

SPORT

'HAPPY' RONALDO CLINCHES TOP SCORER AWARD

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OPINION

WILL KSA-IRAN TIES BE AFFECTED BY RAISI'S DEMISE?

By Hassan Almustafa Page 10



SAUDI ARABIA

US, AUSTRALIA ENVOYS LAUD TRAILBLAZING SAUDI WOMEN

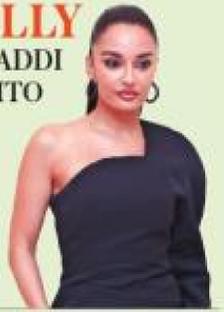
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& FINALLY

AMINA MUADDI MARKS BRITO CAPSULE LAUNCH

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WEDNESDAY, May 29, 2024
Dul Qaada 21, 1445
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ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

Since 1975

MIDDLE EAST WAR

Israel rolls tanks into the heart of Rafah

Three states recognize Palestine

Arab News Jeddah

Israeli tanks rolled into the heart of Rafah in southern Gaza in Tuesday as three European states formally recognized Palestine as a state, further isolating Israel on the world stage.

In an evacuation tent camp west of Rafah, Israeli shelling killed at least 21 Palestinians, 12 of them women. The attack in Al-Mawasi took place in an area Israel had designated a humanitarian zone and urged civilians in Rafah to move there.

In central Rafah, Israeli tanks and armored vehicles mounted with machineguns approached Al-Awda mosque, a city landmark. Witnesses said the vehicles appeared to be remotely operated and there was no sign of troops in or near them.

International opposition to Israel's three-week Rafah offensive had earlier turned to outrage after an attack on Sunday set off a blaze in a tent camp in the Tel Al-Sultan area of the city, killing at least 45 people.

Residents said Tel Al-Sultan was still being bombarded on Tuesday. "Tank shells are falling everywhere. Many families have fled their houses in western

Rafah under fire throughout the night," one said.

Meanwhile Israel reacted with anger after Spain, Ireland and Norway officially recognized a Palestinian state on Tuesday. It means 146 of the 193 member states of the UN now recognize Palestine.

"It's the only way of advancing toward what everyone recognizes as the only possible solution to achieve a peaceful future, one of a Palestinian state that lives side by

NUMBER

36,096

Palestinians have been killed in Israel's offensive on Gaza.

side with the Israeli state in peace and security," Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said. Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris said the aim of the move was to "keep the miracle of peace alive."

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz described the recognition as a victory for Hamas, and Israel recalled its ambassadors from Madrid, Dublin and Oslo.

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• Opinion: Osama Al-Sharif Page 9

King chairs Cabinet meeting after recovery



King Salman headed a Cabinet meeting on Tuesday after he underwent medical treatment for lung inflammation. He chaired the meeting via video link alongside Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The king thanked the Saudi people for their wishes and prayers for his health.

SPA

NATION IN TURMOIL

New Lebanon drive to send Syrians home

Beirut defies EU warning of 'no safe, voluntary, and dignified return'

Najia Houssari Beirut

Lebanon on Tuesday stepped up its push to repatriate Syrian refugees despite a warning from the EU that there was "no safe, voluntary, and dignified return."

A new Lebanese Cabinet committee led by Deputy Prime Minister Saadeh Al-Shami will negotiate directly on the issue with the Assad regime in Damascus. Prime Minister Najib Mikati

said Lebanon had a "clear and specific action plan" and wanted safe areas to be found in Syria so the return process could get underway as soon as possible.

He urged ministers from other countries hosting Syrian refugees, including Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt, to agree on a plan to communicate with the Syrian government and "support early recovery in Syria."

There are at least 2 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and

hostility toward them is growing.

Hate speech has escalated and they face work restrictions.

Lebanese security forces have been evicting Syrian families from illegal settlements in Mount Lebanon and the north, and about 1,000 Syrians in Koubba in the Batroun region were evicted on Tuesday on orders from Ramzi Nohra, the local governor.

International donors pledged nearly \$8 billion on Monday to

help Syrian refugees, but EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell rejected repatriation.

"There is no safe, voluntary, and dignified return for refugees to Syria at present," he said.

"Voluntary return must be voluntary; refugees should not be coerced. The situation in Syria today is more perilous than a year ago."

Spotlight Page 3

The Brief

'PILGRIMS' HEALTH

A health awareness campaign for Hajj pilgrims has been launched. The topics covered include heat exhaustion, dehydration and food poisoning. **P4**

SAUDI MEDICS

A 22-member medical team from Saudi Arabia is in Indonesia to train doctors in advanced cardiac procedures. **P8**

GULF SECTOR

The value of the healthcare sector in the Gulf Cooperation region is projected to reach \$135 billion by 2027. **P11**

'FILLING A GAP'

Hunt for young Saudis with stars in their eyes

Training program to provide skills they need to work in Kingdom's growing film industry

Jasmine Bager Dhahran

A home-grown Saudi company is training hundreds of young people in the skills they need to work in the Kingdom's growing film industry.

Studio Production Training, run by the Saudi film producer Hajar Al-Naim, identifies "below-the-line" talent — the cinematographers, sound technicians, editors and specialists in makeup, hair and wardrobe who play vital roles in making a movie.



Saudi producer Hajar Al-Naim sees the film sector as a thriving hub to continue telling Saudi stories. Supplied

The company's first collaboration was with streaming giant Netflix, and trained professionals from its program ended up on Netflix series. About 300 trainees have come through the scheme.

"We're filling a gap in the industry where we can take all the participants who want to join the film industry and take them through our ecosystem from education into job placements," Al-Naim told Arab News.

"We work to build a bridge between young talents and

expert filmmakers to develop the industry. We are the first of its kind in the Kingdom and I'm so glad that we're making history!"

Detailed report Page 5

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No. 175 • 16 pages



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I met with Spain's Minister of Economy, Commerce and Business Carlos Cuerdo and we affirmed our aspiration to strengthen commercial and economic cooperation between our countries.

Princesses Halfa Al-Mogrin
Saudi ambassador to Spain



Radars

KSA today



Jeddah Sculpting workshop

This workshop by Passion Art Center will introduce you to the tools and techniques involved in sculpting and teach you how to shape, bake, and glaze clay. Join through the Halla Yalla app.



Dhahran Play Hub

Experience Saudi gaming culture with your friends and family at Ithra's Children's Museum. Book through the Ithra app.



Riyadh Nofa Park

Book a tour at the beautiful Nofa Wildlife Park, where you can see animals up close from the safety of a caged jeep. More details are available on the Halla Yalla app.



Dhahran Water Challenge

The Ithra Water Challenge is back as summer is only a few weeks away. Enjoy fun water-based challenges and activities — and a special surprise to end your day. The event runs until May 31.

