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WEDNESDAY, May 8, 2024
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ARAB NEWS

SINCE 1975

The Voice of a Changing Region



DRESDEN 1945



GAZA 2024

7 LIVES LOST Attack on emergency center in Lebanon 'unlawful'

Najla Housseini Beirut

An Israeli airstrike in Lebanon that killed seven first responders was an unlawful attack on civilians and the US should suspend the sale of weapons to Israel, Human Rights Watch said on Tuesday.

The Israeli strike "targeted a residential structure that housed the Emergency and Relief Corps of the Lebanese Succour Association, a civil society association that provides emergency services, ambulances, first-aid training, and primary care and relief services in Lebanon," the group said.

"If the attack on civilians was carried out intentionally or recklessly, it should be investigated as an apparent war crime."

The Israeli military said at the time of the attack that the target was a military compound and that the strike killed a "significant terrorist operative" from Jamaa Islamiya, a Lebanese group close to Hamas.

However, Human Rights Watch said it found no evidence of a military target at the site of the attack in the southern village of Habbariyeh on March 27.

The group said weapons parts found at the site included the remains of an Israeli bomb and remnants of a "guidance kit produced by the US-based Boeing company."

Human Rights Watch's Lebanon researcher Ramzi Kaiss said: "Israeli forces used a US weapon to conduct a strike that killed seven civilian relief workers in Lebanon who were merely doing their jobs."

The rights group urged the US to "immediately suspend arms sales and military assistance to Israel given evidence that the Israeli military is using US weapons unlawfully."

It also asked Lebanon's Foreign Ministry to "take immediate action by submitting a declaration to the International Criminal Court, allowing it to investigate crimes falling within its jurisdiction committed on Lebanese territory since October 2023, and prosecute the perpetrators."

MIDDLE EAST WAR

Worse than Dresden 1945

- Destruction of Gaza compared to controversial bombing of German city at end of World War II
- Israel seizes control of Rafah crossing with Egypt, halts aid • Netanyahu rejects his own truce plan

Arab News Jerusalem

Israel's seven-month bombardment of Gaza has caused more destruction than the controversial firebombing of the German city of Dresden near the end of the Second World War, analysts of satellite images said on Tuesday.

Nearly 75 percent of buildings in Gaza City have been damaged or destroyed, five hospitals have been completely destroyed, fewer than one in three hospitals are even partially functioning, 408 schools out of 563 have been damaged and 53 completely destroyed, and more

than 60 percent of mosques have been reduced to rubble.

"The fastest rates of destruction were in the first two to three months of the bombardment," said Corey Scher, a satellite image analyst at the City University of New York in the US.

"The rate of damage being registered is unlike anything we have studied before. It is much faster and more extensive than anything we have mapped."

In comparison, four air raids on Dresden in February 1945 destroyed just under 60 percent of the city's buildings. US and British bombers dropped more than 3,900 tonnes of high-explosive and incendiary devices that devastated

NUMBER

34,789

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

more than 6.5 km2 of the city in one of the most controversial acts of the war.

In Gaza on Tuesday, Israeli forces seized the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and the enclave, shutting down a vital aid route.

Tanks rolled through the crossing complex and the Israeli flag

was raised on the Gaza side.

There was heavy tank shelling on Tuesday evening in eastern Rafah.

"They have gone crazy, tanks are firing shells and smoke bombs cover the skies and with smoke over Al-Salam and Jneinah neighborhoods," said Emad Joudat, 55, a refugee from Gaza City.

"I am now seriously thinking of heading north, maybe to the central Gaza area. If they move further into Rafah it will be the mother of massacres."

The seizure of the crossing came despite weeks of calls from allies and international bodies for Israel to hold off from a major offensive in the city.

Israel's military said it was con-

ducting a limited operation in Rafah to kill Hamas fighters and dismantle its infrastructure.

Meanwhile, there was confusion in Israel after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected a ceasefire proposal that Hamas accepted on Monday night. One Israeli official said the plan was almost identical to Israel's own truce proposal submitted at the end of April, with some minor amendments.

However, Netanyahu said on Tuesday that the ceasefire plan fell "far short" of Israel's demands. Talks on a truce continue in Cairo.

• **Opinion by Osama Al-Sharif & Yoel Mekeleberg** Pages 9
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The Brief

WORKSHOP HELD

The Heritage Commission launched the International Workshop on Industrial Heritage to promote awareness about its preservation and diversification. **P4**

INDIA ELECTION

India's massive general election reached its halfway mark with a turnout lower than expected despite Prime Minister Modi and his chief opponent Rahul Gandhi calling on voters to cast ballots. **P8**

BANKS' LOANS

Saudi banks' loans totaled \$711.5 billion in March, marking an 11 percent increase as compared to the same month in 2023, according to the official data. **P11**

LEARNING HUB

AIUla academy to train next generation in hospitality skills

Kingdom's heritage gem to offer specialist vocational training in booming tourism industry

Arab News AIUla

Heritage chiefs at AIUla launched a tourism and vocational training academy on Tuesday to attract young Saudis to the Kingdom's booming hospitality industry.

The academy will operate in partnership with HotelSchool, a specialist hospitality education group. An inaugural digital training program for the first group of students will begin in July, and subsequent programs will be available through the academy's website.

Philip Jones, the Royal Commission for AIUla's chief tourism



Authorities in the Kingdom are carefully developing historic AIUla, an ancient oasis in the northwest of the Arabian Peninsula, as a global tourist destination. Supplied

officer, said: "Learning centers such as AIUla Academy play a pivotal role in creating job opportunities while upholding excellence in visitor experiences to international standards, all while maintaining an authentic Saudi essence."

"Both physically and digitally, AIUla Academy will expedite the training process, enhancing the quality and efficiency of professional skill development, thereby advancing the tourism sector's goals in the Kingdom."

Guests at the launch ceremony on Tuesday included Anita Mendiratta, special adviser to

the UN secretary-general at UN Tourism. Also a member of the Royal Commission's advisory board between 2017 and 2023, and one of the key figures behind the development of the academy, she emphasized the organization's commitment and dedication to the enhancement of visitor experiences through the development of local skills.

"The key to AIUla's development lies in embracing authenticity and prioritizing community engagement," Mendiratta said.

Authorities in the Kingdom are carefully developing historic AIUla, an ancient oasis in the northwest

of the Arabian Peninsula, as a global tourist destination distinguished by its 7,000-year-plus history, spanning several civilizations. It encompasses four primary heritage sites and a wide selection of visitor experiences.

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No. 154 • 16 pages



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All GCC member states, through their ambitious economic vision, aspire to build an economic bloc characterized by sustainable development, shared prosperity, a world free from poverty.

Jassem Albudaiwi
GCC secretary-general



Radars

KSA today



Diriyah Glass beads

Bead making with glass takes in physics, a little bit of chemistry, and a lot of art. The Soft Glass workshop teaches those attending how to manipulate glass with heat and gravity to create their own tiny glass beads. For registration, visit biennale.org.sa.



Riyadh Stand-up comedy

Comedy Pod holds two comedy nights each week, giving people two hours to ease their woes with jokes and laughter. Shows begin at 8:45 p.m. Book through experiences.suplift.com.



Diriyah Sun printing

Dive into the world of printing using sun rays with Dina Ahmed at her printing workshop on May 8-9. Those attending will learn the history behind this ingenious technique which creates distinctive blue photo prints using just water and sunlight. Book through biennale.org.sa.



Dhahran ‘The Color of Light’

At Ithra's ‘The Color of Light’ experience at Energy Exhibit you can discover the magical interaction between colors and different types of light. Find more details on the Ithra app.

The Register

THE PICTURES THAT MARK THE DAY



The assistant military commander for the Islamic Military Counterterrorism Coalition, Maj. Gen. Abdullah Al-Qarashi, on Tuesday received Gen. Paulino Garcia Diego, adviser to the secretary-general for defense

policy for diplomatic relations at the Spanish Ministry of Defense, and his accompanying delegation, at the coalition's headquarters in Riyadh. During the meeting, they discussed topics of common interest and ways to enhance cooperation in combating terrorism, the

Saudi Press Agency reported. The delegation was also briefed on the Islamic coalition's mission to coordinate international counterterrorism efforts in various domains, and its efforts to monitor and analyze extremist groups around the world.

Today's Number

\$2.3m

More than 2 million people benefited in April from the services of the Elkrum Association for Food Preservation in Makkah, which came at a total value of SR 9 million (\$2.3 million), Saudi Press Agency reported. The association offers a wide range of community services, including distributing surplus food and organizing meals and charity projects.

Who's Who



Mazin Fawaz Baghdadi

Mazin Fawaz Baghdadi joined Alinma Investment Co. as chief investment officer in 2017 and was promoted to CEO and managing director in 2020.

In that time he has played a key role in shaping the strategic direction of the company, notably through creating synergy between the short- and long-term objectives of the board of directors and working closely with other key personnel.

By applying best practices of risk aversion, the company has been able to endure difficult market environments such as those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent global economic fallout. Relying on staff development and corporate growth, Baghdadi has driven the company's revenue channels forward both in terms of size and diversity.

Under Baghdadi's leadership, the company has become one of the top performing asset managers in the market.

Alinma's assets under management were recently valued at more than SR83.5 billion (\$22.26 billion), making it the third-largest asset manager in the Middle East, according to Forbes Top Asset Managers 2024.

In addition to his role at Alinma Investment, Baghdadi has served as an independent board member at Jabal Omar Development Co. since June 2022, where he is also a member of the audit committee.

Before joining Alinma, Baghdadi held various leadership roles in the financial sector, including head of investment management at HSBC Saudi Arabia and head of Saudi and GCC equities at Saudi Fransi Capital.

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



'I STILL LOVE HIM' Yasmin Abdelaziz

Egyptian actress Yasmin Abdelaziz broke down in tears while speaking about her former husband, actor Ahmed El-Awady, on a TV show on Monday night.

Appearing on ‘Sahabat Al-Saadah,’ hosted by Esaad Younis, Abdelaziz shared details about her private life, including her relationship with her ex-husband.

In an emotional moment that grabbed fans, the actress began sobbing when she talked about their divorce and how they still love each other but cannot be together for reasons she did not reveal.

‘I don't only love Ahmed, I'm completely fond of him,’ she said, before adding in a reprimanding tone: ‘You brought me here to make me cry! You're re-opening wounds that are still hurting me and addressing everything that pains me!’

Abdelaziz further told Younis that she learned true love when she found her husband. ‘I thought I had known love before him. But whatever I felt before, was never love in the way I know it now,’ she said.

‘Ahmed is my one and only love,’ she continued. ‘I prayed and asked Allah to choose the best path for me in this life, and he had chosen this one for me (without Ahmed) and I believe there is something good I cannot yet see.’

The ‘Dharb Nar’ star explained that she and El-Awady had to call their marriage off because of some people in their lives who had turned every moment of their life together into hell.

‘There was no cheating or anything of this sort,’ she said. ‘There are bad people who plant issues between couples and others with black hearts who cannot live in peace knowing there are people around them living happily.’

She later said that she avoids using social media because she does not want to see the videos fans create of her with her ex-husband because ‘it breaks my heart more, especially since I do still love him.’

She appealed to her fans to stop making videos of the two of them to spare her further heartbreak.

'MARS' D.O.

South Korean singer Doh Kyong-soo, known professionally only as D.O., on Tuesday released a new mini-album, titled ‘Blossom.’

The album features six tracks, including ‘Popcorn,’ the single he released last week. The other tracks are ‘Simple Days,’ ‘Good Night,’ ‘My Dear,’ ‘About Time,’ and the title track ‘Mars.’

D.O., who is a member of the South Korean-Chinese boy group Exo, dropped the music video of the title track depicting an entire day in his life, from waking up at 8 a.m. through until 3 a.m., along with his attempts to communicate with his lover from another planet.

The story in the song depicts his excitement at the thought of meeting his lover, but his dream is unfulfilled because he is stuck on the planet Mars. So, he makes sure to communicate his desire to be with her on Venus by building contraptions to contact her and writing ‘I Miss You’ on a green field using flowers he collected himself.

Fans rushed to X to share their opinions about the songs and the music video, which made the album's title trend worldwide at the top spot on the platform.

@Alsubale44 said: ‘All the details of the song are beautiful ... I loved the simplicity of it.’

@DKSHOURLYS wrote: ‘The definition of the music video is art, simply pure art. Kyungsoo's ability to show us a story within his music video is incredible and even more so with his acting level.’

The Region

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Jeddah

• An unforgettable night of comedy is waiting for everyone on Friday, May 10, with the Palestinian American activist and comedian Amer Zahr set to perform at The Rainbow Theater in Amman, Jordan. Tickets and more details are available on calendar.jo.

• The biggest car show in Jordan takes place on Friday, May 10, in

Amman, featuring a concert by the singer Sillawy. It will be held at Parking Lot 2 in King Hussein Business Park from 4 p.m. until midnight. More details are on calendar.jo.

• Sharjah Children's Reading Festival is being held until May 12 at Expo Centre Sharjah. The festival is a celebration that goes beyond one age group to enrich the whole family, while instilling a love of reading in

the youngest of children. For more details, check sharjahevents.ae.

• Salwa Beach Resort in Qatar is holding a ladies-only night on Wednesdays from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. until Sept. 25. The location hosts one of the largest theme parks in the Middle East, boasting 19 attractions and 30 rides and slides, including a wave pool, surf dunes and spinning rapids.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

May 8	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Aar	Mugreb	Isha
Makkah	4:24	5:46	12:16	3:37	6:49	8:19
Madinah	4:16	5:42	12:19	3:45	6:54	8:24
Riyadh	3:49	5:14	11:50	3:17	6:26	7:56
Abha	4:20	5:40	12:07	3:19	6:34	8:04
Dammam	3:31	4:58	11:37	3:07	6:15	7:45

The only hope for a way out of a worsening humanitarian catastrophe is simple — an immediate and long-lasting humanitarian ceasefire.

Salim Oweis
UNICEF spokesperson



Spotlight

RESEARCH & STUDIES
THE MIDDLE EAST, BETTER EXPLAINED

ARAB NEWS



Israeli forces, bottom right, have mounted a fresh offensive in Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah, main, seizing the border crossing with Egypt and ordering some 100,000 Palestinians to evacuate, below and bottom left. AFP

GAZA CONFLICT

'Despair, chaos and confusion'

Israel must halt its military operation in Rafah to avoid 'inevitable' humanitarian catastrophe, warn aid agencies

Anan Tello & Robert Edwards London

Palestinians in Gaza's southern governorate of Rafah face a desperate situation as the Israeli military proceeds with its long-planned assault on the area, capturing the Gaza side of the border crossing with Egypt and ordering displaced families to move yet again.

The Israeli army announced on Tuesday morning that its 401st Brigade had taken "operational control" of the Rafah border crossing after advancing into the eastern part during the night as part of its mission to dislodge Hamas.

Earlier on Monday, Israel ordered some 100,000 Palestinians in eastern Rafah to "evacuate immediately" to Al-Mawasi, a coastal town near Khan Younis that humanitarian organizations said was "completely uninhabitable."

Mercy Corps said Palestinians in eastern Rafah were confronted with two impossible choices: Face death under bombardment or attempt a perilous journey to an unlivable area with no access to essential aid.

Bashra Khalidi, advocacy director for Oxfam in the Palestinian territories, says civilians fleeing Rafah have been left with nowhere to go.

She told Arab News that people in Rafah "are worried of even leaving their homes" because they fear they will not find anywhere in Al-Mawasi.

Al-Mawasi, which Israel had dubbed a "humanitarian zone," is "already overpopulated

and filled with makeshift tents," said Khalidi.

Moreover, this narrow coastal strip, measuring just 1 km wide and 14 km long, already hosts an estimated 250,000 displaced Gazans, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent.

Ahmed Bayram, media adviser for the Norwegian Refugee Council in the Middle East, stressed that "there is not a corner or a street in Gaza where people can go expecting safety."

He told Arab News: "Al-Mawasi, which is one of the areas Israel has asked people to go to, is full to the very brim. There is no free spot left in that narrow stretch of land, which is not equipped for such high demand."

It also remains unclear whether Palestinians can flee to neighboring countries through the Rafah crossing now that it is under Israeli control, said Ruth James, Oxfam's regional humanitarian coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa.

She told Arab News: "Many Palestinians in Gaza currently do not have the recognized right to return to their original homes. Given this context, Egypt, or any other state, should be cautious of inadvertently abetting any potential efforts by Israel, or any other party, to ethnically cleanse the



Palestinian population of Gaza."

Oxfam's Khalidi also warned that if a Rafah-wide incursion happens, which is the worst-case scenario, it would "entail mass carnage and a complete bloodbath."

She explained that this is due to "how small" Rafah is and "because of how congested and overpopulated it is."

Echoing her colleague's fears, James said: "It's hard to imagine the scale of need caused by a Rafah invasion. Simply put, this invasion can't happen. There must be an immediate and permanent ceasefire."

She added: "The alternative is an avoidable, massive loss of civilian life."

Despite repeated public objections, even US President Joe Biden's appeals against the Rafah offensive have gone unheeded.

According to the Associated Press, Biden urgently warned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a phone call on Monday against invading Rafah.

The Israeli military said its operation is designed to eliminate fighters and

dismantle infrastructure used by Hamas.

This is despite Hamas accepting the terms of a Qatari-Egyptian ceasefire proposal on Monday.

Humanitarian organizations concur that the impact of Israel's operation in Rafah will extend beyond the eastern area, affecting the entirety of Gaza's remaining population.

"While the initial 'evacuation orders' and operations announced in the east of Rafah are directly impacting 100,000 people, over 1.4 million are sheltering in Rafah, half of which are children, and are at direct risk of any escalated military operations across the area," Salim Oweis, a spokesperson for UNICEF in Gaza, told Arab News.

FASTFACTS

- Israel ordered Palestinians to evacuate to Al-Mawasi — deemed 'completely uninhabitable.'
- Closing Rafah crossing would cut Gaza's only viable humanitarian lifeline, warn aid chiefs.
- Fears that Rafah-wide incursion would 'entail mass carnage and a complete bloodbath.'

"There's been no contingency plan in place, and all foreign aid delegations have been evacuated," she told Arab News. "If this goes ahead as Israel states, it will be a massacre."

As Israel has blocked aid through the Rafah border crossing, aid groups are concerned about the impact on much-needed humanitarian assistance across the Gaza Strip.

Oxfam's James cautioned that "even one day of closure (of crossing points) means that additional lives are likely to be lost to hunger and illness."

Khalidi pointed out that aid organizations "are already facing huge obstructions" in delivering aid across Gaza.

"Often aid is not making it even past Khan Younis," she said. "And hence the descent to hell, into starvation, that we have seen over the last course of months in the north, but also across the strip."

The World Food Programme warned on Saturday that northern Gaza is experiencing a "full-blown famine," which is "moving its way south."

Bayram of the NRC also warned that "the entire aid system is at the point of collapse."

He said: "Closing down the Rafah crossing means cutting off the only viable lifeline currently available for aid workers."

UNICEF's Oweis emphasized that "any interruption to the already limited aid access will have a devastating impact on the humanitarian situation as a whole."

He added: "Not having food entering the Strip means that more children will fall into malnutrition and disease, and will be put at heightened risk of death."

Oweis stressed that "the only hope for a way out of a worsening humanitarian catastrophe is simple, and it's an immediate and long-lasting humanitarian ceasefire."



RULE OF LAW

Riyadh forum tackles challenges in judicial training

Workshops focus on digital transformation, cultural awareness, and effective methodologies

Sulafa Alkhumalzi Riyadh

Confidence comes from competence, and competence comes from experience, Martin Camp told a panel discussion at the International Conference on Judicial Training held in Riyadh on Tuesday.

The mantra is central to Camp's teaching approach as a professor of practice and assistant dean for graduate and international programs at Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law in Dallas, Texas, where he teaches property and business law.

In the conference's sixth session, titled "Understanding Culture and Social Context in Judicial and Legal Training," Camp, with other legal experts, discussed the significance of incorporating cultural awareness into the judicial system.

Camp said that despite each nation's cultural identity, we all, as a collective society, desire the same

things. "Then I realized that under this veneer difference, we are the same. People want the same things. They want work, family, security, peace, everything they want depends on the rule of law.

"It does not matter what label

HIGHLIGHT

Gathering law professionals from more than 40 countries, the conference explored how modern technologies and artificial intelligence can be integrated to enhance judicial and legal training methodologies.

we put on what systems people choose or what is chosen for them, in the final analysis, whatever system, people still want justice. They want the general application of the principle of rule of law and those are the rules that people are expected to follow."

To have a flowing judicial system,

training needs to be a regular part of the life of the judiciary and sometimes specialization is preferred to provide competence, Camp said.

"The role of the judiciary is ensuring that the rule of law, that the courts, are preachers of our constitution and our legislature ... by understanding the law, practicing the law, and having the confidence that comes from that," Camp added.

Fabricio Da Cruz, a federal judge in Brazil, told Arab News that he is attending the conference because he is fascinated by its theme, which explores the future of judicial training. "Everybody here has something to tell and something to teach, but there is a lot to learn ... sharing knowledge is the main benefit from a conference like this."

"I give this advice to my students and children: Stay hungry for knowledge and focus on developing (your) skills ... knowledge and skills, together, make a huge difference in the future for the person, community, and country."



The workshop features global experts who give lectures and share their case studies. AN photo/Abdulkarim Alhajm

HERITAGE PRESERVATION

Experts at Diriyah workshop discuss revitalization of industrial sites

Lama Alhamawi Riyadh

The Heritage Commission kicked off day one of the International Workshop on Industrial Heritage in the JAX district to promote awareness of industrial heritage, its preservation, and diversification.

The workshop, which runs from May 7 to May 8 in Diriyah, will cover topics such as industrial heritage on a global scale, industrial heritage within the Kingdom, and case studies of the revitalization and restoration of industrial heritage sites.

The workshop features global experts who will lecture and share their case studies, including Tosh Warwick from the UK, Mitsuko Nishikawa from Japan, and Mirhan Damir, who will discuss her expertise in industrial heritage in Egypt.

The opening remarks for the workshop were delivered by Jasser Al-Harhash, CEO of the

Heritage Commission, who highlighted some of the Kingdom's notable industrial heritage sites, particularly in the mining sector.

The first session of the workshop provided a broader overview of international industrial heritage, with panel members sharing insights from Germany, Latin

HIGHLIGHT

The commission set up multiple VR stations that allow users to explore the Kingdom's industrial heritage sites, including oil and gas projects.

America, and the UK.

Marion Steiner, secretary-general of the International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage, gave a lecture on the interpretation and global perspective of industrial heritage.

She stressed that a global

understanding of industrial heritage leads to a better understanding of each other and sparks peace-building in the minds of men and women.

Miles Oglethorpe, president of the TICCIH, discussed the broad definition of industrial heritage and the extensive list of sectors that fall within this category, such as agriculture, mining, oil and gas, heavy industries, and water desalination. He explained that industrial heritage comprises sites, structures, and complexes, as well as their associated documentation and history.

"It includes both material assets and immovable and movable and intangible dimensions such as know-how, the organization of work and workers, and the complex social and cultural legacy that has shaped the life of communities and brought major organizational changes to entire societies and the world in general," said Oglethorpe.

TheSpace

Paris parade builds awareness of camel sector's untapped potential



SHEIKH FAHAD BIN FALAH BIN HATHLIN

Paris last month witnessed a camel parade the likes of which it had not seen for almost a century. The streets and tree-lined avenues of the French capital, along with its lush parks, were alive with the colors and sounds of 50 dromedary and Bactrian camels and llamas as they paraded through the streets, much to the delight of the eager onlookers who flocked in their hundreds to see the event.

The parade, which gathered delegations from 30 countries, caught the attention of the top-tier media outlets that were ready on the spot to convey the atmosphere, feelings and feedback of the audience. A long list of big names communicated about the event.

This awareness event, which was aligned with the international Camel Organization's strategic goal of "cultivating valued partnerships and community engagement," was intended to celebrate the International Year of Camelids 2024 and to spotlight the challenges facing this remarkable animal and the need to join hands to overcome them. Collective efforts are key in discussing and finding sustainable solutions.

The route of the parade extended over a few kilometers near the historic Chateau de Vincennes, a favorite residence of French kings.

Under the umbrella of the International Camel Organization, the event was organized by the French Federation for the Development of Camelids in France and Europe and sponsored by the Saudi Camel Club and the Saudi Ministry of Culture.

As a result of the success and the positive feedback received from key opinion leaders in the sector, the International Camel Organization

intends to repeat the same success story with other camel associations globally and to increasingly advocate for a scaling-up of the camel sector.

The aim of events of this nature is to build awareness of the untapped potential of camels and call for increased investment in the camel sector, advocating for greater research, capacity development and the use of innovative practices and technologies, while at the same time doing more to overcome

the current obstacles to their movement from country to country.

We should all do more to support the camel sector. Doing so means supporting the traditional livelihoods of millions of people globally. And doing it sustainably, too.

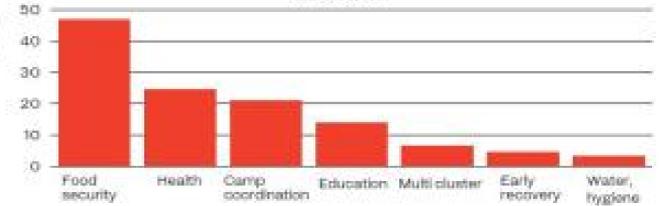
Sheikh Fahad bin Falah bin Hathlin is the founder and chairman of the International Camel Organization.

We should all do more to support the camel sector. Doing so means supporting the traditional livelihoods of millions of people globally. And doing it sustainably, too.

The Day's FIGURES

KSRELIEF PROJECTS IN PALESTINE

March 2024



Source: ksrelief.org

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Saudi Music Memory Music Commission shares plans to preserve heritage

The Music Commission hosted an open meeting on the Saudi Music Memory initiative, engaging with music enthusiasts and industry professionals, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Tuesday.

The goal was to involve them in preserving the Kingdom's musical heritage, as part of a series of open meetings designed to keep the musical community informed and encourage their participation in documenting and preserving Saudi music.

The virtual meeting outlined the initiative's focus on documenting music and lyrics composed by Saudi artists through the mid-1980s, aiming to preserve and archive these works and the evolution of the Saudi music scene.

The meeting highlighted the achievements of the Saudi Music Memory initiative, which secured rights for over 5,000 works, documented 305 musical notations, and produced two musical notation books. The first book, titled "From the Memory of National Songs," was released to coincide with this year's Founding Day. The second book, "From the Memory of Ramadan Songs," is completed and set to be published before Ramadan 2025. **AN Riyadh**

Seasonal opportunities Ministry launches service to hire Hajj workers

The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development has launched the Ajeer Al-Hajj service for this year's Hajj season.

The initiative allows businesses to engage a temporary workforce through seasonal contracts during the Hajj period.

The ministry is encouraging Saudis and expatriate residents interested in working at the holy sites during the Hajj season to upload their CVs on the Ajeer portal, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Tuesday.

This integrated platform connects job seekers with available positions, facilitating workforce management and streamlining processes for both businesses and workers during the Hajj season.

This service enables businesses to issue work permits and recruit temporary staff, as well as advertise job vacancies specifically designed for the Hajj season. Job seekers can access these opportunities and apply directly through the platform.

The service is accessible online in a streamlined manner for businesses and individuals through the following website: ajeer.com.sa. **AN Riyadh**

Exclusive collections Luxury jewelry brands dazzle at Riyadh showcase

Saudi International Luxury Week, which is taking place in Riyadh until May 9, showcases a selection of fine jewelry from around the world.

The event offers a unique opportunity for Saudi clients to acquire exclusive and sophisticated pieces.

House of GOL, a New York-based brand known for its colorful diamonds, has shown a rare pink diamond at the event.

Anna Larsen, head of business development at House of GOL, has been visiting Saudi Arabia for the past three years to meet clients.

Larsen said that House of GOL specializes in high-end jewelry and many people buy it to reflect their heritage and to pass it down to future generations.

Another standout brand at the event is Maitraya, an Indian company specializing in pure Gulf pearls, including khaleeji and Saudi pearls.

The brand is led by Sanghvi Maitraya, a seventh-generation representative of his family's pearl business.

He said that the pearls were no longer found in the Gulf, adding: "We collected them from grandmothers, maharajas, royal families, and other sources around the world." **AN Riyadh**

News Saudi Arabia



IN FULL BLOOM

All is rosy in Taif as crowds flock to flower festival

Taif's annual show features a floral carpet of over million flowers; Taifrosethon launched to encourage innovation

Nada Hameed Jeddah

Visitors are flocking to the 19th Taif Rose Festival at Al-Raddaf Park where the flowers are in full bloom, highlighting the region's rich floral heritage.

The festival, themed "Qetaf" meaning "Picking Time," coincides with the harvest season and will run until May 12. The organizers include the Taif Rose Cooperative Society and Taif Municipality.

There has been an impressive turnout of Taif residents and domestic and international tourists. The exhibitors — mostly farmers and vendors — are optimistic that increased revenues will help boost rose cultivation and production.

Abdullah Altwairqi, a local farmer and festival participant, said: "Participating in the Taif Rose Festival has become a tradition for me. The atmosphere improves each year, and the revenue and exposure we receive from visitors make it worthwhile."

At his booth, Altwairqi showcased various flowers and fruit, including Taif roses, peaches, prickly pears, figs, mulberries, grapes, blackberries, pomegranates, as well as aromatic plants.

Altwairqi urged people to visit the Rose Flavor cafe where they can savor hot and cold beverages infused with the flavor of Taif roses and other aromatic flowers including lavender, which is also abundant in the region.

The flower carpet set up by the municipality in the center of the park



The 19th Taif Rose Festival, themed 'Qetaf' meaning 'Picking Time,' coincides with the harvest season and will run until May 12. SPA

NUMBER

70k

The rose-picking season in Taif starts around the end of March or early April, lasting between 35 to 45 days, with an average of 70,000 roses picked daily.

left visitors awestruck. Covering 5,206 square meters, it was crafted using over a million flower and rose seedlings, making it the largest in the history of the festival.

Faiz Al-Thibaiti, director-general of media and corporate communication at Taif Municipality, told Arab News: "The flower carpet was designed with decorative patterns inspired by the province's heritage."

He said the carpet has ensured the event has become "one of the

most important tourism festivals in the Kingdom, attracting thousands of visitors and tourists from various regions of the country."

The decorations adorning the flower carpet draw inspiration from the intricate designs found on the walls and facades of Taif's ancient structures, including Al-Kaki Palace in Al-Salama and King Saud Palace.

Al-Thibaiti added: "Preparations for the festival started early, with the Taif Rose Cooperative Society detailing participation criteria to highlight Taif roses, including their cultivation, harvesting, and distillation into fine perfumes. This adds to Taif's unique tourist appeal. The festival provides a platform for producers, experts, and entrepreneurs to connect, collaborate, and boost this important sector."

Among the highlights are the rose and flower path, product stalls, goods market, government booths, and the agricultural nursery.