The Register

THE PICTURES THAT MARK THE DAY



Saudi Minister of Economy and Planning Faisal Al-Ibrahim met Andreas Kugi, the scientific director of the Austrian Institute of Technol-

ogy, during a visit to Vienna on Tuesday. The parties discussed future areas of collaboration and recent developments in the technology industry, the

Economy Ministry reported on X. Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Austria Dr. Abdullah Tawlah was also present at the meeting.

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



56TH BIRTHDAY Kylie Minogue

Famed Australian singer Kylie Minogue turned 56 on May 28.

The singer took to Instagram and X to celebrate her birthday with her fans, and shared a post in which she thanked her parents and siblings for being "the best."

She also thanked all her fans and followers for the loving birthday messages they sent her.

"It's my birthday! Thanks Mum and Dad ... you're the best! Thanks brother and sister. Also, the best! And thanks for all the beautiful messages from around the world. I love you!" she wrote in the caption. Fans of the "Padam Padam" singer rushed to X to wish her a lovely 56th birthday.

'DOING GREAT' Mike Tyson

Former world heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson had a health scare on a flight from Miami to Los Angeles earlier this week.

According to the 57-year-old's representatives, Tyson was tended to by paramedics after his ulcer flared up causing him to become drowsy and nauseous just half an hour before landing in LA.

"Thankfully Mr. Tyson is doing great ... he is appreciative to the medical staff that were there to help him," the representatives said in a statement.

Some media outlets reported that Tyson's medical emergency was the reason behind the flight's delayed departure, but his representatives denied the

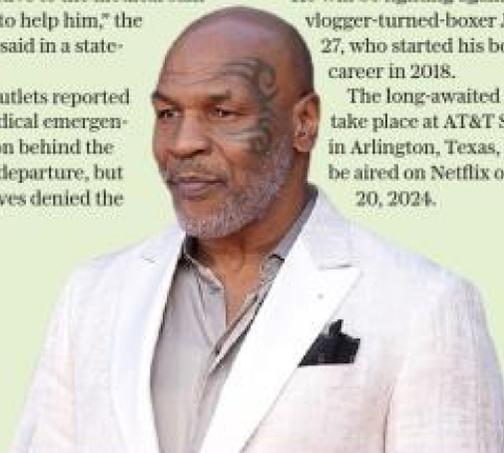
rumors, because he was already on the plane when the medical issue occurred.

"It's false reporting that his medical attention caused the flight delay," they said in the statement. "This two-hour delay was due to an air conditioning issue on the aircraft."

Tyson is currently preparing for his first return to the ring in years. He told "The Damon Elliot Show" in April that he had stopped smoking in order to get healthier.

He will be fighting against the vlogger-turned-boxer Jake Paul, 27, who started his boxing career in 2018.

The long-awaited fight will take place at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, and will be aired on Netflix on July 20, 2024.



Today's Number

960k

Riyadh Municipality nurseries produced around 960,000 plants for cultivation throughout the capital during the first quarter of 2024, as part of efforts to improve the landscape and reduce pollution and carbon emissions in line with Saudi Green Initiative, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

Who's Who



Mansour Al-Babtain

Mansour Al-Babtain is the vice president of commercial partnerships and liaison at the World Defense Show.

A former fighter pilot, Al-Babtain has extensive experience working with high-level government figures and private-sector leaders.

He joined the WDS in April 2021. His current role is to oversee the sales, sponsorship and customer experience divisions, in addition to maintaining his liaison responsibilities with Saudi government entities including the General Authority for Military Industries and international delegations.

The department links WDS business owners with the appropriate government entities, ensures the security of the location and people prior to, during and following the show, and manages WDS committees.

From the initial show license to security support, Al-Babtain effectively manages the challenges of ensuring the smooth entry and exit of military supplies, technology, and personnel.

Having graduated from King Faisal Air Academy, he served 12 years in the Royal Saudi Air Force as a fighter pilot, squadron leader and tactical intelligence officer before moving to the Ministry of Defense and later to several government entities.

TheRegion

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Jeddah

- Big Eid Exhibition showcases everything you need for Eid Al-Adha. The event features family-friendly goods, gift items, Arabic food, toys, and games, combining a consumer show with a traditional celebration. It will take place at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre's Hall

4 from May 30 to June 16. More details on adnec.ae.

- Discover the fascinating world of spider silk at the Golden Spider Silk exhibition, which explores the rare material produced by Madagascar's indigenous golden orb-weaver spiders. Held at the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar, the exhibition

will run until July 6. Check mia.org.qa for more information.

- Enjoy the ultimate virtual reality gaming experience at Eva Bahrain, Manama, and get transported to massive arenas where you will face off against other players in epic battles. The experience will run until July 31. For tickets and more details, visit calendar.bh.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

May 29	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghreb	Isha
Makkah	4:12	5:38	12:19	3:34	6:59	8:29
Madinah	4:4	5:33	12:19	3:42	7:06	8:36
Riyadh	3:35	5:04	11:51	3:14	6:38	8:08
Abha	4:10	5:33	12:08	3:27	6:42	8:12
Dammam	3:16	4:47	11:38	3:05	6:28	7:58

President von der Leyen has put her desire to curb the flow of refugees before the EU's obligations to protect refugees.

Aya Majzoub
Middle East and North Africa deputy director, Amnesty International



Spotlight

RESEARCH & STUDIES
THE MIDDLE EAST, BETTER EXPLAINED

ARAB NEWS

MIDDLE EAST

Commitment or convenience?

EU aid in exchange for restricting refugees flows may make it harder for Syrians in Lebanon to overcome hostility

Anan Tello London

Since the EU announced a €1 billion (\$1.087 billion) aid package to assist Syrians in Lebanon, in exchange for Lebanese authorities agreeing to curb the flow of migrants to Europe, hostility toward the Syrian community in Lebanon has, by most accounts, continued to rise.

Earlier this month, Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, announced that the EU would allocate a substantial package of aid to crisis-racked Lebanon for the 2024-27 period to help it cope with its substantial refugee population.

Of this amount, €736 million would be allocated to supporting refugees, while €264 million would go toward training the Lebanese armed forces to tackle illegal migration to Europe.

Von der Leyen said the aid would bolster border management, assist reform to the banking sector, and support basic services to the most vulnerable communities, including refugees, amid a crippling economic crisis in Lebanon and a surge in the number of irregular boat arrivals in Cyprus from Lebanon.

The announcement came after Cyprus, an EU member state, voiced concern about the number of migrant boats arriving on its shores last month. The majority were Syrians arriving from Lebanon.

This sharp increase in arrivals prompted the Cypriot government in mid-April to suspend the processing of asylum applications from Syrians. Nicosia also called on its EU partners to step up efforts to aid Lebanon.

However, von der Leyen's announcement appears to have emboldened Lebanese authorities to step up their crackdown on Syrians, human rights monitor Amnesty International said on Monday.

Within a week of the announcement, on May 8, Lebanon's General Security announced a new clampdown on Syrians, further tightening work and residency restrictions and ramping up raids, evictions, arrests and deportations.

More than 400 refugees were repatriated to Syria on May 14, according to Amnesty International, which, alongside other rights bodies, concluded that "Syria remains unsafe for return, and refugees are at risk of human rights violations."

"Once again, President von der Leyen has put her desire to curb the flow of refugees at any cost into Europe before the EU's obligations to protect refugees fleeing conflict or persecution," Aya Majzoub, Amnesty International's deputy director for the Middle East and North Africa, said in a statement.

"This appears to have



Displaced Syrians in Lebanon, main, are in a position where they have to pick between two ugly options: Staying in Lebanon or going back to Syria. AFP file

emboldened Lebanese authorities to intensify their ruthless campaign targeting refugees with hateful discourse, forced deportations, and stifling measures on residency and labor."

Lebanon is home to about 1.5 million Syrian refugees. Anti-Syrian sentiment in the country has intensified since the onset of the financial crisis in 2019, pushing 80 percent of the Lebanese population below the poverty line.

The hostility and suspicion, stoked by the rhetoric of senior politicians, boiled over in mid-April when a senior Lebanese Forces official was reportedly abducted and killed in a Syrian area near the Lebanese border.

Lebanese mobs indiscriminately attacked Syrians and vandalized their properties, while local authorities and self-appointed community groups evicted many

EU recently announced a €1bn aid package for Lebanon, far right, in exchange for Beirut agreeing to curb the flow of migrants, right, to Europe. AP/AFP file



IN NUMBERS

1/3

Lebanese citizens in five governorates who were living in poverty in 2022.

90%

Syrians in Lebanon who were living below the poverty line in 2022.

2,000

Syrians who arrived in Cyprus by sea in the first quarter of 2024.

from their homes and businesses.

The EU-Lebanon deal augurs poorly for acceptance of displaced Syrian refugees, rights groups say.

Wadih Al-Asmar, president of the Lebanese Center for Human Rights, told Arab News he has never witnessed "this amount of pressure on Syrian refugees in Lebanon, where all the security services are participating."

He believes the hostility toward Syrians is "purely for electoral reasons" and that von der Leyen has "opened a Pandora's box in the region, especially in Lebanon."

Syrian refugees are among the most vulnerable communities in Lebanon, with the majority unable to afford basic essentials and more than half of households living in shelters that are either overcrowded or below minimum standards for habitability, according to UN agencies.

Karam Shaar, a senior fellow at the New Lines Institute, said displaced Syrians in Lebanon "are always in a position where they have to pick between two ugly options: Staying in Lebanon or going back to Syria."

"It's the balance between the ugliness of these two factors that determines whether they decide to stay in Lebanon or go back to Syria," he told Arab News.

Until now, the next

best option for Syrians was onward travel to a third country — ideally an EU member state. However, since Cyprus stopped processing Syrian refugee applications, options have narrowed further.

"The option to leave Lebanon and go to Europe has also been made much, much harder because it's much more difficult to go to Greece from Lebanon instead of going to Cyprus, which is much, much closer," Shaar said.

Cyprus is a mere 185 km from Lebanon — taking about 10 hours to reach by boat. More than 2,000 Syrians arrived by sea in the first quarter of 2024. Whether the new EU funding for Lebanon will reduce those numbers remains to be seen.

Shaar said the money allocated to support Syrians in Lebanon is "relatively small." Furthermore, owing to the routine



misappropriation of funding by Lebanese authorities, little is likely to reach those most in need.

"If you think of the 3RP (Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan), which is the main UN-sponsored plan for helping Lebanon cope with the Syrian refugee crisis, the sums that Lebanon has been receiving per year are actually higher than the amount that the EU has announced — if you look at the elements relating specifically to Syrians," he said.

"Unfortunately, in light of aid diversion, which is the case in Lebanon, in Syria — in most corrupt countries to varying extents — little of that amount will actually find its way to Syrians."

"However, I think part of those amounts is urgently needed, especially in the field of education and the support toward the UNHCR."

Co-led by the UN Refugee Agency and the UN Development Programme, the 3RP provides a platform for humanitarian and development partners to respond to the Syrian crisis at the regional and host country level.

The 3RP estimated in this year's Regional Strategic Overview report that Lebanon, the country with the highest proportion of refugees in the world relative to its population, will need \$2.7 billion in financial aid to meet humanitarian needs in 2024.

Last year, Lebanon received \$1.8 billion, representing a mere 31 percent of the required \$5.9 billion, according to the same report. Al-Asmar of the Lebanese Center for Human Rights believes the latest EU aid package will have "more negative than positive effect on Lebanon."

On the one hand, he said, the €1 billion "is not new money — this was the support that was planned for the next four years." It was primarily a "marketing or packaging announcement," he said. On the other hand, "this support, instead of being welcomed by Lebanese politicians, was somehow a trigger to initiate one of the biggest hate campaigns against Syrian refugees."

Rather than shouldering the responsibility for the country's predicament, including the ongoing financial crisis, Lebanese politicians are instead making scapegoats of the Syrians, he said.

"€1 billion for Lebanon over four years means €250 million per year," which "is nothing," especially when considering the "number of refugees we have in Lebanon."

Article 3 of the UN Convention against Torture stipulates that "no state party shall expel, return ('refouler') or extradite a person to another state where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture."



Field tours by health personnel target places frequented by Hajj pilgrims, including hotels in Madinah. SPA

LIFETIME JOURNEY

Health awareness campaign educates Hajj pilgrims

Indonesian doctor joins efforts to ensure pilgrim well-being

Arab News Riyadh

A health awareness campaign in several languages has been launched by the Madinah Health Cluster for Hajj pilgrims, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Tuesday.

The campaign is being run in coordination with the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah and the Madinah Development Authority.

The initiative involves 97 smart display screens at locations including Prince Mohammad bin Abdulaziz International Airport, the Haramain High Speed Railway station, shuttle buses, pilgrim reception centers, malls and the health cluster's facilities.

It also uses various media and social platforms to publish posts in English, French, Urdu, Persian and Arabic. Field tours by health personnel target places frequented by pilgrims, including hotels.

Messages cover issues such as



Indonesian Dr. Indah Melina, a beneficiary of the Makkah Route Initiative, is raising awareness among Hajj pilgrims about the importance of maintaining good health. SPA

HIGHLIGHT

All Hajj campaigns have a medical team with doctors, nurses and technicians who monitor pilgrims' health. Hajj this year is expected to start on June 14 and end on June 19.

the dangers of direct sun exposure, heat exhaustion, dehydration, food poisoning, first aid, personal hygiene and other health topics.