Interactive fountain shows accompanied by national tunes were also among the attractions, with a crossing to the upper pedestrian bridge from where visitors can view the massive flower carpet.

Artwork, flower arrangements, and hanging floral baskets scattered throughout the park added to the flair of the event.

Al-Thibaiti said: "The significant turnout at the current festival comes amid increasing rose production year after year, indicating the success of this agricultural sector in achieving high revenues while continuing

HIGHLIGHTS

- Exhibitors at the Taif Rose Festival are optimistic that increased revenues will help boost rose cultivation and production.

- The flower carpet set up by the municipality in the center of the park was designed with decorative patterns inspired by the province's heritage.

- It covers 5,206 square meters and was crafted using over a million flower and rose seedlings, making it the largest in the history of the festival.

to promote the Taif rose product."

Taifrosethon

The five-day Taifrosethon began on May 7, which is being held to encourage entrepreneurship in the region with technological solutions to enrich the industry.

The event includes various skills training and technical workshops covering trade, cultural heritage, and tourism.

The top-three winners will receive \$2,666, \$1,866 and \$1,333 respectively. Participants are required to enter as teams, each with three to five members.

Taif's roses

The Taif province produces more than 200 million roses each season. According to the local chamber of industry, each tree produces an average of 250 roses daily throughout the harvest season, which lasts for about 45 days.

The rose-picking season starts around the end of March or early April, lasting between 35 to 45 days, with an average of 70,000 roses picked daily.

Taif roses feature an exquisite, sweet fragrance and vibrant pink hues on delicate petals, and are a hallmark of the region's natural beauty.

Cultivated in the high-altitude climate of Taif, these roses thrive in the cool temperatures and fertile soil of the region.

They are meticulously harvested by hand to preserve their quality, with the petals carefully collected for various purposes.



UPLIFTING THE COMMUNITY

Ensan launches dual initiatives to empower orphaned girls, single mothers

Arab News Riyadh

The Charity Society for Orphans Care in Riyadh has launched two initiatives to improve the lives of orphaned girls and single mothers.

Mohammed bin Saad Al-Muharib, general manager of the society, also known as Ensan,

said the first of the schemes, titled Enayah (care), would benefit 30 primary school age children, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

The program will run for a full academic year and include a range of activities with psychological, spiritual, linguistic, social, health and economic dimensions.

Al-Muharib said the program

would feature regular meetings, visits and excursions with the ultimate goal of providing the youngsters with the tools they needed to navigate a successful future.

The second initiative, titled Qanadil (lanterns), is designed to provide single mothers with a range of emotional and practical

FASTFACTS

- Ensan's new initiative, titled Enayah (care), will benefit 30 primary school age girls.

- The program will include excursions to provide the girls with the tools they needed to navigate a successful future.

support to help them achieve personal and professional success.

The scheme will comprise 90 hours of practical training designed to raise awareness of their educational responsibilities, addressing the spiritual and psychological needs of their children and teaching them critical life skills.

Both programs will be overseen by the Specialized Council for Orphan Associations in the Kingdom and supported by the Abdul Latif Al-Essa Charitable Foundation. The King Salman Social Center will provide logistical support in the form of venues for holding the training courses.

News Middle East

A pro-Palestinian activist is carried away from the campus of the Free University of Berlin as police try to break up a demonstration against Israel's war in the Gaza Strip. AFP



SOLIDARITY

Berlin students protest for Gaza as demos spread across Europe

● Scuffles erupt between officers, protesters ● Crackdown on University of Amsterdam protest

AP Amsterdam

German police on Tuesday broke up a protest by several hundred pro-Palestinian activists who had occupied a courtyard at Berlin's Free University earlier in the day, the latest such action by authorities as protests that have rolled campuses in the US spread across Europe.

Some demonstrators have even called for a break in academic ties with Israel over the war in Gaza.

In Berlin, the protesters had put up about 20 tents and formed a human chain around them. Most had covered their faces with medical masks and draped keffiyeh scarves around their heads, shouting slogans such as "Viva, viva Palestina."

Berlin police called on the students via loudspeakers to leave the campus. Police were seen carrying some students away as scuffles erupted between officers and protesters. Police also used pepper spray against some of the protesters.

In the eastern German city of Leipzig, about 50 pro-Palestinian

protesters set up tents on campus of Leipzig University and occupied a lecture hall on Tuesday afternoon.

Earlier on Tuesday, Dutch police broke up a similar pro-Palestinian demonstration camp at the University of Amsterdam. Police spokeswoman Sara Tillart said about 140 protesters were arrested, two of whom remain in custody on suspicion of committing public violence.

Amsterdam police said on the social media platform X that their action was "necessary to restore order" after protests turned violent. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

Video aired by national broadcaster NOS shows police using a mechanical digger to push down barricades and officers with batons and shields moving in, beating some of the protesters and pulling down tents. Protesters had formed barricades from wooden pallets and bicycles, NOS reported.

In Austria, protesters camped out in about 20 tents set up in the main courtyard of the University of Vienna for a second day Tuesday. With police monitoring, protesters cordoned off the encampment,

which is near a memorial for Austrian Jews who perished in the Holocaust.

The University of Vienna and the main Austrian Union of Students distanced themselves from the protest. The union said "antisemitic groups were among the protest's organizers," which the protesters denied. Pro-Palestine protest camps have sprung up at about a dozen universities in Britain, including at

In Austria, protesters camped out in about 20 tents set up in the main courtyard of the University of Vienna for a second day.

Oxford and Cambridge, urging the institutions to fully disclose investments, cut academic ties with Israel and divest from businesses linked to the country.

Dozens of students have pitched up Gaza solidarity encampments on lawns outside King's College at Cambridge University and the Pitt

Rivers Museum in Oxford.

"Oxford's profits cannot continue to climb at the expense of Palestinian lives, and their reputations must no longer be built on the whitewashing of Israeli crimes," said a joint statement from protesters at the two universities.

Over 200 Oxford academics have signed an open letter supporting the protests.

In Finland, dozens of protesters from the Students for Palestine solidarity group set up an encampment outside the main building at the University of Helsinki, saying they would stay there until the university, which is Finland's largest academic institution, cuts academic ties with Israeli universities.

In Denmark, students set up a pro-Palestinian encampment at the University of Copenhagen, erecting about 45 tents outside the campus of the Faculty of Social Sciences. The university said students can protest but called on them to respect the rules on campus grounds.

In Italy, students at the University of Bologna, one of the world's oldest universities, set up a tent encampment over the weekend to demand an end to the war in Gaza as Israel

prepared an offensive in Rafah, despite pleas from its Western allies against it. Groups of students organized similar protests in Rome and Naples, which were largely peaceful.

In Spain, dozens of students have spent over a week at a pro-Palestinian encampment on the University of Valencia campus. Similar camps were set up Monday at the University of Barcelona and at the University of the Basque Country. A group representing students at Madrid's public universities announced it would step up protests against the war in the coming days.

In Paris, student groups called for gatherings in solidarity with Palestinians later Tuesday.

On Friday, French police peacefully removed dozens of students from a building at the Paris Institute of Political Studies, known as Sciences Po, after they had gathered in support of Palestinians.

On Tuesday, students at the prestigious institution, which counts French Premier Gabriel Attal and President Emmanuel Macron among its alumni, were seen entering the campus unobstructed to take exams as police stood

PEACE PUSH

Egypt urges all parties to exert more pressure to end Gaza conflict

Gobran Mohamed Cairo

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has welcomed Monday's developments in peace talks about finalizing a truce in Israel's war on Gaza.

El-Sisi said he was "closely following the positive developments pertinent to the ongoing negotiations to reach a comprehensive truce in the Gaza Strip."

He called on all parties to exert more efforts to reach an agreement that will end the human tragedy of the Palestinian people and finalize the exchange of hostages and prisoners. Hamas accepted an Egypt-Qatar mediated ceasefire proposal on Monday.

Meanwhile, Egypt's Foreign Ministry said that it has warned of the dangers of a possible Israeli military operation in Gaza's Rafah region, "since this escalatory act entails grave humanitarian dangers threatening more than 1 million

BACKGROUND

● President El-Sisi welcomes progress in recent talks.

● Cairo warns Israel that attack on Rafah threatens over 1m in Gaza.

Palestinians residing in this region."

It called on Israel to exercise "utmost restraint, and refrain from further escalation at this extremely sensitive timing of ceasefire negotiations, spare the lives of Palestinian civilians who have been enduring an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe since the outbreak of the war."

It said that Egypt continues talking with all parties to prevent the situation from deteriorating.

Meanwhile, Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry discussed the Rafah situation with his UAE counterpart Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan in a phone call.

They exchanged views regarding the possibility of Israeli forces carrying out a military operation in the besieged city.

Shoukry reiterated his warning of the dangers of an Israeli military escalation in Rafah, which is considered the last relatively safe area in the Gaza Strip and refuge for more than a million Palestinians.

The ministers stressed the urgency of reaching a truce agreement that allows for the swapping of hostages and detainees, and ensure a permanent ceasefire.

They agreed to continue talks with various parties to prevent the conflict from spreading to the region.

TROUBLED WATERS

UK marine agency reports 2 explosions in Gulf of Aden

Saeed Al-Batati Al-Mukalla

The UK Maritime Trade Operations reported on Tuesday two explosions near a ship in the Gulf of Aden as international marine task forces in the Red Sea shot down drones fired by the Yemeni Houthi militia.

The skipper of a ship transiting the gulf notified the UK maritime agency of two explosions "in close proximity to" the ship 82 nautical miles south of Yemen's southern city of Aden, and that the ship and crew were unharmed.

The incident prompted the UKMTO to encourage ships traveling in the Gulf of Aden to be

cautious and to report "any suspicious activity."

This comes as the US military and the EU naval operation in the Red Sea said they shot down Houthi drones in the previous 24 hours.

US Central Command announced in a statement on Tuesday that its forces destroyed on Monday one uncrewed aerial system fired by the Houthis on Monday from Yemeni territory under their control, targeting foreign commercial and navy ships in the Red Sea.

The EU mission in the Red Sea, known as Eunavfor Aspides, said an Italian frigate shot down one drone on Monday while responding to a



People watch the 'Hessen' frigate arriving in the harbor in Wilhelmshaven, Germany. It took part in the EU mission to protect ships from Houthi attacks. AP

strike conducted by the Houthis from regions under their control in Yemen. Until Tuesday afternoon, the Houthis had not claimed responsibility for new strikes on commercial or navy ships in the Red Sea or Gulf of Aden.

Since November, the Houthis have seized a commercial ship, sunk another, and launched hundreds of drones and ballistic missiles

against vessels in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Bab Al-Mandab Strait, and, most recently, the Indian Ocean in support of the Palestinians against Israel's war in Gaza.

Meanwhile, the Houthis claimed on Monday to have uncovered an "espionage" network working for the US and Israel.

Houthi media broadcast images and videos of 10 individuals from

The skipper of a ship transiting the gulf notified the UK maritime agency of two explosions 'in close proximity to' the ship 82 nautical miles south of Yemen's southern city of Aden, and that the ship and crew were unharmed.

the western province of Hodeidah who admitted to being recruited by Yemeni military officers at military locations under government control.

They claimed that these individuals were given the task of gathering information about the locations of missile and drone launchers, boats, weapons storage facilities, trenches, and movements of the Houthi forces, and that their information assisted US and UK

strikes at those locations.

The Houthis accused Ammar Mohammed Abdullah Saleh, a former intelligence official and brother of Tareq Saleh, a member of the country's presidential council, of running the dismantled network from a military base on the country's western coast.

In 2022, a Houthi court in Sanaa sentenced Ammar Saleh to death in absentia for allegedly damaging Yemeni military missiles and air defense systems while serving as the deputy director of the National Security Bureau.

Yemen's Minister of Information Moammar Al-Eryani described the Houthi claims as "fabricated lies," accusing them of torturing "innocent" people who appeared on the footage to convince them to admit to crimes they did not commit.

He added that the Houthis were using Israel's war in Gaza to lay the groundwork for a new military operation against the Yemeni government.

News Middle East

BORDER TENSIONS

Hezbollah carries out drone, artillery attacks on Israeli forces, equipment

Group claims it 'killed, wounded' soldiers in strike on Yiftah barracks

Najla Houssari Beirut

Hezbollah on Tuesday carried out a series of drone and artillery attacks on Israeli forces and other targets under the blanket slogan of "Supporting the Gaza Resistance."

The group said it targeted "officers and soldiers while they were in the courtyard of the Yiftah barracks" and that its strikes were successful in "killing and wounding them."

It also "targeted with other drones one of the Iron Dome platforms located south of the Ramot Naftali barracks, which was directly hit and damaged."

A third target was "spy equipment at the Al-Sammaqa site in the Kafr Shuba hills," while a fourth was "Israeli soldiers as they were moving inside a bulwark at the Israeli Al-Rahib military site," on which it "achieved a direct hit."

Israeli media said that "six explosive-rigged drones were launched from Lebanon, five of which exploded in the Upper Galilee, causing damage."

Officials at the Kiryat Shmona settlement asked residents there to "stay in shelters due to fears of drone infiltration."

Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth said Hezbollah's operations included "launching rockets and drones toward border areas in the Upper Galilee" and that an Israeli warplane dropped heat balloons over the area where the drones entered.

Explosions were heard in Yiftah and Ramot Naftali, it said.

Israeli Channel 12 said air defenses intercepted a drone launched from southern Lebanon toward Galilee,



Smoke billows from the site of an Israeli airstrike on the southern Lebanese village of Khiam, on Tuesday. AFP

while another exploded without causing any damage.

According to the Israeli Army channel: "During April, four Israelis were killed by Hezbollah fire on the northern border and 33 others were injured, including five who sustained serious injuries."

FASTFACT

Israeli Channel 12 said air defenses intercepted a drone launched from southern Lebanon toward Galilee, while another exploded without causing any damage.

The Israeli military responded to Hezbollah's actions by conducting raids and using artillery to shell Lebanese border towns, particularly Aita Al-Shaab.

Meanwhile, the Lebanese Foreign Ministry warned against "any escalation by the Israeli occupation

forces against the city of Rafah," which it said would cause a "severe humanitarian disaster for more than 1 million Palestinians who have been displaced to this area as a result of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip that has been ongoing for seven months."

COOPERATION

UN atomic chief urges Iran to take 'concrete' steps for cooperation

AFP Isfahan

UN atomic watchdog chief Rafael Grossi, visiting Iran on Tuesday, urged the country to adopt "concrete" measures to bolster cooperation on its nuclear program and address the international community's concerns.

At a news conference in the city of Isfahan, Grossi said he had proposed in talks with Iranian officials that they "focus on the very concrete, very practical and tangible measures that can be implemented in order to accelerate" cooperation.

The International Atomic Energy Agency director-general held talks with senior Iranian officials including Atomic Energy Organization's head



UN atomic watchdog chief Rafael Grossi speaks with Iran's atomic energy chief Mohammad Eslami in Isfahan on Tuesday. AFP

Mohammad Eslami.

Grossi insisted on the need to "settle differences" on the nuclear issue while the Middle East was going through "difficult times," particularly with the war between Israel and the

Iran-backed Palestinian militant group Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

"Sometimes, political conditions pose obstacles to full-fledged cooperation" between Iran and the international community, he said.

To overcome these obstacles, he said, "we need to come up with concrete steps that are going to be helpful in bringing us closer to these solutions that we all need."

Grossi said a March 2023 deal with Iran was "still valid" but required more "substance."

The agreement was reached during Grossi's last visit to Iran and outlined basic cooperation measures including on safeguards and monitoring.