Meanwhile, Indonesian Dr. Indah Melina, a beneficiary of the Makkah Route Initiative,

is raising awareness among pilgrims about the importance of maintaining good health.

At Surabaya airport, she walked among other beneficiaries of the initiative, sharing health tips with Indonesian pilgrims.

"I was thrilled to be selected as part of the medical team for the Hajj season. It has always been my dream to serve Indonesian pilgrims and ensure their safety."

Melina highlights the need for pilgrims to carry identification cards and acknowledges the efforts of the Kingdom's authorities to ensure health security.

INNOVATION

Kawin incubator program looks to empower Saudi culinary talents

Arab News Riyadh

The Culinary Arts Authority is hosting the fourth Kawin incubator program from June 11 to Aug. 15. The initiative aims to boost culinary skills by supporting talented chefs and entrepreneurs in the food and beverage sector, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Tuesday.

The incubator consists of three main programs. The first is the

Kawin Culinary Arts Incubator, featuring six courses. Each course starts with a three-day virtual competition for 80 participants, followed by a two-month, in-person incubation phase for 40 projects, concluding with the graduation of 120 projects.

Participants must be Saudi nationals — aged 18 or above — and passionate about the culinary arts and able to attend the entire program. They must

also have an innovative recipe or product.

Kawin, which means create, aims to raise standards in the culinary sector by nurturing startups with innovative concepts, fostering a supportive entrepreneurial environment.

It aims to empower both male and female entrepreneurs in the culinary arts while enhancing the Kingdom's global reputation in gastronomy.

TheSpace

KSA makes significant strides in protecting digital infrastructure

DR. BADER BIN SAUD



A recent study revealed that Saudi companies are integrating artificial intelligence technologies into their cyberdefenses after incidents of electronic hacking, costing an estimated \$588,000 in losses in 2023, according to American company Cisco. While this figure may seem small, global hacking losses reached \$3 trillion in 2015 and are projected to soar to \$10.5 trillion this year and next.

Cybersecurity threats in Saudi Arabia primarily involve phishing, ransomware, and social engineering. Hackers are employing advanced techniques such as ChatGPT, machine learning, and automation, as evidenced by the development of a variant of the 2019 malware Infostealer, facilitated by ChatGPT, according to cybersecurity company Check Point.

Saudi Arabia's National Cybersecurity Authority and its partners have made significant strides in protecting the Kingdom's digital infrastructure, reflected in its high ranking in the World Bank's digital maturity index, rising from 46th in 2017 to second in 2023.

A correlation exists between reduced corruption and digital transformation, with the least corrupt countries like Denmark, Finland and New Zealand leading in digital transformation. Conversely, the most corrupt nations, such as Chad, Afghanistan and Haiti, lag in digital adoption. Electronic transactions offer greater security against tampering compared to paper-based

systems, but any disruption can result in substantial financial losses.

According to local statistics in 2023, more than 45 million government transactions are conducted monthly through the Nafath platform in the Kingdom. There are over 430 applications and platforms linked to it, posing a challenge. If one of them is breached by cybercriminals, they can access sensitive and important information and data.

The consequences of a major cyberattack on Saudi Arabia could be devastating. In 2022, Costa Rica declared a state of emergency

after a cyberattack crippled a range of government services and caused millions of dollars in economic losses.

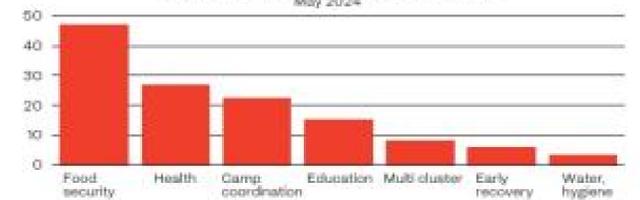
As we approach the Hajj season, the Hajj processes are largely dependent on digital systems. Disrupting them could lead to operational chaos, airport congestion, problems with pilgrim movement, and data leaks of citizens, residents,

and foreign pilgrims. The best solution is to establish specialized cybersecurity forces at the national level, using a combination of intellect and muscle to track down hackers and fortify systems, in addition to enacting legislation to criminalize cybercrime and treat offenders as corrupters on Earth, on par with highwaymen and drug smugglers, and punish them accordingly.

Dr. Bader bin Saud is a columnist for Al-Riyadh newspaper, a media and knowledge management researcher, and the former deputy commander of the Special Forces for Hajj and Umrah in Saudi Arabia. For full version, log on to www.arabnews.com/thespace

The Day's FIGURES

KSRELIEF PROJECTS IN PALESTINE



Source: ksrelief.org

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Narcotics bust Saudi authorities seize 4.7m Captagon pills

Maj. Marwan Al-Hazmi, spokesperson for the Saudi General Directorate of Narcotics Control, announced that authorities seized over 4.7 million Captagon tablets hidden in a shipment of concrete blocks, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Tuesday.

The shipment's recipients, a Yemeni resident and a displaced expatriate, were arrested in the Riyadh region, according to SPA.

The suspects have been referred to the Public Prosecution and initial legal procedures have been taken against them. **AN Riyadh**

Border control Recruiters to face heavy fines for visa violations

The General Directorate of Public Security announced that recruiters who postpone reporting the departures of employees as soon as their entry visas expire will be subject to a fine of about SR50,000 (\$13,300), imprisonment for up to six months, and deportation of recruits if they are expatriates.

The directorate called for reporting residency, work and border security regulation violations by dialing the numbers (911) in Makkah, Riyadh and the Eastern Province, and (999) in the rest of the Kingdom. **AN Riyadh**

Arab League meeting Experts to discuss AI, intellectual property

Intellectual property and artificial intelligence will be discussed at a regional meeting of the Arab League's Intellectual Property and Competitiveness Department on Wednesday.

The virtual gathering will include experts from the World Intellectual Property Organization and governmental intellectual property offices from several Arab nations.

Key topics on the agenda are optimizing intellectual property frameworks for AI development, the impact of AI on patenting processes, and legislative efforts to address legal challenges. **AN Riyadh**

News Saudi Arabia

CHANGEMAKER

Going above and beyond: Hajar Al-Naim on shepherding local film talent

Saudi producer's training company nurtures below-the-line creatives

Jasmine Bager Dhahran

It has been a busy month for Hajar Al-Naim, a Saudi film producer paving the way for creatives by building a road map for the region's burgeoning film industry.

Her company, Studio Production Training, recently made its third appearance at the 77th Cannes International Film Festival in France, taking its Saudi-centric model to new heights.

After earning her master's degree from Loyola Marymount University in the US, Al-Naim returned to her homeland to build the infrastructure that budding local and international filmmakers previously lacked in the Kingdom.