COMING HOME

Trinidad, Tobago urged to repatriate women, children from Iraq

Arab News London

Human Rights Watch has urged the government of Trinidad and Tobago to repatriate a number of its citizens from Iraq being held in detention for alleged involvement with Daesh.

HRW said four Trinidadian women have been held by authorities in Iraq along with seven children, aged 7-15 years, for almost seven years.

It said it had been in contact with

one mother, currently in Rasafa prison, who on May 2 told them in a voice recording that her two sons, aged 13 and 15 — one of whom suffers from asthma, anaemia and malnutrition — had been taken away from her.

"They took my son from me, they told me he was too big to be staying in a cell with us. They put him in a cell with about 10 boys," she said.

"We have no education for our children. Nothing. We are going on our seventh year in prison and our

children are growing up here."

Another mother told HRW on May 4: "We are here just waiting, and time is wasting. Our children remain uneducated without any knowledge."

Rasafa is believed to hold around 100 youths as well as their mothers, with many of the adults foreign nationals charged with or convicted of terrorism-related crimes.

Three of the four Trinidadian women are being held there, serving sentences of 20 years or more.



Consulate General of Pakistan, Jeddah Tender Notice



The Consulate General of Pakistan, Jeddah, intends to construct its new Chancery/Office building at Jeddah. Interested experienced, well reputed, registered construction firms meeting the following criterion may submit their bids:

- Name and address of the firm with telephone and fax numbers, organizational set-up and date of establishment of the firm;
- Details of experience in related projects and work in hand for the last ten years;
- Details of in house capabilities, resources and registration with local building regulatory authorities;
- No. of Architects / Engineers employed along with Bio-data and related experience;
- Financial stability (Financial statement for the past 5 years);
- Has necessary registrations to perform the required services related to building on diplomatic premises;
- Does not have a history of being involved in any dispute or litigation proceedings;
- Offers multi-disciplinary in-house services including architecture, engineering and quality surveying;
- Any other information in support of their firm.

2. The firms may submit their technical and financial bids separately in sealed envelopes to undertake the project. Bidding documents containing detailed drawings, Bill of Quantities (BoQs) and other relevant details of the project can be obtained from the Consulate General of Pakistan, Jeddah from date of advertisement to **12th June 2024** between 1300 to 1600 hours. The cost of bidding documents is SAR 2,000/- non-refundable to be paid at the time of receiving the bid documents.

3. Sealed bids must reach the office by **Sunday 23rd June 2024 at 1100 hours** and will be opened on the same day at 1130 hours in the presence of all bidders or their authorized representatives. This advertisement is also available on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad, website mofa.gov.pk, Consulate General's website <https://parejeddah.org> and PPRA website at www.ppra.org.pk

4. The Consulate General reserves the rights to accept or reject any or all applications without giving any reason whatsoever and without any financial and legal liability/responsibility.

Head of Chancery

Consulate General of Pakistan, Jeddah

P.O. Box No.182, JEDDAH-21411

Contact No. 012-6692371



Malaysian PM Anwar Ibrahim with MWL Secretary-General Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa and other officials in Petaling Jaya on Tuesday. Supplied

FACILITATING DIALOGUE

2,000 religious leaders attend peace conference in Kuala Lumpur

MWL co-organized international gathering with the Malaysian government

Mohammed Rasooldeen Kuala Lumpur

More than 2,000 religious leaders and scholars from 57 countries gathered in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday for a conference organized by the Muslim World League to discuss the role of religion in facilitating dialogue and peace initiatives.

The MWL, an international nongovernmental Islamic organization founded in Saudi Arabia in 1962, organized the 2024 International Conference of Religious Leaders with Malaysia's Department of Islamic Development.

The conference was inaugurated

by Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and MWL Secretary-General Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa.

"This religious conference will be an annual feature in Malaysia since it has proved successful in building an understanding and affinity among religions in the world, as well as in Malaysia," Anwar said during his speech.

"In a conference like this, we can observe the things that need to be done and need to be improved among Muslims, Christians, Buddhists or Hindus. We want to listen to your advice, criticisms and suggestions."

While about two-thirds of Malaysia's more than 33 million population

FASTFACT

The MWL, an international nongovernmental Islamic organization founded in Saudi Arabia in 1962, organized the 2024 International Conference of Religious Leaders with Malaysia's Department of Islamic Development.

are Muslims, there are also large Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian minorities in the country.

"Religious leaders should take an active, effective and courageous role in promoting peace and justice. It is the duty of religious leaders to ensure that governance is guided by strong moral and

ethical values," Anwar said.

Al-Issa said the conference seeks to have a tangible impact.

"This international conference was attended by international, religious, political, intellectual, academic and media leaders. It is considered the first nucleus of a major breakthrough through a number of initiatives and programs around the world, aiming to enhance friendship and cooperation between nations and peoples," he said.

"Our world is most in need of true solidarity, solidarity with a tangible impact, and is most in need of awareness of the threats threatening its global peace and the harmony of its diverse national communities in their religions and races."

PLAYING POLITICS

Modi, Gandhi urge more Indians to vote as election reaches halfway mark

Sanjay Kumar New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his chief opponent Rahul Gandhi called on voters to cast their ballots on Tuesday, as India's massive general election reached its halfway mark with a turnout lower than expected.

More than 968 million people have been registered to vote and the polls are held in seven phases from April 19 until June 1. Some of India's 28 states and eight federally governed territories complete the process on a single day, while others spread it out.

The first two phases of the election were held on April 19 and April 26 in 190 constituencies, with a voter turnout of 66.1 percent and 66.7 percent respectively — about 4 percent lower than in 2019.

In the third phase on Tuesday, citizens from 94 constituencies in 12 states went to the polls, including in Modi's home state of Gujarat.

"Urging all those who are voting in today's phase to vote in record numbers. Their active participation will certainly make the elections more vibrant," the incumbent prime minister said on X after



India's PM Modi shows his inked marked finger after casting his ballot in Ahmedabad on Tuesday. AFP

casting his ballot. Modi is eyeing a rare third straight five-year term in power, targeting 400 seats for the National Democratic Alliance led by his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, which has been in power since 2014.

He is challenged by an alliance of two dozen opposition parties — the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance, or INDIA, led by the Congress Party, which has ruled the country for close to 45 years since its independence in 1947.

Gandhi, Modi's key contender and Congress leader, is the son of Rajiv Gandhi, a grandson of Indira Gandhi,

and a great-grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru — all of whom had served as prime ministers of India.

Congress plunged to a historic low when it was swept out of power by the BJP in the 2014 election, and won its second-lowest number of 52 seats in 2019.

As the turnout showed a declining trend in the first and second phases of the ongoing poll, Gandhi also took to social media to ask voters to show up.

"I request all of you to come out in large numbers and vote to protect your rights," he said. "Remember, this is not an ordinary election, it is an election to protect the democracy

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Blame game

UK says Defense Ministry targeted in cyberattack

A senior British lawmaker said on Tuesday China was probably behind a massive cyberattack on the names and banking details of UK armed forces personnel, prompting a furious denial by Beijing.

MP and former minister Tobias Ellwood said a third-party payroll system used by the Defense Ministry was targeted, adding that it had the hallmarks of a Chinese operation.

"Targeting the names of the payroll system and service personnel's bank details — this does point to China because it can be as part of a plan, a strategy to see who might be coerced," the ex-soldier and former chairman of a parliamentary defense committee, told BBC radio.

Shapps's Cabinet colleague Mel Stride confirmed there had been an attack on a system run by an outside firm but did not elaborate. The leak is believed to have also included a small number of personal addresses of serving and former armed forces members. **AFP**

Hot waters

Indian yoga guru misled public with COVID cures

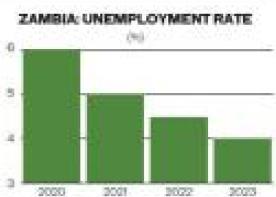
An Indian state has accused yoga guru Baba Ramdev of criminal misconduct for promoting his traditional ayurvedic medicine as a cure for COVID-19 because it was only approved as an "immunity booster," a case filing reviewed by Reuters showed.

Ramdev, whose yoga cures and ayurvedic products have made him popular in India, the United States and other countries, misled the public with claims his medicines could cure other diseases such as cardiac disorder and cancer, the filing showed.

Ramdev violated Indian drug law "by misleading the general public," according to an April 16 filing which is not public and was submitted to a local court in the northern Haridwar city by a drugs regulator. A spokesperson for Ramdev and his firm, Patanjali Ayurveda, denied allegations of making misleading claims on COVID-19 medication and said that they would clarify that to the court. **Reuters**

The Day's FIGURES

Source: Statista



What We Are Reading Today

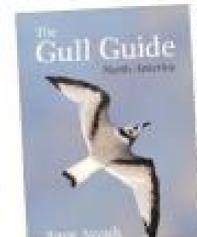
FROM AROUND THE WEB & IN PRINT

'The Gull Guide: North America'

AMAR AYYASH

Gull identification can be challenging for even the most seasoned birder. While these birds are common to coasts, lakes, and rivers, they exhibit remarkable plumage changes related to age, which is sometimes

complicated by similarities between species and a readiness to hybridize. This book provides an invaluable identification guide to all regularly occurring gull species and subspecies throughout North America.



Soft talks

Macron seeks to charm Xi into trade policies in Pyrenees

French President Emmanuel Macron welcomes Chinese President Xi Jinping in the Pyrenees mountains on Tuesday, for the second day of a trip during which Xi showed little sign of being ready to offer major concessions on trade or foreign policy.

Macron, who will greet Xi at the Tarbes-Lourdes Pyrenees airport at around 11:40 a.m. (09:40 GMT), will take him to have lunch in the mountains dear to him as the birthplace of his maternal grandmother.

Advisers to the French president described this as breaking with protocol for a chance for one-on-one direct chats with Xi, without scores of aide on either side.

One of Macron's main objectives for the visit is trying to convince Xi to reduce the trade imbalance between the two regions, with better access for European firms in China and less subsidies for Chinese exporters.

Reuters

Unclear motive

Knife attack at a Chinese hospital kills 2 people

A knife attack at a hospital in southwestern China on Tuesday killed two people and injured 21 others, authorities said.

No motive was given for the attack at Zhenxiang County People's Hospital in Yunnan province. The suspect is a male from a village in the same county, a Zhenxiang police statement said. The injured were being treated, it said.

A witness told Red Star News, an online outlet, that he had narrowly escaped the attack and that a doctor or doctors were among the injured. Video from the witness showed people who were bleeding and had fallen to the ground, and one older person trying to help another, the Red Star social media post said. Earlier media reports said 23 people had been injured, but the police statement said the total was 21.

A video posted online by Guizhou Province Television showed a man being taken away by police. **AP**

قَدْ تَجِدُ الشُّبَّ فِي كُلِّ الأديانِ
لَكِنَّ الشُّبَّ نَفْسَهُ لا دِين لَهُ
(جلال الدين الرومي)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

You may find love in all religions,
but love itself has no religion.

Jalal Al-Din Rumi
(13th-century poet)

Opinion

Israel is testing the West's most fundamental values

OSAMA AL-SHARIF



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The student protests that are roiling US universities and colleges — and now spreading into Europe — over Israel's war on Gaza are testing the Western world's long-held principles and values. Images of police cracking down on largely peaceful gatherings have shaken the foundations of the American republic, its Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The attacks on elite universities for not clamping down on protesting students are being led by vehemently pro-Israel Republican lawmakers. They have called on President Joe Biden to send in the National Guard and suppress what they call pro-Hamas, liberal-funded antisemitic infiltrators.

The crisis has raised questions about the fundamental individual freedoms that are protected by law and considered sacrosanct in Western societies. It has polarized an already divided American society over Israel's war on Gaza and the gross human rights violations committed there, in addition to the horrific human toll on the Palestinians.

The Biden administration is already under fire from both sides: from the left for enabling Israel's genocidal war and from the right for not doing enough to help Israel finish the job in Gaza. Biden is caught in the middle. His support among the Democratic youth and Arab and Muslim voters is waning and may

play a vital role in him losing his reelection bid in November.

The president's Republican foes, including Donald Trump, refuse to give him a free pass. Despite his long history as a self-proclaimed Zionist and ardent supporter of Israel, he is being blamed for helping Hamas buy time, weakening the Netanyahu government, and ignoring a steep rise in antisemitism at US colleges and universities.

There is one clear message that US politicians on both sides of the aisle are sending to the rest of the world: when it comes to Israel, there are special sets of rules that do not apply elsewhere. Forget about Israel's excessive use of US-supplied firepower against civilians, the accusations of genocide and war crimes, and the breaches of international laws and conventions. Israel gets special treatment all the time. It is not only the politicians that are involved; it is also the mainstream media, the lobbies, the CEOs of the tech giants and the military-industrial complex, the evangelicals and many of the special interest groups.

And it is not only the US institutions that the pro-Israel lawmakers are pressuring. This week, Zetes revealed that 12 GOP senators informed the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan, that any attempt by the court to hold Netanyahu and his colleagues to account for their actions in Gaza would be interpreted "not only as a threat to

Israel's sovereignty but to the sovereignty of the United States."

Pro-Israel lawmakers have also lambasted the UN, its organizations and officials, including Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, numerous times after the body criticized Israel or called for independent investigations into possible war crimes committed by Israel in Gaza and the West Bank.

Europe is not much better. Despite massive weekly demonstrations calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the punishment of Israel, most European governments have taken hasty steps to contain such protests.

Most recently, the German government banned British-Palestinian surgeon Ghassan Abu Sitta from entering the country to deliver testimony about his experiences in Gazan hospitals. On Saturday, he was also refused entry to France due to a German ban affecting all Schengen Area countries.

Israel's automatic impunity in the eyes of Western governments and the ruling elite is gnawing at the foundations of fundamental individual freedoms and rights, not to mention raising legitimate questions about the undue influence that Zionist bodies have over Western politicians.

The reverberations of Israel's war on Gaza will go deep into Western societies long after that horrific war is over. The link will linger for many years. Israel will have to face

a reckoning if the international rules-based order is to survive.

Israel has become a severe liability to the West and it is using its last reserves of support among politicians who will, at the end of the day, have to answer to voters. Vibrant democracies have a way of correcting themselves. Israel's credit line among politicians is coming to its inevitable conclusion.

In the end, Israel will have to fight its own battles at the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice and other forums. The stigma of its atrocities in Gaza will not go away. The Global South, an emerging power, observes the unfolding calamity, Gaza is no longer about Palestine, even though that cause persists, but about the fidelity of a world order that is designed for all members with no exceptions.

Israel is the last of the 19th-century colonial projects and it has outlasted its expiration date. Historical Palestine/Israel needs to coexist to prevent a recurrence of genocidal wars like the one in Gaza. International law and the tenets of what the West has been preaching all these decades are being tested, both in the West and beyond. The credibility of the West is at stake. The road ahead leads to a fork and making the wrong choice will be detrimental. Europe should know better: the line between fascism and democracy can be invisibly thin.

US politicians are sending the message: when it comes to Israel, there are special rules that do not apply elsewhere



International recognition could considerably close the power gap between the two sides of the conflict

Palestine is a state waiting to be recognized

YOSSI MEKELBERG



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Once again, as a matter of routine, the US has vetoed a Palestinian request to the UN Security Council for full UN membership and, by that, prevented the only global political body with the power to bestow such a recognition from doing so.

This was a reflection of another of Washington's contradictions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian issue, as its foreign policy chiefs, including President Joe Biden, are repeatedly expressing their support for a two-state solution, the logical conclusion of which is an independent Palestinian state.

However, this has not meant recognition of Palestinian statehood prior to a peace agreement with Israel, but highlighted that there is broad international support for such a recognition and brought to the fore the question of whether recognition would accelerate peace between the Israelis and Palestinians, slow it down or make no difference. In Europe, the discourse around this question is rapidly changing, much of it because of the war in Gaza, and Spain is leading a move to recognize Palestinian statehood.