Her company, launched in 2021, connects filmmakers with qualified below-the-line (BTL) talent, the support and film crew teams working behind the scenes on productions. Cinematographers, sound technicians, editors and specialists in makeup, hair and wardrobes play a vital role in film. High-level creative roles, such as screenwriters, directors and producers as well as the principal cast are known as above-the-line talent.

At SPT, which is headquartered in Riyadh, Al-Naim's custom program provides training, mentoring, production resources and access to networks within the industry. "We're on a mission to cultivate a robust infrastructure



With ample opportunities opening for aspiring filmmakers, Hajar Al-Naim sees the film sector as a thriving hub to continue telling Saudi stories. Supplied



of BTL talent in Saudi Arabia," Al-Naim told Arab News.

"The main goal of the fund is to inspire and attract the new generation to join the field of filmmaking, and we will work to train and develop them through our partnerships and initiatives," Al-Naim said. "We seek to celebrate the voices of professionals in this sector, and we work to build a bridge between young talents and expert filmmakers to develop the industry and enhance the interaction between them, and bring them and their work to the world.

"We are the first of its kind in the Kingdom and I'm so glad that we're making history, starting from our training program that we're doing with the Cultural Fund," she added.

"We're filling in the gap in the industry where we can take all the participants who want to join the film industry and take them through our ecosystem from education into job placements."

The short courses Al-Naim curates with experts in the field are held in Riyadh. From there, SPT recruits

working professionals to bring them on to film sets. Al-Naim said that professionals of all stripes can find a niche in the industry.

"We want people from different industries to realize that they can use their skills in the film industry. The interior designers, the fashion designers, accountants, project managers ... they can use their education and their degree and put it toward the industry," she added.

The training programs are meant to be intense. Her team curates each course — which usually lasts two to five days — with an instructor, focusing on three pillars: Knowledge, mindset and safety.

"We're trying to apply a high-caliber, world-class kind of training, because we want those international productions, when they come to the region, to not have to bring their whole crew to Saudi Arabia. They use our crew," she added.

In May, the Saudi Film Festival returned to the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture, or Ithra, in Dhahran. Al-Naim's company offered prizes to specific filmmakers, all of whom were nominated for the Saudi Film Festival awards, from a

Studio Production Training provides training, mentoring, production resources and access to networks within the Saudi film industry.

●● We want people from different industries to realize that they can use their skills in the film industry. Hajar Al-Naim Saudi film producer

fund of SR100,000 (\$26,600).

Aside from her CEO duties at SPT, Al-Naim is also a founding member of the Saudi Film Council, which launched in 2018, and the founder and chairwoman of Her Films, a Saudi nonprofit dedicated to the elevation and empowerment of women in film.

"A lot of filmmakers appreciate all the initiatives that we're doing because they know that it's coming from me ... they know that it's coming from someone who struggled like them. They appreciate the experience that I went through to be able to step back and try to support them," she said.

Al-Naim's face lights up when she speaks about her team. "I met Steve (Stephen Andrew Martin) when I was in (graduate) school. I've done my first movie with him, so we have a lot in common — and we love supporting others. And it's interesting for an American white guy who comes from Texas originally to share the same values with me," she said of her co-founder.

Martin brings his connections, expertise and passion to SPT.

"Communication is the key in our organization," Al-Naim added, highlighting the importance of having a clear vision for the organization. "We have a document called 'Compass,' and we try to identify where we're going, why we're doing what we're doing, how can we reach the right audience, and how can we leave them with the best feeling and experience."

SPT's first collaboration was with streaming giant Netflix as part of a program. Trained professionals that went through the program ended up on Netflix series.

SPT training sessions, for professionals and beginners, are held in-person at the Riyadh location, with class sizes kept to a maximum of 15 people.

BEYOND BARRIERS

US and Australia envoys laud Saudi women for social, economic achievements

Lama Alhamawi Riyadh

The envoys of Australia and the US have praised women in Saudi Arabia for their work and achievements across all sectors of the country's economy.

In a recent interview with Arab News, the US' Deputy Chief of Mission Alison Dilworth and Australia's Deputy Head of Mission Kim Ralston reflected on their experiences working alongside Saudi Arabia's women and witnessing firsthand their perseverance.

"I have been incredibly impressed with the Saudi women I have met here in the Kingdom. From tech and finance to the arts, to diplomacy, Saudi women are achieving new heights, and I am proud to work with them," Dilworth said.

Each month, in partnership with other embassies, the US Embassy hosts a Women's Majlis to celebrate women's accomplishments, experiences and share expertise in a private and intimate setting.

"Through the Women's Majlis, a series of monthly events

co-hosted with the Australian, New Zealand, German, and British embassies, and with HRH Ambassador Reema bint Bandar, we have explored the themes of 'Women in Defense,' 'Women in Tech,' 'Women in the Visual Arts,' 'Women in Poetry' and 'Women in Shariah Law,'" Dilworth said.

The idea of the majlis was created in 2019 in a collaboration between the American, Australian, British and Canadian embassies in Abu Dhabi.

"We work with Saudi women across all aspects of our work. As an example, Australia and Saudi Arabia enjoy close relations in agriculture and food security, with embassy staff working closely with female counterparts to promote trade and remove barriers," Ralston said.

Since her arrival in the Kingdom in 2023, Ralston has worked with Saudi women in the public and private sectors, sports, and the arts.



Each month, in partnership with other embassies, the US Embassy hosts a Women's Majlis to celebrate women's accomplishments and experiences. Supplied / US Embassy

Through sharing our stories, and hearing from others, we all add to the journey of women throughout the world who want to achieve and to make the world a better place for all.

Allison Dilworth US Deputy Chief of Mission

Ralston said "Saudi women are intelligent and driven. They are open, warm, and passionate about their work. I have thoroughly enjoyed hearing about their goals and objectives, which are not unlike my own."

"I have particularly enjoyed sharing experiences with women on social policy matters. The talented women at the Quality of Life Program have inspired me as they encourage culture, entertainment, sports, and tourism to flourish in Saudi Arabia," Ralston added.

She explained how impressed she was by the Kingdom's focus on ensuring women are represented in areas where they have not traditionally worked, including the military.

When asked how she would characterize the ambitions of the Kingdom's females, Dilworth said: "Saudi women never stop reaching for the next level."

She said that when she asks Saudi women about what they will do next, they immediately say: "I want to run the business, become the next minister, or set the next record."

The most recent majlis took place in Riyadh on May 21 at the German Embassy and focused on women in the technology sector.

Dilworth said these events build cooperation between women from Saudi Arabia and the US. "I have witnessed the achievements of US women working in diplomacy over my 27-year career, and I am proud to be a female diplomat."

News Middle East

SOLIDARITY

Arab League chief calls for wider recognition of Palestine

Gobran Mohamed Cairo

The Arab League secretary-general said in Brussels that Israel's aggression in the Gaza Strip could undermine any chance for peace and extinguish hopes of achieving a two-state solution, posing significant risks not only for the Middle East but also for international security.

Ahmed Aboul Gheit issued the warning while taking part in a series of Arab League meetings with European foreign ministers and other officials on the Palestinian-Israeli situation in light of the conflict in Gaza.

Hossam Zaki, Abdul Gheit's assistant, said that the meetings in Brussels on Sunday and Monday discussed practical

political solutions to end the fighting and subsequent steps to ensure peace.

During his discussions with European ministers, Aboul Gheit highlighted the need for more European countries to recognize an independent Palestinian state based on the June 4, 1967, borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

This would signal to Palestinian people that their right to independence is respected by Western countries, along with other nations in the world, he said.

Aboul-Gheit thanked the foreign ministers of Ireland, Norway, and Spain for their decision to recognize an independent Palestinian state.

Aboul Gheit, along with the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, and Bahrain, urged European countries to move beyond merely discussing the feasibility of the two-state solution.

They advocated for clear and concrete steps to implement it on the ground, addressing the root causes of the conflict, Zaki said.

RACE AGAINST TIME

WHO condemns 'abrupt halt' to medical evacuations from Gaza

More people will die waiting for treatment, warns organization's spokeswoman

AFF Geneva

More people will die in Gaza because medical evacuations from the Palestinian territory have halted since Israel launched its offensive in Rafah three weeks ago, the World Health Organization said on Tuesday.

The WHO has long been pleading with Israel to allow more critically ill and wounded people to leave Gaza.

Thousands of Gazans are estimated to require urgent medical evacuation but few have been able to leave the besieged territory since war on Oct. 7 after the Hamas attacks on Israel.

WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris said that since Israel launched a military offensive in the densely crowded southern city of Rafah in early May, "there's been an abrupt halt to all medical evacuations."

She warned that the cut-off obviously meant more people will die waiting for treatment.

Before October 7, between 50 and 100 people left the enclave every day for treatment not available in the territory, including for cancer.

"Those people didn't go away simply because conflict started, so they all still need a referral," Harris told reporters in Geneva.

Since services in Gaza have been disastrously disrupted by the conflict, far more people need to leave for treatment they used to access inside Gaza, like chemotherapy or dialysis, she said.

In addition, thousands now need to evacuate after suffering severe injuries in the war.



The mother of Palestinian toddler Khaled Abu Samaha weeps as attempts to save his life continue at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the central Gaza Strip after he was badly injured in Israel's bombardment. AFP

"If they don't get the treatment sadly they die," she commented.

WHO estimates that there are now typically "around 10,000 people who need to be evacuated

... to receive the much-needed medical treatment elsewhere," Harris said.

They include more than 6,000 trauma-related patients and at least 2,000 patients with chronic conditions, like cancer, she said.

Since medical evacuations halted on May 8, an additional 1,000 critically ill and wounded patients have been added to that list, Harris said.

HIGHLIGHTS

• WHO estimates that there are now 'around 10,000 people who need to be evacuated ... to receive the treatment elsewhere.'

• They include more than 6,000 trauma-related patients and at least 2,000 patients with chronic conditions, like cancer.

Before the cut-off, WHO had received approval from Israel for 5,800 medical evacuations — about half of the number it had requested since the war began.

Of the 5,800, only 4,900 patients had been able to leave, Harris said. Even more people require medical evacuation after an Israeli strike set fire to a displacement camp in Rafah on Sunday killing 45 people.

IAEA MEETING

US cautions UK against censuring Iran over nuclear program

Arab News London

The US has warned the UK against condemning Iran's nuclear program at a meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency next week, the Daily Telegraph reported.

Amid simmering tensions in the Middle East and a US presidential election in November, Washington is reportedly seeking to avoid a regional escalation.

At an IAEA board of governors' meeting next week, the UK and France are expected to deliver a censuring resolution against Iran over its nuclear program.

But the US is said to have warned other countries to abstain from the resolution, which was drafted over growing frustration with Tehran's defiance of the IAEA.

Officials in the US have denied lobbying against the British and French move.

As well as electoral concerns, the White House also fears that Iran may be prone to instability

FASTFACTS

• Britain, France expected to condemn Tehran in resolution at IAEA meeting.

• Washington seeking to avoid Mideast escalation amid simmering tensions.

following last month's exchange of strikes with Israel, and the death of the country's president and foreign minister in a helicopter crash.

UK officials believe that Iran's nuclear program is as advanced as ever and are "deeply concerned" about escalation, the Daily Telegraph reported.

From June 3-7, the 35-member IAEA board of governors will gather for a quarterly meeting.

Iran is believed to have been enriching uranium to 60 percent purity for three years, following Washington's axing of the nuclear deal under former President Donald Trump.

Tehran has maintained that it seeks to use the uranium for a civil nuclear program.

But the IAEA has warned that no country has enriched to 60 percent purity without later developing nuclear weapons.

Last week, a senior European diplomat described Iranian nuclear violations as "unprecedented" in comments to Reuters.

DIPLOMACY

El-Sisi arrives in Beijing to attend China-Arab forum

Gobran Mohamed Cairo

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi arrived in Beijing on Tuesday on a state visit to China and to attend the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum after an invitation from President Xi Jinping.

El-Sisi will hold talks with Xi and senior Chinese officials focusing on ways to forge closer relations and unlock broader prospects for cooperation in several fields.

The visit coincides with the

10th anniversary of relations between Egypt and China being raised to the level of a comprehensive strategic partnership.

Ahmed Fahmy, spokesman for Egypt's presidency, said the talks will also focus on regional and international issues of common interest, primarily the war in Gaza and ways to restore stability in the region and achieve the aspirations of its peoples for peace, security, and development.

El-Sisi is also scheduled to meet the heads of several major

El-Sisi will hold talks with Xi and senior Chinese officials focusing on ways to forge closer relations and unlock broader prospects for cooperation in several fields.

Chinese companies.

The meetings are expected to explore opportunities to attract more investment to Egypt in

light of the state's orientation toward enhancing mechanisms for the localization of industry and technology transfer.

Egypt is eager to collaborate closely with the private sector and encourage foreign direct investment.

El-Sisi will attend a meeting of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, to be held on May

30, with the participation of the Chinese president and a number of Arab leaders.

The forum will discuss various aspects of China-Arab relations and ways to further advance them.

Egypt's government said the forum is a framework for dialogue and cooperation between Arab states and China. Its founding document was signed in September 2004 at the headquarters of the Arab League in Cairo following a visit by the Chinese president.