It can be argued that Palestine is already a state, with or without a formal recognition by the UNSC. It has governing bodies of sorts and its pre-June 1967 borders are, generally speaking, internationally recognized. And, of the UNSC's 15

members, 12 voted in favor of the recent resolution on recognizing Palestinian statehood.

Furthermore, Palestine has already been accepted as a nonmember observer state of the UN General Assembly — in November of 2012, by a vote supported by 138 countries and opposed by only nine member states. In practical terms, it can be argued that this raises the question of whether a formal UNSC recognition would be merely symbolic, as important as it might be.

However, whatever merit there is to claiming that recognition of its statehood would be merely gestural, the more persuasive argument is that it would mean a substantial departure from the current situation, which disadvantages the Palestinians because of the very asymmetric nature of the conflict. It would create a different dynamic in relations between the Palestinians and the general international approach to the nature of the negotiations.

There is a marked difference in relations, especially in the context of negotiations, between one side that is a recognized state with all the symbols of one, let alone territorial integrity, recognized borders and military and economic power, and the other, which is an entity that is mostly under occupation, with many of those it represents living in the diaspora and whose security and economy are at the mercy of the occupier. This puts the latter at a severe disadvantage, but

international recognition could considerably close the power gap between the two.

As it stands, recognition — or, more accurately, the prevention of such a recognition — is a tool misused by Israel to demand concessions from the Palestinians. For Palestinians, recognition should serve as an incentive to unite and reform their system of governance and, just as importantly, transform their discourse from that of a liberation movement to one that has responsibility for the security and well-being of all its people.

For the international community to present Israel with Palestinian statehood as a fait accompli would be to send a clear signal of intent, forcing Israel to adjust accordingly or find itself isolated.

Decades of delay over recognizing Palestinian statehood have not advanced by one iota the cause of peace negotiations, let alone a peace agreement. On the contrary, this issue has become a bottleneck and a distraction that has prevented the sides from progressing on other outstanding issues.

Now, there is certainly the danger that one or both sides might reach the wrong conclusion from such a recognition. Israel, due to its ingrained distrust of the international community, would probably see it as another deliberate move to undermine its security and its survival. The Palestinians, meanwhile, might conclude that the tide has turned in

their favor and against Israel, feel that there is no urgency to conclude a peace agreement and consequently harden their position. If that were the case, it would be for the international community to ensure that this thinking is nipped in the bud.

The last few months have dramatically changed the domestic and international discourse over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and highlighted the understanding that avoiding any proactive approach to resolving it comes at an intolerable price whose impact goes well beyond Israel and Palestine. But it is impossible to envisage Washington leading a radical change to this intractable conflict, especially in an election year.

So, this makes it imperative that the EU, both as individual members and as one of the more powerful and influential political bodies in international affairs and which has deep-rooted interests in the region and its stability, not to mention its historical connections, takes the lead and the initiative in recognizing Palestine as a state. This would send a clear message to Washington that America either joins Europe in recognition or remains almost isolated from its friends by not doing so.

Simply recognizing Palestine as a state will not be a complete panacea, but it will be an essential turning point toward a just and viable resolution to one of the most protracted and volatile conflicts in modern history.

Opinion

EU should not give in to Lebanese blackmail over refugees

DR. DANIA KOLEILAT KHATIB



Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib is a specialist in US-Arab relations with a focus on lobbying. She is co-founder of the Research Center for Cooperation and Peace Building, a Lebanese nongovernmental organization focused on Track II.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen visited Lebanon along with the Cypriot president last week. The EU offered the country a package of €1 billion (\$1.08 billion) to be disbursed through 2027. Though the package is supposedly to help Lebanon, it is in fact to buy its leaders' acquiescence in keeping 1.5 million Syrian refugees in the country.

The Lebanese political class has been very skillful in using the refugee issue to blackmail the international community and extract funds. The political class has its back to the wall. The country defaulted on its debt service in March 2020, meaning it can no longer issue bonds to finance spending. The tax collection system is plagued with inefficiencies. The meager taxes cannot cover government spending. Of course, the political class is not willing to conduct reforms, as it thrives on corruption and clientelism. The only thing left is to blackmail the international community. The Lebanese political class is very good at doing that.

Whenever they need money, these Lebanese leaders start using incitement against refugees. They increase the abusive security measures against refugees, as well as the public rhetoric. The more they squeeze the refugees, the more they try to leave the country. Given that going back to Syria is impossible, the only way out is to cross the Mediterranean. This is a threat to Europe, so the Europeans cave in to the political class and relinquish their demand for reforms in

exchange for funds and grants.

However, what the Europeans do not understand is that they are not solving the problem and are actually making it worse by feeding the political class's predatory behavior. They are opting for the easy way out. The solution they offer is only a temporary one that, in the future, will aggravate the problem. If blackmail works, the political class will use it whenever it needs a new cash injection.

By giving the Lebanese political class money, Europe is neither helping the Lebanese nor the Syrians. The Lebanese need the international community to help them get rid of the corrupt political class. But the cash injection will give it a lifeline and allow the political class to avoid conducting reforms. On the other hand, keeping the Syrians in Lebanon is not a solution to the Syrian problem. The solution to the Syrian problem is pressuring the Assad government to make concessions and allow the return of refugees.

So far, Assad has skillfully used his allies in the Lebanese political class to pressure the international community. Jamil Al-Sayyed, a pro-Syrian political figure, attacked the political class for accepting the EU's money in return for keeping the refugees in Lebanon. He said that, instead of taking the money, the Lebanese government should have pressured the Europeans to mend their relations with Bashar Assad. This is the mantra of the pro-Syrian, or "mumanna," political camp. It is using the refugees as a pressure point on the international community on behalf of Assad. It alternates between doing this and using the refugees to milk cash.

Though the Europeans realize they are being blackmailed, the specter of illegal migration looms large. According to the Cypriot Interior Ministry, between Jan. 1 and April 4, 2,140 migrants arrived on the island by boat, as opposed to 78 during the same period in 2023. The vast majority were Syrians who had crossed from Lebanon. If this trend continues, it will create a threat to Europe.

Europe can no longer accommodate new refugees. Europe is inundated with those who have fled Ukraine. To add to the economic burden, there is the cultural aspect of migration. The influx of Syrians in 2015 led to a wave of electoral gains for extreme-right parties. Such migration has even placed a question mark over the European project.

During last week's visit, Najib Mikati, Lebanon's caretaker prime minister, reiterated the pro-Assad line by saying that the Syrians fled their country for economic reasons. This is not true, as the refugees mainly left because of the security situation and Assad and his allies' butchery. The Syrian president is also using refugees as a negotiating card with the international and the Arab communities and has no real intention of allowing them to come back. Even last year's Arab normalization with Assad did not result in a return of refugees.

The Europeans are putting a sticking plaster on a deep wound that needs surgery. They do not want to tackle the issue of Assad properly and are merely trying to somehow contain the spillover. Faced with his support from Iran and Russia, the international community has been unable to remove Assad. At the same

time, the Syrian president is not showing any flexibility — he is not willing to make any concessions in order to be accepted and reintegrated into the international community. As a result, the international community just tries to accommodate the refugees indefinitely without a real plan for their future.

The refugees are a convenient scapegoat for the Lebanese political class. They blame refugees for all the calamities facing the country. They keep hyping up the cost of the refugees to the Lebanese economy. They fail to mention that the allowances refugees get from the UN Refugee Agency pour into the Lebanese economy. They fail to say that the support Lebanon gets for its public schools is driven by Europe, as the international community wants to keep refugee children in schools. Hence, the Lebanese teacher receives a salary because Syrian refugee children are learning in public schools alongside Lebanese students.

There is an agreement that the refugees are weighing down the country and its decaying infrastructure and that Syrian labor is competing with the Lebanese in a limited market amid a financial crisis. However, the Lebanese political elite are not seeking to solve the problem. On the contrary, they want to benefit from it.

Of course, for Europe, immigration is a clear and present danger, but its leaders should recognize that, by caving into the demands of the Lebanese political elite, they are only making themselves prone to more blackmail. Any aid to Lebanon, regardless of the presence of refugees, should be conditioned on tangible reforms.

The Europeans are making the problem worse by feeding the political class's predatory behavior

Though the Europeans realize they are being blackmailed, the specter of illegal migration looms large

Ukraine: A war without an end in sight

DALIA AL-AQIDI



Dalia Al-Aqidi is executive director of the American Center for Counter Extremism.

As the attention of the American populace remains fixated on the riveting trial of former President Donald Trump, the war in Gaza and the fiery protests erupting across college campuses nationwide, another significant event is unfolding with far less fanfare: The Russia-Ukraine war quietly reached the 800-day milestone last Friday, with no discernible signs of abatement.

As the conflict rages on, its impact reverberates far beyond the borders of the two belligerent nations, sending shock waves across the international community and underscoring the fragility of peace in an increasingly interconnected world.

In the corridors of power in Washington, the deliberations surrounding US policy toward the conflict have been fraught with contention and nuance. Last month's decision by the US

House of Representatives to approve more than \$61 billion in military assistance to Ukraine represents a watershed moment in America's engagement with the crisis.

Amid mounting pressure from both domestic and international stakeholders, lawmakers grappled with the moral imperative to support Ukraine's fledgling democracy while navigating the intricate web of geopolitical alliances and strategic interests.

The bipartisan nature of the vote, with 210 Democrats and 101 Republicans throwing

their weight behind the measure, underscored the consensus on the urgency of bolstering Ukraine's defenses against Russian aggression. Yet, beneath the veneer of unity, fissures within the Republican Party threaten to undermine the coherence of America's foreign policy approach.

Within Republican ranks, a vocal contingent has voiced opposition to the allocation of additional funds to Ukraine, citing concerns over fiscal responsibility, the efficacy of military aid and the broader strategic calculus in facing Russia. The disagreement among Republicans shows how different ideas are causing problems in American politics today. It also shows how various factors, such as a desire to prioritize their own nation, consider what benefits them most and a sense of moral obligation, shape US foreign policy.

Republican Speaker Mike Johnson showed great skill in handling the disagreements within his party. He successfully led the passage of the legislation despite facing opposition from some fellow Republicans. This demonstrates the crucial role of compromise and practical decision-making in political leadership, especially when divisions are deep and progress is hard to achieve.

As everyone watches closely, Ukraine's future is uncertain, balancing between serious international tensions and tricky diplomatic moves. The decision by the US to give new military aid is critical in the ongoing fight with Russia. But even with this help, the future is still uncertain and dangerous.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was thrilled by the news. He thanked both parties, especially Johnson, for making a decision that he believes will be historically really important. Zelensky said that democracy and freedom are essential globally and will always be strong as long as America helps protect them.

However, in Moscow, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov had a different view. He said that the decision to approve security aid for Ukraine would make things worse in the conflict. Peskov stated that this decision would benefit the US but harm Ukraine, leading to more deaths among Ukrainians and more blame for the Kyiv government for this situation.

Efforts to bring an end to the conflict are underway, with Switzerland taking the lead by arranging a peace summit, with an invite to Pope Francis, at the Burgenstock resort in June. This gathering aims to foster a shared vision for achieving a fair and enduring peace in Ukraine. More than 160 delegations will examine previous discussions and highlight the importance of following the plan for peace in Ukraine and other ideas based on the rules set by the UN and international laws.

But what is the point of having a summit if the country at the heart of the issue is not invited? The Swiss government last week indicated that Russia had not been invited to the summit. It elaborated on its stance, highlighting a willingness to include Moscow in the discussions.

However, it also noted that the Russian government had repeatedly conveyed its lack of interest in participating in the inaugural summit.

This underscores the complexity of diplomatic relations and the challenges inherent in fostering inclusive dialogue on contentious issues such as the Ukraine conflict.

In a separate development, the US has officially leveled accusations against Russia, alleging the use of chemical weapons. As a result, Washington has declared its intention to impose additional sanctions on Russian individuals and organizations. The State Department contends that Moscow's actions

constitute a breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which prohibits the manufacture and deployment of chemical weapons. Specifically, Russia is accused of employing the "choking agent" chloropicrin against Ukrainian military personnel.

A resolution to the conflict in Ukraine remains elusive for now. The steadfast support for Kyiv from the US and Ukraine's European allies persists, unwavering, despite the enduring nature of the conflict. The specter of a potential victory for Vladimir Putin and Russia looms ominously, casting a shadow of apprehension over neighboring nations, each acutely aware of the peril that could ensue should they be the next target.

Maintaining the status quo appears to be the sole viable option for the interim.

Ukraine's future is uncertain, balancing between serious international tensions and tricky diplomatic moves

Fissures within the Republican Party threaten the coherence of America's foreign policy approach

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“We need a very large fleet, we're going to make a number of additional orders.”
Tony Douglas
 Riyadh Air CEO



Business



Figures released by the Saudi Central Bank showed personal borrowings accounted for 35 percent of this growth, while the remaining 65 percent went to the corporate sector. File

LENDING

Saudi bank loans up by 11% in March to hit \$712bn

Real estate financing for corporate dealings specifically surged by 27 percent

Dayan Abou Tine Riyadh

Saudi banks' loans totaled SR2.67 trillion (\$711.5 billion) in March, marking an 11 percent increase as compared to the same month in 2023, according to the latest official data.

Figures released by the Saudi Central Bank, also known as SAMA, showed personal borrowings accounted for 35 percent of this growth, while the remaining 65 percent went to the corporate sector, particularly for real estate activities, as well as electricity, gas, and water supplies.

Real estate financing for corporate dealings specifically surged by 27 percent in the third month of the 2024, marking the highest annual growth rate in 10

months, reaching SR275.2 billion.

A study by MORTOR Intelligence, which used 2023 as a base year, estimated the Kingdom's real estate market at \$68.51 billion in 2024, and expects it to reach \$101.62 billion by 2029, growing at a compounded annual growth rate of 8 percent between 2024 and 2029.

The surge in real estate and construction endeavors may have heightened the need for debt-based financing primarily sourced from the local banking sector. Saudi banks play a central role in the provision of loans for real estate projects.

According to SAMA data, new retail residential mortgage loans experienced a notable increase, reaching a 14-month high at SR7.63 billion in March. This marked a 5 percent rise compared to the

HIGHLIGHTS

● **New retail residential mortgage loans experienced a notable increase, reaching a 14-month high at SR7.63 billion in March.**

● **SAMA data also revealed that financing for professional, scientific, and technical activities soared by 54 percent, hitting SR6.4 billion.**

amount granted in the same month last year and a 10 percent increase from the previous month.

In March, lending for home purchases accounted for the largest portion, comprising 64 percent of new mortgages to individuals, totaling SR4.91 billion. The most notable growth, however, was observed in apartment loans,

surging by 28 percent to reach SR2.24 billion. Meanwhile, land loans experienced a more modest growth of 4 percent, reaching SR474 million in new mortgages.

One factor contributing to this growth could be the need for residential properties from expatriates arriving in the Kingdom, along with government initiatives aimed at modernizing the financial system.

In a March study by Knight Frank, a notable trend emerged among expatriates, with 68 percent expressing a strong preference for owning an apartment rather than a villa. This inclination was especially prominent among individuals aged 35-45 and 45-55.

Growth in lending for electricity, gas and water supplies came as the second contributor in corporate loans after real estate, registering

an annual rise of 27 percent to reach SR147.42 billion in March.

According to an April report by Global Data, the key sectors in the Saudi Arabia power market are the residential sector, commercial sector, industrial sector, and others. In 2023, the residential sector had the dominant share in the power consumption market.