News Middle East

MOVING TARGETS

Possible Houthi missiles damage ship in Red Sea

Yemen national carrier resumes direct flights between Sanaa airport and Jeddah airport

Saeed Al-Batati Al-Mukalla

A ship in the Red Sea was damaged after being hit by missiles suspected to have been launched by Yemen's Houthi militia on Tuesday, two British maritime agencies said.

A shipmaster reported to the UK Maritime Trade Operations that the ship was damaged after being struck by missiles at 9:30 a.m. (UTC) 31 nautical miles southwest of Yemen's Hodeidah and that the ship's crew members were safe.

"At 1040UTC the Master of the MV reports an impact in the water in close proximity to the vessel. The crew are reported safe and the vessel is proceeding to its next port of call," UKMTO said.

Ambrey, another UK marine security agency, said three ballistic missiles hit a ship in the Red Sea, forcing it to tilt to one side roughly 54 nautical miles southwest of Hodeidah Port.

The incident occurred less than a day after the Iran-backed Houthis claimed to have fired a volley of drones and ballistic missiles against warships and commercial ships in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.

Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea said on Monday night that their military forces carried out two "successful" drone attacks against two US warships in the Red Sea, as well as fired missiles at Largo Desert and MSC Michela in the Indian Ocean, and Minerva Lisa in the Red Sea.

Sarea said that the first ship was targeted because it was American, the second because



Yemeni pilgrims bid farewell to loved ones on Tuesday, as they prepare to board a flight from Sanaa airport to perform Hajj. AFP

it was owned by Israel, and the third for violating the ban on ships going to Israel through the Red Sea. He did not provide an exact date for the attacks.

According to www.marinetraffic.com, Largo Desert is an oil and chemical ship that was flying the Marshall Islands flag and that arrived at the Omani Duqm port on the Arabian Sea four days ago. The Liberian-flagged Minerva Lisa is a crude oil tanker that stopped at the Egyptian Ain Sokhna on the Suez Canal on

Tuesday, while the container ship MSC Michela is operating under the Portuguese flag and left Valencia Port in Spain on Saturday for Brazil.

HIGHLIGHT

Ambrey, another UK marine security agency, said three ballistic missiles hit a ship in the Red Sea, forcing it to tilt to one side roughly 54 nautical miles southwest of Hodeidah Port.

Tuesday, while the container ship MSC Michela is operating under the Portuguese flag and left Valencia Port in Spain on Saturday for Brazil.

At the same time, the US Central Command said that its forces shot down a drone over the Red Sea launched by the Houthis on Monday morning.

On Monday, the UK Royal Navy announced that its HMS Duncan destroyer had been sent to the Red Sea to engage in international naval operations to defend ships from Houthi attacks, replacing sister ship HMS Diamond.

Meanwhile, the national carrier of Yemen, Yemenia,

resumed direct flights between the Houthi-controlled Sanaa airport and Jeddah airport on Tuesday to facilitate the transportation of thousands of Yemeni pilgrims.

Four Yemeni planes carrying 600 pilgrims left Sanaa on Tuesday, the first of 44 identical flights that would transport 8,200 pilgrims to Saudi Arabia. Yemenia has been flying from Sanaa to Amman since April 2022, when the UN-brokered ceasefire was implemented.

SOLIDARITY

Iraq's Sadr demands closure of US Embassy after Rafah strike

AFP Baghdad

Influential Iraqi cleric Moqtada Sadr renewed his calls to close the US Embassy in Baghdad Tuesday after an Israeli strike killed dozens of civilians in a camp in Gaza.

Health officials in Gaza said the Sunday night strike killed at least 45 people in a displaced persons' camp in Rafah, the south Gaza city where Israel launched a controversial offensive earlier this month.

Sadr condemned the Israeli strike and Washington's "shameless" support for the "genocide" he charged was under way in Gaza.

"I reiterate my demand to expel" the US ambassador and "close the embassy through

FASTFACT

Sadr condemned the Israeli strike and Washington's 'shameless' support for the 'genocide' he charged was under way in Gaza.

diplomatic means without bloodshed," he said in a statement on X.

He said that would be a more effective deterrent than the use of force and would mean US officials "don't have an excuse to destabilize Iraq."

Sadr once led a militia fighting US-led forces after the 2003 invasion that toppled longtime dictator Saddam Hussein.

He retains a devoted following of millions among the country's Shiite Muslim majority community, and wields great influence over Iraqi politics.

TRAINED PILOT

Hard-liner re-elected as Iran's parliament speaker

AP Dubai

Iran's parliament re-elected hard-liner Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf on Tuesday as its speaker, reaffirming its hard-right makeup in the wake of a helicopter crash that killed the country's president and foreign minister.

Of 287 lawmakers voting, 198 backed Qalibaf to retain the position he first took in 2021. He initially became speaker following a string of failed presidential bids and 12 years as the leader of Iran's capital city, in which he built onto Tehran's subway and supported the construction of modern high-rises.

Many, however, know Qalibaf for his support, as a Revolutionary Guard general, for a violent crackdown on Iranian university students in 1999. He also reportedly ordered live gunfire to be used against Iranian students in 2003 while serving as



Iran's parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, right, greets lawmakers during the inauguration session for the new parliament in Tehran on Monday. AFP

the country's police chief.

In Tuesday's vote, challenger Mejtaba Zonnouri, a hard-line Shiite cleric who once led the parliament's national security commission, won 60 votes. A former foreign minister to hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Manouchehr Mottaki, received five votes.

Qalibaf called on lawmakers to find a way to address their

constituents' demands after being re-elected. "In order to create hope in the people, we must reach a common understanding and act in a converging and empathetic way, and we must agree on prioritizing the solution of the people's problems, regardless of our political inclinations and tastes," he said.

The March parliament election saw the country's lowest turnout

since its 1979 Islamic Revolution. Of those elected to the 290-seat body, hard-liners hold over 230 seats, according to an Associated Press survey.

A trained pilot, Qalibaf served in the paramilitary Guard during the country's bloody 1980s war with Iraq. After the conflict, he served as the head of the Guard's construction arm, Khatam

Al-Anbia, for several years leading efforts to rebuild.

Qalibaf then served as the head of the Guard's air force, when in 1999 he co-signed a letter to reformist President Mohammad Khatami amid student protests in Tehran over the government closing a reformist newspaper and a subsequent security force crackdown. The letter warned

Khatami the Guard would take action unilaterally unless he agreed to put down the demonstrations.

Violence around the protests saw several killed, hundreds wounded and thousands arrested.

Qalibaf then served as the head of Iran's police, modernizing the force and implementing the country's 110 emergency phone number.

I, NAHIDA BEGAM JHANIYA (Given name) holding passport number M2965274 Issued at Riyadh on 17/11/2014, here by announced to change my name as NAHIDA BEGUM (Given name) and JHANIYA (Surname) for all future purposes.