SAMA data also revealed that financing for professional, scientific, and technical activities soared by 54 percent, hitting SR6.4 billion, marking the highest annual growth rate among sectors.

Education loans also showed robust growth, with an annual increase of 28 percent to reach SR6.27 billion. Additionally, financing for administrative and support service activities rose by 20 percent, totaling around SR34.22 billion.

AVIATION

Riyadh Air set to launch new routes, destinations

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's Riyadh Air will soon announce more routes and destinations thanks to a new agreement with the Saudi Tourism Authority.

Riyadh Air, backed by the country's Public Investment Fund, signed a memorandum of understanding with STA at Dubai's Arabian Travel Market.

According to a statement, the deal aims to offer an elevated travel experience to passengers traveling to and from the Kingdom.

"Increasing Saudi's connectivity with the world is a key pillar of our tourism strategy and will ensure we sustain our rapid growth and meet our new ambitious target of 150 million visits by 2030," STA CEO Fahd Hamidaddin said.

"This exciting new partnership with Riyadh Air will support our goals and ensure more visitors can travel to experience the cool mountains, pristine waters and dynamic cities that make Saudi a great year-round destination," Hamidaddin added.

He added that the firm is currently

FASTFACTS

● **STA is currently connected to over 180 destinations and is aiming to triple annual passenger traffic to 330 million by 2030.**

● **Under the terms of the deal, Riyadh Air and STA will seek joint sponsorships and will collaborate at global trade shows and events.**

connected to over 180 destinations and is aiming to triple annual passenger traffic to 330 million by 2030. The CEO also shed light on how as well this new agreement will help propel these efforts.

Under the terms of the deal, Riyadh Air and STA will seek joint sponsorships and will collaborate at global trade shows and events.

Moreover, the two parties will work together to offer joint loyalty program schemes with exclusive offers and rewards to benefit guests.

The new deal will also make airline booking processes simpler due to collaboration on payment solutions. Riyadh Air CEO Tony Douglas added: "This is another momentous day in the history of Riyadh Air."

He added: "Working alongside the STA to elevate the travel experience for our guests and those coming to visit the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signifies what we're all about."

He also highlighted that the carrier is working on elevating aviation standards to previously unseen levels.

PERFORMANCE

Saudi Aramco's net profit hits \$27.27bn in first quarter of 2024

Arab News Riyadh

Energy giant Saudi Aramco reported a net profit of \$27.27 billion in the first three months of this year, marking a 2.04 percent increase compared to the previous quarter.

According to the company's statement, the state-owned oil firm's total revenue for the three months to the end of March stood at \$107.21 billion, with the total operating income for the period reaching \$58.88 billion.

Amin Nasser, president and CEO of Saudi Aramco, said: "Our first quarter performance reflects the resilience and strength of

Aramco, reinforcing our position as a leading supplier of energy to economies, to industries and to people worldwide."

However, when compared with the first quarter of the previous year, the net profit of the Tadawul-listed firm declined by 14.44 percent by the end of March 2024.

Despite lower net income, Aramco declared a base dividend of \$20.3 billion for the first three months of the year and anticipates distributing its fourth performance-linked dividend of \$10.8 billion in the second quarter.

The statement added that the company expects total dividends of \$124.3 billion to be

Our first quarter performance reflects the resilience and strength of Aramco.

Amin Nasser
 Saudi Aramco CEO



declared in 2024, comprising a base dividend of \$81.2 billion and a performance-linked dividend of \$43.1 billion.

Nasser revealed that Saudi Aramco made significant progress in its gas business during the first quarter.

"We also continue to execute our long-term strategy, and in the first quarter made significant progress on expanding our gas business and growing our globally-integrated downstream value chain, while maintaining our focus on consistently delivering value for our shareholder," he added.

In February, the energy giant discovered an additional 15

trillion standard cubic feet of gas and 2 billion barrels of condensate in the Kingdom's Jafurah Field.

Additionally, the statement noted that Saudi Aramco awarded \$7.7 billion worth of engineering, procurement, and construction contracts for the expansion of the Fadhil Gas Plant, aiming to increase its processing capacity by 1.5 billion standard cubic feet per day.

Moreover, Aramco completed the acquisition of a 100 percent equity stake in Chilean retailer Esmax in the third quarter of 2023, bolstering the company's downstream expansion efforts.

"Looking ahead, I expect our

portfolio to continue to evolve as we aim to contribute to an energy transition that offers solutions to climate challenges, but at the same time recognizes the need for affordable, reliable, and flexible energy supplies," added Nasser.

The statement further added that Saudi Aramco is well-positioned to help meet the world's growing need for affordable and reliable energy, emphasizing that oil and gas will continue to play a significant role in the global energy mix.

Additionally, the company noted that it achieved a total hydrocarbon production of 12.4 million barrels of oil equivalent in the first quarter of this year.

Business Saudi Arabia

FISCAL POLICIES

Budget deficit is 'intentional' to ensure sustainable development

'As long as deficit is directed toward productive expenses, it is acceptable,' says Al-Jadaan

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan on Tuesday said the Kingdom is intentionally running a budget deficit to achieve its development goals.

The Finance Ministry announced the quarterly budget performance report on Sunday. As per the report, the Kingdom posted a deficit of SR12.4 billion (\$3.3 billion) in Q1, marking the sixth consecutive quarterly deficit with revenues amounting to SR293.4 billion and expenditures hitting a record SR305.8 billion.

"We're intentionally running a sustainable deficit for economic development, contrasting with mandatory borrowing in some nations for essential but unproductive expenses," the minister told Al-Eqtisadiyah in an interview.

He said the deficit is not merely a consequence but an attempt to achieve development goals. The minister said the government prioritizes spending to accelerate the implementation of its development strategies and projects.

Al-Jadaan also shed light on the overall situation of the global economy and how Saudi Arabia's prudent fiscal policies have supported growth and enhanced the Kingdom's resilience in dealing with changes.

Regarding the budget deficit and its potential impact on the economy, he reassured citizens that managing the budget deficit is a top priority.

The minister clarified that as long as the deficit is directed toward productive expenses, the government views it as acceptable, as it generates economic returns that exceed the cost of debt. Highlighting sustainable

financial policies, Al-Jadaan cited the government's efforts to reduce its reliance on oil revenues by diversifying sources of income.

He said non-oil revenues made up 38 percent of the total income in 2023, compared to 9 percent in 2015. The minister said the ratio of non-oil revenues to covering expenditure ceilings was about 17 percent in 2015 and surged to reach 35 percent in 2023.

Al-Jadaan said: "Financial policies can enhance financial inclusion and access to funding, both vital for supporting entrepreneurship, small and medium-sized enterprises, and innovation. This contributes to achieving the goals of Saudi Vision 2030, which has succeeded in unprecedented achievements across various sectors."

He also addressed the efficiency of government spending and its pivotal role in fostering economic development and bolstering economic resilience.

"We are committed to optimizing government expenditures by directing them toward promising strategies aimed at diversifying the economic base," the official added.

He said by the end of 2023, total government spending had reached approximately SR1.29 trillion, reflecting continued progress in implementing initiatives and structural reforms.

These initiatives include regional and sectoral strategies supportive of structural transformation for comprehensive sectoral development and economic diversification, Al-Jadaan added.

Moreover, the finance minister revealed that active efforts are underway to attract both domestic and foreign investments that stimulate economic growth and contribute to reducing the budget deficit. Commenting on



Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan said deficit is not merely an attempt to achieve development goals. SPA

HIGHLIGHTS

- Efforts are underway to attract domestic and foreign investments that stimulate economic growth and contribute to reducing the budget deficit.
- Strategic spending has a multiplier effect on the economy, like creating jobs and enhancing trade through infrastructure investments.
- Saudi Arabia is committed to optimizing government expenditures by directing them toward promising strategies.

the impact of strategic spending on the national economy, he said it "involves directing and allocating financial resources toward specific goals and priorities that align with long-term economic objectives."

This is achieved by strategically guiding funds, enabling governments and institutions to stimulate economic growth and development, foster innovation, and enhance productivity, he explained.

The minister went on to say that for instance, investments in additional industrial zones, expanding ports' capacities, and investing in roads have led to significant growth in industrial investments and logistics services, creating business opportunities and employment for many citizens.

"This supports economic activity and raises the non-oil gross domestic product, thereby increasing non-oil revenues and covering additional debt costs," he added.

Al-Jadaan said that strategic spending has a multiplier effect on the economy, like creating jobs and enhancing trade through infrastructure investments.

COLLABORATION

Saudi-Malaysian ties strengthen with launch of business council

Arab News Riyadh

Economic ties between Saudi Arabia and Malaysia are set to soar with the launch of a business council that will catalyze growth and collaboration across various sectors.

The council was inaugurated during the visit of Saudi Minister of Commerce Majed Al-Qasabi, who led a delegation comprising 44 officials and leaders representing 20 government bodies and 24 private sector entities to the Southeast Asian country.

The minister announced the establishment of the business council, emphasizing its goal of enhancing economic relations between the two countries.

"We inaugurated today with the Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry, Tengku Zafrul Aziz, the Saudi-Malaysian Business Council to contribute to strengthening economic and trade relations in the promising sectors in the two brotherly countries," Al-Qasabi said in a post on his X account on May 6.

The minister further held a roundtable meeting with Aziz, attended by Sulaiman Mahbob, chairman of the Malaysian Investment Development Authority, and



The council was inaugurated during the visit of Saudi Minister of Commerce Majed Al-Qasabi to Malaysia. SPA

Dato Seri Reezal, chairman of the Malaysia External Trade Development Corp., along with Shaharul Sadri Alwi, director general of the Department of Standards Malaysia.

Al-Qasabi pointed out that the talks with Malaysian officials revolved around enhancing partnerships within the business sectors of both nations.

Concluding his visit to the Southeast Asian country, the commerce minister mentioned that he had also held meetings with Ewon Benedict, minister of entrepreneurship development; Mohamad Sabu, minister of agriculture and food industry; and Alexander Nanta Linggi, minister of works.

"We discussed cooperation in the areas of training, knowledge transfer, innovation, and sustainability, while also reviewing Malaysia's experience in supporting small and medium-sized projects," Al-Qasabi said.

During the meetings, efforts to encourage exports and enhance the capabilities of Saudi and Malaysian companies to access global markets were discussed, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

It added that collaboration in capacity building in innovation, emerging technologies, research programs, and e-commerce was emphasized. Al-Qasabi affirmed that Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030,

launched by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has brought about significant transformations in the Saudi economy since its announcement in 2016.

He noted the close trade relations between Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, highlighting significant opportunities for expansion and diversification. The minister emphasized Saudi Arabia's efforts to become a global hub for trade and logistics services.

In conjunction with the Saudi delegation's visit to Malaysia, representatives from the Federation of Saudi Chambers, led by Secretary-General Waleed Al-Orainan, participated in the meeting aimed at exploring investment opportunities in both countries. The meeting concluded with the signing of significant partnership and investment agreements between the two sides.

Al-Orainan and the president of the National Chamber of Commerce of Malaysia, Tan Sri Dato' Soh Thian Lai, signed an agreement to enhance economic cooperation.

Moreover, private sector companies from both countries held bilateral meetings and signed trade and investment partnership agreements in multiple sectors.

EDUCATION

PIF's Egyptian investment arm to acquire shares in Social Impact Capital

Arab News Riyadh

Egypt's Social Impact Capital is set to receive a significant financial boost as it announced a conditional agreement with the Saudi Egyptian Investment Co.

Under the terms of the deal, SEIC will subscribe for new shares in SIC, the principal shareholder of CIRA Education, which is listed on the Egyptian Stock Exchange.

This financial arrangement is designed to facilitate SEIC's acquisition of additional shares in CIRA, potentially increasing SIC's total shareholding to between 75 percent and 100 percent at a price of 14 Egyptian pounds (\$0.29) per share.

This move aims to delist CIRA from the Egyptian exchange and transform it into a major regional player in the education sector.

SEIC, wholly owned by the Saudi Public Investment Fund, will play a crucial role in enhancing CIRA's market position. As one of the largest fully integrated education service providers in Egypt's private sector, CIRA stands to benefit significantly from this partnership.

The completion of this conditional agreement is contingent upon successful due diligence, securing applicable

regulatory approvals, and the execution of definitive agreements.

Following these steps, the SIC-SEIC consortium plans to extend a mandatory tender offer to CIRA's other shareholders on the Egyptian stock exchange in line with existing laws and regulations.

CIRA's initial public offering

FASTFACT

75%

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was in 2018 at a market value of 1.2 billion Egyptian pounds.

According to several reports, the company's IPO saw selling shareholders SIC alongside other minority reserve holders offer of 207.26 million shares, or 37.8 percent of CIRA, to institutional and retail investors at a price of 6 Egyptian pounds per share.

Business News



Investments in clean technology manufacturing are becoming increasingly significant and are beginning to register in broader macroeconomic data. File

IEA REPORT

Clean energy tech fueling global growth

Investments in renewable energy manufacturing up by 70% year on year in 2023

Nirmal Narayanan Riyadh
Booming investments in clean energy technology are strengthening the global economy by creating new industrial and employment opportunities, a report said.

According to the International Energy Agency, global investment in the manufacturing of five key clean energy technologies, including solar photovoltaic, wind, batteries, electrolyzers, and heat pumps, surged by 70 percent year on year in 2023 to \$200 billion.

The IEA added that investments in clean technology manufacturing are becoming increasingly significant and are beginning to register in broader macroeconomic data.

According to the report, such investments in 2023 accounted for around 0.7 percent of worldwide investment across all sectors of the economy.

"In growth terms, the contribution is even starker — in 2023, clean technology manufacturing alone accounted for around 4 percent of global GDP growth and nearly 10 percent of global investment growth," said IEA.

Solar PV meets 2030 targets

The analysis revealed that investments in solar PV manufacturing more than doubled last year to \$80 billion, while funding in battery production rose by around 60 percent to \$100 billion.

Due to the surge in investments, solar PV module manufacturing capacity today is already in line with what is needed in 2030 based on the IEA's net-zero emissions scenario.

Similarly, for battery cells, if announced projects are included, manufacturing capacity is 90 percent of the way toward meeting net-zero demand by the end of this decade, the report highlighted.

"Record output from solar PV and battery plants is propelling clean energy transitions — and

the strong investment pipeline in new facilities and factory expansions is set to add further momentum in the years ahead," said IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol. He added: "While greater investment is still needed for some technologies — and clean energy manufacturing could be spread more widely around the globe — the direction of travel is clear. Policymakers have a huge opportunity to design industrial strategies with clean energy transitions at their core."

The IEA also projected that announced projects in clean energy technology will be operational soon.

"Around 40 percent of investments in clean energy manufacturing in 2023 were in facilities that are due to come online in 2024. For batteries, this share rises to 70 percent," said IEA in the report.

Battery manufacturing
 Battery manufacturing also had a record year in 2023, with

Record output from solar PV and battery plants is propelling clean energy transitions.

Fatih Birol
 IEA executive director



FASTFACTS

\$80bn

Investments in solar PV manufacturing more than doubled last year to \$80 billion, while funding in battery production rose by around 60 percent to \$100 billion.

45%

Battery manufacturing also had a record year in 2023, with production totaling more than 800 gigawatt-hours, representing a rise of 45 percent from 2022.

80%

Clean energy manufacturing is still dominated by a few regions, with China home to 80 percent of the global solar PV module production capacity.

production totaling more than 800 gigawatt-hours, representing a rise of 45 percent from 2022.

The report highlighted that battery capacity additions also surged, with almost 780 GWh of cell manufacturing capacity added in 2023, around a quarter more than the previous year.

"Globally, battery manufacturing capacity could exceed 9 terawatt-hours by 2030 if all announcements are realized. Battery manufacturing deployment needs in 2030," added IEA.

Similarly, new manufacturing capacity for wind and electrolyzers also grew faster in 2023.

According to the agency, the existing capacity for wind could deliver nearly 50 percent of the needs in 2030, while announced projects could meet a further 12 percent. Meanwhile, capacity

additions for heat pump manufacturing slowed due to stagnation in the majority of leading markets. The report added that the existing capacity could deliver only around one-third of the needs required in 2030.

China dominates clean energy

Clean energy manufacturing is still dominated by a few regions, with China home to 80 percent of the global solar PV module production capacity.

The report highlighted that the manufacturing of battery cells could become less geographically concentrated by the end of this decade if all announced projects are materialized.

Apart from China, the US, and the EU, other countries that heavily invested in clean energy technologies in recent years were India, Japan, and South Korea.

The report also highlighted that similar investments in Africa, Central America, and South America were negligible.

Investments

The IEA revealed that cost is not the only factor that draws investments in the clean energy technology sector.

According to the think tank, several other factors, including the size of the domestic market, availability of skilled workers, and infrastructure readiness, are other crucial elements that shape the decisions of firms to invest in the sector.

"Policy interventions can therefore raise the attractiveness of investing in a given region without directly subsidizing the costs of manufacturing," said IEA.

It added: "Training and certification schemes for workers, compressing project lead times while maintaining environmental standards, enlarging domestic markets and reducing uncertainty with robust, stable climate policies are some key 'low regret' measures that can increase incentives to invest, irrespective of the role of direct incentives in industrial strategies."

BizBriefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Data

German exports up in March amid weak orders

German exports picked up in March but industrial orders fell unexpectedly, official data showed on Tuesday, reflecting a mixed picture for Europe's biggest economy.

Exports rose by 0.9 percent month on month after a decline of 1.6 percent in February, federal statistics agency Destatis said, defying expectations of a continued downward trend.

But new orders, closely watched as an indicator of future business activity, fell by 0.4 percent month on month.

ING bank analyst Carsten Brzeski said the figures published Tuesday confirmed "the return of the export-driven German growth model."

However, the weak industrial orders "spoiled the party of optimism," he said, illustrating "the high risk that the revival of the export-oriented success formula is only short-lived." **AFP**

PMI

UK construction growth hits 14-month high

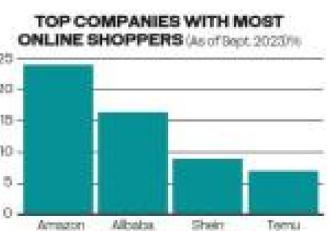
British construction companies enjoyed their fastest expansion in more than a year during April, despite a further drop in house-building, according to a survey on Tuesday that added to signs of an economic recovery from recession.

The S&P Global UK Construction Purchasing Managers' Index rose to 53 from 50.2 in March — moving further above the 50-point growth threshold and marking the fastest growth since February 2023.

The survey's gauges of commercial work and civil engineering shot higher, although the housing sector's downturn worsened in April. Recent house price surveys have pointed to a moderation in the housing market's recovery. Tuesday's PMI chimed with other business surveys that suggest Britain's economy returned to modest growth in early 2024. **Reuters**

Chart of THE DAY

As of September 2023, Amazon was the top company in the world with the highest number of online shoppers followed by Alibaba. Source: Statista



What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

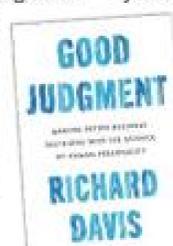
Good Judgment

RICHARD DAVIS

Organizational psychologist Richard Davis has spent decades advising business leaders and evaluating executives from some of the world's biggest companies. In "Good Judgment," the author explains what the science of personality is, and how all of us can use it to

improve our working relationships, says a review published on goodreads.com. Whether you are a novice manager

looking to hire your first assistant, an angel investor trying to choose between two startups, understanding the science of personality and how to utilize it is the key to exercising good judgment.



Safe haven

China's central bank adds more gold to its reserves

China's central bank added 60,000 troy ounces of gold to its reserves in April, official data showed on Tuesday, extending the period of consecutive purchases to 18 months despite high gold prices.

Safe haven demand, driven by geopolitical and economic uncertainty, as well as persistent central bank buying contributed to a rally in gold in March-April, with spot gold prices hitting a record of \$2,431.29 per ounce on April 12.

China held 72.80 million ounces of gold at the end of April, up from 72.74 million ounces a month before, the data showed. The value of China's gold reserves rose to \$167.96 billion from \$161.07 billion.

Demand from global central banks for gold has been elevated for two years, supporting prices. **Reuters**

FX

Japan warns of action over rapid currency moves

Japan may have to take action against any disorderly, speculative-driven foreign exchange moves, the government's top currency diplomat Masato Kanda said on Tuesday, reinforcing Tokyo's readiness to intervene again to support a fragile yen. In a sign of authorities' alarm over recent yen falls, Bank of Japan Gov. Kazuo Ueda said currency moves were among topics he discussed in a meeting with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Tuesday.

Kanda, Japan's vice minister of finance for international affairs who also oversees the country's currency policy, said the government did not need to intervene if exchange rates move steadily reflecting fundamentals.

"However, when there are excessive fluctuations or disorderly movements due to speculation ... the government may have to take appropriate action," said Kanda. **Reuters**

By enhancing access to heart health screening and promoting early detection, we aim to contribute to the efforts of Vision 2030 in reducing cardiovascular diseases and ensuring a healthier future for the region.

Mohamed Galal
Vice President of Middle East
and Pakistan at Bayer



Corporate

NEWS RELEASES FROM THE WORLD OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE

LUXURY HOSPITALITY

Leva Hotels debuts in Riyadh with five-star property

UAE-headquartered hospitality brand Leva Hotels, in collaboration with their local partners Siraj Holdings, is celebrating a significant milestone with the signing of its newest property, a luxe five-star hotel boasting 134 keys, nestled in the bustling heart of Riyadh's Al-Olaya District.

In an exclusive partnership with Princess Dr. Nouf Mohammed Fahad Al-Saud — president of Dhallyyah Group, Leva Hotels is embarking on a journey to set a benchmark for excellence in Riyadh's vibrant hospitality landscape. This move signifies Leva Hotels' evolution from a provider of four-star experiences to a brand offering luxury hospitality.

Saudi Arabia's tourism sector is undergoing a transformative phase driven by Vision 2030 — the

national economic diversification plan. With 150 million tourists expected by 2030 as stated by global real estate consultancy Knight Frank, the new hotel is strategically positioned to contribute to the Kingdom's tourism growth trajectory, with a projected 320,000 rooms envisioned as part of Saudi Arabia's ambitious tourism infrastructure development plans.

Leva Hotel Riyadh will present guests with breathtaking city vistas and a wealth of amenities, including an indoor pool, a meticulously appointed gym, two culinary destinations, and versatile event spaces comprising five meeting rooms and two grand ballrooms.

Conveniently positioned within close proximity to iconic landmarks such as the Al-Faisallah Tower and the revered King Khalid Grand



The new property, a luxe five-star hotel boasting 134 keys in Riyadh, will be developed in an exclusive partnership with Dhallyyah Group.

Mosque, the property ensures effortless accessibility to key destinations. With King Khalid International Airport a mere 31 km away, guests can anticipate seamless travel experiences, whether for business or leisure pursuits.

"We are delighted to unveil the

debut of our premier five-star property in Riyadh, marking a significant milestone in our journey," said J.S. Anand, founder and CEO of Leva Hotels. "Our partnership with Princess Nouf marks the culmination of meticulous planning and unwavering dedication to

excellence in hospitality. Leva Hotel Riyadh stands as a testament to our unwavering commitment to elevating guest experiences and setting new industry standards."

For business travelers seeking luxury and convenience, the hotel located in Al-Olaya, Riyadh's main commercial area, is an ideal choice. Its proximity to key business centers and government offices makes it perfect for professionals visiting Riyadh. Additionally, culinary enthusiasts can indulge in a variety of international flavors and healthy dishes right at the hotel.

In a statement, Princess Nouf said: "The launch of Leva Hotel Riyadh signifies a new era of luxury hospitality in Saudi Arabia. I am confident that together, we will set new standards of excellence in the hospitality industry."

Corporate Briefs

THE BEST OF THE BEST

Regional Award

stc named leading 'telecom & digital service provider'

Economy Middle East awarded stc Group the "Telecom and Digital Service Provider of the Year" at its 2024 summit. Held in Abu Dhabi on May 1, Economy Middle East brought together a number of ministers and industry experts from across the private and public sectors under the theme "Accelerating Future Growth." The program focused on addressing the key challenges and opportunities across banking, finance, technology, hospitality, tourism, and the future of mobility.

"The recognition of stc Group as the leading telecom and digital service provider of the year across the region is a testament to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's progress in driving digital transformation, domestically and worldwide," a statement said. stc Group's focus on innovative technology expands across digital infrastructure, cloud computing, cybersecurity, Internet of Things, digital payments, and digital entertainment.

Supporting Sports

American Express sponsors golf tournament in Riyadh

American Express Saudi Arabia exclusively sponsored the American Express AmCham 28th Annual Golf Tournament, which took place at Riyadh Golf Club, on May 2-3. Held in collaboration with the American Chamber of Commerce in the Kingdom, the golfing event celebrated its 28th anniversary this year.

Since its inception, the tournament has fostered networking opportunities and contributed to the Kingdom's broader sports community.

Speaking before the event, Fahad M. Al-Guthami, CEO at American Express Saudi Arabia, said: "American Express Saudi Arabia's ongoing sponsorship of American Express AmCham Annual Golf Tournament aims to support golf-related activities domestically while providing a platform for experienced players to excel. We look forward to showing why golf is better with Amex."

Transforming Tourism

Arabian Travel Market returns with 2,300 exhibitors

The 31st edition of Arabian Travel Market is currently underway, running from May 6-9 at the Dubai World Trade Centre. The event is poised to welcome more than 2,300 exhibitors and representatives from over 165 countries, with 41,000 attendees expected under the theme "Empowering Innovation: Transforming Travel Through Entrepreneurship," spotlighting a pivotal area for the travel and tourism industry.

From startups to established brands, ATM 2024 is highlighting how innovators are enhancing customer experiences, driving efficiencies and accelerating progress toward a net-zero future for the industry.

The number of participating hotel brands for ATM 2024 has increased by 21 percent year-on-year, with a 58 percent rise in new travel technology products showcased. Several new destinations have been introduced at ATM 2024, including China, Macao, Kenya, Guatemala, and Columbia, while returning countries include Spain and France, among many others.

ACTIVE LIVING

Aldar launches Dubai's first fitness-focused community 'Athlon'

Leading real estate developer Aldar Properties has unveiled Athlon, a first-of-its-kind "active living" concept in Dubai.

Meticulously designed with principles of active living throughout, Athlon is Dubai's first and only concept designed for the everyday movement of its residents. Featuring world-class amenities, as well as a program of activities exclusively curated by wellness experts, the development redefines fitness-focused living, with the goal of ensuring long-term well-being and a profound sense of community for all residents.

Developed in partnership with Dubai Holding, a diversified global investment company with investments in 31 countries, Athlon represents the joint venture's second residential project in Dubai, building upon the resounding success of Haven by Aldar, launched in late 2023.

Jonathan Emery, CEO of Aldar Development, said: "The unveiling of Athlon marks a definitive moment in our ambitious Dubai expansion strategy, building upon the tremendous success of Haven by Aldar. As we witness an unwavering demand for unparalleled residential developments in Dubai, from both local and international investors, we are confident that Athlon's groundbreaking concept will captivate a diverse range of investors and homeowners, setting a new standard for active living in the region."

Located beside Global Village,



The development is defined by a seamless connection of interactive green spaces — where athletic spaces merge with green walkways and vibrant parks.

the luxurious development is defined by a seamless connection of interactive green spaces — where athletic spaces merge with green walkways and vibrant parks — and features tailored activities to suit every age and interest.

Expertly planned around a captivating central park that forms the community's beating heart, Athlon — inspired by the Greek word for "place of contest" — features four

additional parks — Adventure, Play, Wellness, and Valley — as well as a total of seven clubhouses, weaving dedicated zones for fitness and socializing throughout the community. The community features more than 10 km of tracks, trails, and loops — with the cycling loop connected directly to Al-Qudra's iconic track — offering boundless opportunities to indulge in jogging, cycling, roller-skating,

and functional training within the community.

From activities that push limits, to those focused on well-being, sports, play, and gathering, the entire emotional and psychological spectrum of wellness has been carefully considered throughout Athlon, for the benefit of its residents, visitors, and workers. State-of-the-art amenities here include a café, massage rooms,

jacuzzi, sauna, yoga room, gym, and a kids' playground.

Surrounding the parks, the residences, featuring 1,492 units ranging from three- to four-bedroom townhouses, three- to five-bedroom standard villas, and four- to six-bedroom premium villas have been designed to maximize natural light and use colors and materials that enhance the sense of space and well-being.

HEALTHCARE

Bayer, Huma bring heart health screening tool to Kingdom

Bayer, a global life sciences company, and Huma Therapeutics Limited, a global digital health company, have announced the launch of their innovative heart health screening tool in Saudi Arabia. This marks the first global launch since the Bayer Aspirin Heart Health Risk Assessment went live in the US in 2023, and supports key objectives of the Vision 2030 national strategy of Saudi Arabia.

The Bayer Aspirin Heart Health Risk Assessment is a digital-only tool

that rapidly evaluates an individual's risk for developing cardiovascular disease over the next decade, without the need for invasive blood tests and blood pressure measurement. Huma developed the algorithm by leveraging 15+ years of longitudinal data from more than 500,000 individuals from the UK Biobank Dataset. Clinical validation of the algorithm in the European Society of Cardiology found that the Heart Health Risk Assessment had very good predictive ability when compared to the standard of care.

The launch of the Heart Health Risk Assessment in Saudi Arabia aligns with the country's healthcare sector transformation strategy, which has made the reduction of the clinical and economic burden of cardiovascular disease a national priority.

Dan Vahdat, CEO and founder of Huma, said: "Saudi Arabia is fast

DECODER

The Bayer Aspirin Heart Health Risk Assessment is a digital-only tool that rapidly evaluates an individual's risk for developing cardiovascular disease over the next decade, without the need for invasive blood tests.

becoming a world leader in digital-first healthcare. Having recently achieved Saudi FDA Class C regulatory clearance for our disease-agnostic, configurable software as a medical device platform, Huma is well-positioned to support the ambitious healthcare transformation put forward by the Ministry of Health as part of Vision 2030."

Mohamed Galal, vice president of Middle East and Pakistan at Bayer, said: "Cardiovascular diseases pose

a significant burden globally, and the Middle East is no exception. Bayer is dedicated to working in collaboration with governments and key partners to address this challenge

and improve the quality of life for the people of the Middle East. Our partnership with Huma to expand the Heart Health Risk Assessment tool to Saudi Arabia underscores our commitment to leveraging digital health solutions for preventive care. By enhancing access to heart health screening and promoting early detection, we aim to contribute to the efforts of Vision 2030 in reducing the prevalence of cardiovascular diseases and ensuring a healthier future for the region."

Maged El-Shazly, Bayer's managing director and country commercial lead consumer health in Saudi Arabia, added: "We are proud to be part of this initiative that prioritizes

prevention and early detection of cardiovascular diseases, which are among the leading causes of death in the country. We look forward to continuing our work with Huma and the Saudi Ministry of Health to further support the health and wellbeing of the Saudi population."

Cardiovascular diseases, like stroke and heart failure, are among the leading causes of death in Saudi Arabia, and Vision 2030 aims to reduce the disease burden through prevention. Bayer has set a similar intention, through the company's mission of "Health for All, Hunger for None." This launch in Saudi Arabia is an early step in the company's long-term global plan.

In addition to the Heart Health Risk Assessment, Huma and Bayer are separately supporting additional healthcare initiatives in Saudi Arabia in line of Vision 2030.

Sport News

MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

Saudi fighter Al-Qahtani faces Morocco's Bendaoud as Professional Fighters League makes MENA debut

- Iraq's Ali Taleb faces Jordanian Nawras Abzakh in the bantamweight division co-main event
- The first of four PFL MENA Season events takes place in Riyadh

Arab News Riyadh

Abdullah "The Reaper" Al-Qahtani headlines the fight card when the Professional Fighters League stages its first PFL MENA event in Riyadh on May 10.

The capital hosts the opening instalment of a four-event sport-season format featuring the region's top fighters in a groundbreaking initiative with SRJ Sports Investments.

The action at the Green Halls in Riyadh will feature fights in



the featherweight and bantamweight divisions, with the best Middle Eastern and North African fighters competing in a PFL playoff win-and-advance format.

Al-Qahtani takes on Morocco's

Taha Bendaoud in a featherweight bout, while the co-main event features Iraqi fighter Ali Taleb, who will meet Jordan's Nawras Abzakh in a bantamweight showdown.

PFL MENA FIGHT CARD

• Featherweight main event: Abdullah Al-Qahtani vs. Taha Bendaoud

• Bantamweight co-main event: Ali Taleb vs. Nawras Abzakh

• Bantamweight: Xavier Alaoui vs. Rachid El-Hazoume

• Featherweight: Islam Reda vs. Adam Meskini

• Bantamweight: Tariq Ismail vs. Jalal Al-Daaja

• Bantamweight: Elias

Boudegzame vs. Hassan Mandour

• Amateur female atomweight: Hattan Alsaif vs. Nada Faheem

• Featherweight: Maraoune Bellagout vs. Motaz Askar

• Featherweight: Ahmed Tarek vs. Abdelrahman Alhyasat

• Showcase featherweight: Mido Mohammed vs. Yazeed Hasanain

• Showcase flyweight: Malik Basahel vs. Harsh Pandya

REPEAT VICTORY

Thailand retain Jiu-Jitsu Asian Championship title

Arab News Abu Dhabi

Thailand have successfully defended their crown at the eighth Jiu-Jitsu Asian Championship in Zayed Sports City with 13 gold medals in several disciplines.

In the adult division on Sunday, the UAE continued their dominance by securing the title for the fourth consecutive year.

On the final day of the adult competition, the UAE Jiu-Jitsu National Team delivered a stellar performance, adding seven more medals to their tally. They won a total of 18 medals, including six gold, seven silver, and five bronze.

Hazza Farhan (over 94 kg), Steed Alkubaisi (85 kg) and Shamma Al-Kalbani (63 kg) secured gold for the hosts, while Faraj Alawlaqi (85 kg), Bashayer Almatrooshi (63 kg) and Abdullah Alkubaisi (94 kg) claimed silver medals. Ammar Al-Hosani (94 kg) won a bronze medal.

Thailand's outstanding performance enabled them to retain their title, earning 13 gold, seven silver, and seven bronze medals across various disciplines including Duo-Classic, Show, Jiu-Jitsu, and Jiu-Jitsu Fighting. Kazakhstan secured second place with 46 medals, including 12 gold, 18 silver, and 16 bronze.

Despite competing only in the Jiu-Jitsu discipline, the UAE team earned a commendable third-place finish overall.

The championship, held under the patronage of Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, crown prince of Abu Dhabi and chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, will run until Wednesday.

The UAE Jiu-Jitsu Federation's Vice Chairman Mohamed Salem Al-Dhaberi praised the national team.

"The Jiu-Jitsu National Team's victory in the Jiu-Jitsu Asian Championship underscores the dedication and sacrifices of our athletes and technical staff across all levels over

Action from the final day of the Jiu-Jitsu Asian Championship, with Thailand claiming the title, in Abu Dhabi. UAEJUF



the past weeks," he said in a statement on Tuesday. "Their exceptional performance throughout the three days of competition culminated in another title win, reaffirming their continental dominance over the strongest Asian teams."

Chanchai Saksuwan, president of the Jiu-Jitsu Association of Thailand, expressed his satisfaction with his team's performance.

"Our team has been performing incredibly well. This is all the work

we have done over the last few years to promote the sport and athletes in our country, which has brought the desired results. We have high hopes for the youth competitions as well."

"Jiu-jitsu is getting bigger and bigger every year in Thailand, which has hosted some of the major events within our country, and we have adopted a comprehensive approach to its advancement over the coming years. Our primary focus is on establishing national teams across

Jiu-Jitsu International Federation to bring more events to our country."

Falah Alansery, coach of the Iraqi national youth jiu-jitsu team, expressed his satisfaction with their participation.

"The Iraqi Jiu-Jitsu Federation is dedicated to promoting the sport within our country, and we have adopted a comprehensive approach to its advancement over the coming years. Our primary focus is on establishing national teams across

different age groups capable of competing on both continental and international stages."

Hazza Farhan, who scooped gold for the UAE in the Adults Jiu-Jitsu Male over-94 kg category, said: "It's truly an indescribable feeling to witness our relentless hard work culminate in success. I dedicate this medal to the wise leadership of the UAE, our fans, our dedicated technical staff, and our supportive colleagues."

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Ancelotti keeps Lunin in goal for Madrid in semifinal second leg against Bayern

AP Madrid

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti is not taking any chances in goal for the second leg of the Champions League semifinal against Bayern Munich on Wednesday, keeping Andriy Lunin as the goalkeeper despite Thibaut Courtois' return from injury last weekend.

Ancelotti said Tuesday he will stick to the plan of starting Lunin at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium even though Courtois

had an assured performance in the 3-0 win over Cadix on Saturday, which allowed Madrid to clinch the Spanish league title.

Courtois did well in his first match since tearing the ACL in his left knee in August, two days before the start of the season. He then also ruptured the meniscus in his right knee in March when he was close to making a comeback.

"Lunin will play tomorrow," Ancelotti said Tuesday. "Courtois has to take his time to get back

to his best. He played against Cadix after training very well and had an excellent game, showing security and confidence, but he has to get back to his best."

Lunin has impressed since replacing Courtois. The 25-year-old Ukrainian won the starting position over Kepa Arrizabalaga, the former Chelsea player who is Madrid's other reserve goalkeeper.

But Lunin recently made a couple of mistakes in the "clasico" against Barcelona, prompting

criticism and reigniting the discussion about who should start.

Madrid and Bayern drew 2-2 in the first leg in Munich last week. The Spanish powerhouse, seeking a record-extending 15th European title, is trying to reach its 18th European Cup final, and a ninth in the Champions League era.

Bayern, a six-time European Cup champion, are making their first semifinal appearance since winning the Champions League in 2019-20.

Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST



Golf

Gooch gets invite to PGA Championship

Talor Gooch, last year's LIV Golf League season champion, said Monday he has received a special invitation to next week's PGA Championship.

Gooch had complained about the lack of world golf ranking points for LIV's 54-hole events keeping strong players out of major tournaments.

But he appears set to show what he can do next week at Valhalla as five-time major winner Brooks Koepka, another LIV player, tries to defend his title.

"Looking forward to Valhalla next week! Thank you for the invitation@PGA See y'all there," Gooch tweeted Monday. **AFP**

Ahead of Paris Games

Olympic flame to arrive in France

The Olympic flame is set to arrive in the French port of Marseille on Wednesday in front of a crowd of up to 150,000 people in a first major test of the hugely ambitious plans for the Paris Games.

The transfer of the flame onshore from a 19th-century tall ship will mark the start of a 12,000-kilometer torch relay across mainland France and the country's far-flung overseas territories. Organizers are hoping the first public spectacle of their much-hyped "iconic" Olympics will help build excitement after a damaging row about ticket prices and ongoing concerns about security.

"It's something we've been waiting for for a very long time," chief organizer Tony Estanguet told reporters Monday. "It's here. One hundred years after the last Games, the Games are coming home." **AFP**

IndyCar mess

Penske suspends Cindric, 3 others in cheating scandal

Roger Penske on Tuesday said he has suspended the president of Team Penske along with three others for two races for their roles in the cheating scandal that has rocked IndyCar ahead of the Indianapolis 500.

Tim Cindric, who oversees all of Team Penske's operations and is the strategist for Indy 500 defending winner Josef Newgarden, is the top name to receive a two-race suspension. Also suspended was team managing director Ron Ruzewski, Newgarden engineer Luke Mason and senior data engineer Robbie Atkinson.

Ruzewski and Atkinson both work on Will Power's car — Ruzewski is his strategist — and Power is the only of the three Penske drivers not accused of any wrongdoing in the push-to-pass scandal. **AP**

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'My first day on set for "Wicked" was the most emotional day of my life,' Ariana Grande told Variety magazine of the upcoming feature adaptation of Winnie Holzman's 2003 Tony Award-winning musical.



Finally

TheSix

Summer splash

Get ready to make a splash with summer swimwear from these six regional brands.



Mayoh

Saudi swimwear brand Mayoh offers vibrant designs blending traditional Middle Eastern aesthetics with modern trends. Their collections include swimwear and beach accessories for both men and women.



Therinos

Therinos is available in stores in the UAE and delivers to Saudi Arabia online. It is known for its designs inspired by nature and the Mediterranean lifestyle.



KAI Collections

The Egyptian brand is gearing up to launch its swimwear line soon. They have been teasing glamorous one-piece swimsuits and vibrant blue bikinis.



Lanuuk

Co-founded by Ayesha Mahomed and Katleya Nielsen in 2018, Lanuuk is dedicated to creating full coverage swimwear that does not compromise on femininity and style.



Hadia Ghaleb

Egyptian influencer Hadia Ghaleb's swimwear line will get you beach ready this summer. From swimsuits to cover-ups, the entrepreneur's brand has colorful options for the daring.



Hydo Swimwear

Besides its soft fabrics, the brand creates modest swimsuits for a good cause. The label donates 10 percent of its profits to Ahi Mase Foundation, a nongovernmental organization that treats trauma and burn victims in Egypt.



CLOSE UP

Gigi Hadid, Imaan Hammam turn heads at the Met Gala

Arab News/ AP New York

A-listers at Monday's Met Gala in New York included US Dutch Palestinian catwalk star Gigi Hadid, Dutch Moroccan Egyptian model Imaan Hammam, Jennifer Lopez, Zendaya and a parade of others dressed in a swirl of flora and fauna looks on a green-tinged carpet lined with live foliage.

Hadid brought the drama in a look by the drama king himself, Thom Browne. Her white gown was adorned with 2.8 million microbeads with yellow flowers and green thorns. She was high glam in a wavy bob and crimson lips. Hammam donned a two-piece

ensemble — her outfit featured a cape, drawing inspiration from Swarovski's Gema collection, and a satin column skirt adorned with gold crystals.

Crafting the cape was an intricate process spanning 14 days. The cape incorporated over 3,000 crystals in six cuts and five vibrant hues while the skirt boasted over 100,000 crystals.

Meanwhile, Lopez went for silver leaves in a second-skin gown by Schiaparelli and Zendaya was all vamp and fantasy in a rare double appearance

Gigi Hadid, above, and Imaan Hammam attended the Met Gala in New York. Getty Images



on the steps of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Lopez went with Tiffany & Co. diamonds, including a stunning bird motif necklace with a diamond of over 20 carats at its center.

Zendaya put on her fashion face in peacock hues of blue and green, with a head piece to match and leaf accents. The look was Maison Margiela by John Galliano. She walked again to close the carpet in black Givenchy Haute Couture gown also by Galliano with a headpiece stuffed with flowers

by Alexander McQueen.

Mindy Kaling is sure to make the best-dressed lists in sand-colored swirls that towered over her head at the back. Her look was by Indian couturier Gaurav Gupta.

Penelope Cruz, meanwhile, went goth in black by Chanel. It had a bustier top and a Sleeping Beauty-like off-shoulder silhouette. There was another Sleeping Beauty-ish guest: Kendall Jenner in a Givenchy look done by Alexander McQueen in 1999.

Kendall's sister, Kylie Jenner, was in an Oscar de la Renta low-cut strapless look, a white bloom in her clicked-back updo and a train behind. Older sister Kim Kardashian tightly covered up her silver corset look with a leaf motif by Maison Margiela with a gray sweater.

DC STUDIOS

James Gunn reveals 'Superman' first look

Arab News Dubai

Fans have been granted their first look at the new Superman suit. As filming on James Gunn's "Superman" continues, the writer-director shared to his Threads account a first look at star David Corenswet in costume as the Man of Steel.

Gunn added on Threads that the first look photo "was taken on set by Jess Miglio and was entirely in-camera."

With "Superman," Corenswet marks his first time leading a major Hollywood tentpole film. The 30-year-old actor is best known for his supporting roles in two Ryan Murphy-created Netflix series, "The Politician" and "Hollywood."

Starring opposite Corenswet in "Superman" is "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" actress Rachel Brosnahan as Lois Lane. Nicholas Hoult is taking on the role of Superman's infamous villain Lex Luthor.



An image of David Corenswet as Superman.

DIRECTOR

Patty Jenkins gives Star Wars update

Arab News Dubai

"Wonder Woman" director Patty Jenkins has given an update on her Star Wars project.

In an interview with "Talking Pictures Podcast," Jenkins said that Lucasfilm has "a hard job in front of them of what's the first movie they're going to do," adding, "They have other directors who have been working, but I am now back on doing 'Star Wars: Rogue Squadron.' We'll see what happens. We need to get it to where we're both super happy with it."

The director said she would "absolutely" be happy to direct a film in the Star Wars universe as she finds "something so beautiful in this world."

"If I can do something beautiful and do something that serves that audience, I would love to do it," she added.

INTERVIEW

East meets West as Egyptian poster artist mixes pop culture

Dalal Awienat Dubai

US record producer Metro Boomin recently performed for the first time in Egypt in front of the Pyramids of Giza, with the promotional poster for the concert designed by Egyptian artist Abdelrahman Mohammed.

Mohammed's style incorporates elements from the golden age of Arab cinema in the 1940s to 1960s, redesigned with modern pop culture themes.

"I loved the idea of mixing between the Western style of art and classic Middle Eastern style of art," the artist told Arab News.



"I love when people get excited by my work and the reaction on social media has been amazing. It's also amazing to get some form of international recognition for my



work like the opportunity to design a poster for a huge rapper," he said. His latest poster features a red and black background with the pyramids and sphinx behind Metro Boomin.

Examples of posters created by Abdelrahman Mohammed. Supplied

"I used Metro's iconic black and red colors and incorporated his style as an artist. The concert is set in front of the Pyramids of Giza so it was a no-brainer to use that as a strong visual element for the poster," Mohammed told Arab News.

The 24-year-old works as a full-time graphic designer and has accumulated more than 74,000 followers on Instagram.

As a teenager, Mohammed began experimenting with design but lacked the proper equipment to explore his talent.

By 2018, he was able to get his hands on a computer and delve into the world of graphic design.

"I found myself drawn to designing posters with an old-school design. I draw inspiration from old-school movie posters, specifically ones from Arab cinema, because this certain style is not very common and no one really knows much about it," said Mohammed.

Some of his most notable pieces are fan posters for the popular series "How I Met your Mother" and blockbuster movie "Dune."

When asked, the artist could not pick his favorite work but said: "The poster I designed for 'Fight Club' is special to me and I have a lot of love for it."