Heart of Switzerland Looking over Lake Lucerne

Unique available property in protected landscape, absolutely quiet, with approved masterplan and project for sale to build what you dream of

Your project • Campus • Institute • Clinic e.g.

Info: heartofswitzerland@pm.me

EXPERTISE

Saudi surgeons train Indonesian doctors in cardiac procedures

Some advanced techniques have never been performed in the province

Sheany Yasuko Lai Jakarta

A 22-member medical team from Saudi Arabia has been in Indonesia since the beginning of May to train doctors in advanced cardiac procedures on adults and children.

Facilitated by the Kingdom's aid agency Ksrelief, the cardiovascular surgical team is embedded with Adam Malik Central General Hospital in Medan, North Sumatra province.

It consists of surgeons, specialist nurses, perfusionists and respiratory therapists from the King Faisal Cardiac Center in Jeddah and the King Abdullah International Medical Research Center in Riyadh.

Among them are "some of the best heart surgeons in Saudi Arabia," who not only "help save the lives of Indonesian people, but also provide training to young doctors to handle open-heart surgery, catheterization and pediatric



In this photo provided by Indonesia's Health Ministry on Monday, Saudi doctors are conducting heart surgery at Adam Malik Central General Hospital in Medan, North Sumatra. Health Ministry

heart surgery," Indonesia's Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin said in a statement on Monday.

"(Their presence) will encourage quality improvement and accelerate the transfer of knowledge to young Indonesian doctors. They will train and

work with well-known doctors from abroad, learning their work discipline, work culture and interaction with patients."

During their stay in Indonesia, the Saudi Arabia doctors will perform surgery on about 30 patients, with all the costs covered by the program.

Heart disease is the second-leading cause of death in the Southeast Asian nation — after stroke — killing 250,000 people a year, including 6,000 children.

Many patients die before they receive specialist care, which is often available only at hospitals in the biggest cities.

The transfer-knowledge program sponsored by Ksrelief supports Indonesia's health system transformation plan, under which all regional government hospitals will be expected to carry out open-heart surgery and pediatric heart surgery, without having to refer patients to the main cardiac centers in Jakarta.

The Ministry of Health said some of the complex procedures introduced by the Saudi Arabia team at the Medan hospital, including the replacement of a part of the aorta and the aortic valve of the heart, have never been performed in the province.

The ministry quoted the Medan hospital's head of cardiovascular services, Dr. Faisal Habib, who said his team was also learning from the Saudi Arabia doctors the advanced techniques of handling surgery in less invasive ways.



United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan arrived in South Korea on Tuesday. Emirates News Agency

'SPECIAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP'

UAE president visits S. Korea with defense, energy on agenda

Reuters Seoul

United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan arrived in South Korea on Tuesday, where his plane was met by an honorary escort of four fighter jets before he landed for his first state visit to Asia's fourth-biggest economy.

Defense industry cooperation, business and investment, and energy initiatives are on the agenda for a summit scheduled for Wednesday with President Yoon Suk Yeol of South Korea,

which has become one of the world's biggest arms exporters.

The two will discuss deepening their "special strategic partnership," Yoon's office said in a statement.

Four F-15K Air Force fighter jets escorted Sheikh Mohamed's plane as it entered the South Korean defense identification zone and landed at a military airfield just south of the capital, Seoul, Yoon's office said.

Sheikh Mohammed is reciprocating after Yoon's state visit to Abu Dhabi early last year, when

FASTFACT

Defense industry cooperation, business and investment, and energy initiatives are on the agenda for a summit scheduled for Wednesday.

the UAE pledged \$30 billion in investment in South Korean businesses in areas spanning nuclear power, defense, hydrogen and solar energy.

He met on Tuesday the leaders of some of South Korea's

top business conglomerates including Jay Y. Lee of Samsung Electronics, SK Group's Chey Tae-won and E.S. Chung of Hyundai Motor Group.

South Korea already has deep business ties with the UAE going back more than a decade, having previously won contracts to build

nuclear reactors in the Gulf state. The country has also signed massive defense contracts as part of plans to become the world's fourth-largest defense exporter by 2027.

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Regional influence

Russia to build nuclear plant in Uzbekistan

Russia and Uzbekistan signed an accord Monday for Moscow to build a small nuclear power plant in the Central Asian country, as Russian President Vladimir Putin held talks in the Uzbek capital with Uzbekistan leader Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

Mirziyoyev hailed the project as "vital" in remarks after the talks, noting that Uzbekistan has "its own large reserves of uranium." Putin, in turn, vowed to "do everything in order to work effectively on Uzbekistan's (nuclear energy) market."

If the agreement is implemented, the plant would become the first in Central Asia, further increasing Russia's influence in the region. **AP**

International support

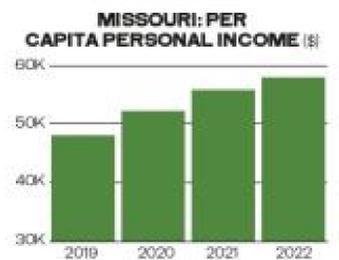
Zelensky presses Biden to attend peace summit

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Tuesday urged US leader Joe Biden to attend a June peace summit in Switzerland, as he accused Russia's Vladimir Putin of trying to derail the gathering.

Zelensky's appeal came as he locked in a commitment from Belgium to supply 30 F-16 fighter jets by 2028, on the latest leg of a whistlestop tour to rally Western support.

Ukraine is pushing to whip up attendance at the peace conference next month where it hopes to win broad international backing for its vision of the terms needed to end Russia's war. **AFP**

The Day's FIGURES



Source: Statista

What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

'Florapedia'

CAROL GRACIE

"Florapedia" is an eclectic A-Z compendium of botanical lore. With more than 100 enticing entries—on topics ranging from achlorophyllous plants that use a fungus as an

intermediary to obtain nutrients from other plants to zygomorphic flowers that admit only the most select pollinators—this collection is a captivating journey into the realm of botany.



Tropical storm

Stone quarry collapses in India's northeast

A stone quarry collapsed Tuesday in India's northeast due to heavy rain triggered by a tropical storm, killing 17 quarry workers and leaving 12 missing, officials said. Senior police officer Rahul Alwal said rescuers recovered the bodies of those killed in the quarry in Melthum, about 6 kilometers from the Mizoram state capital, Aizwal, and were able to pull out two workers alive from the debris.

Alwal said rescue workers were trying to reach trapped workers while searching for more survivors.

India's northeastern states are experiencing heavy rainfall after tropical storm Remal made landfall in Bangladesh on Monday. **AP**

Child abuse

Italian woman dumps daughter for bad grade

An Italian woman who dumped her 16-year-old daughter on a major Rome highway for a poor grade in Latin has been cited for alleged child abuse, media reported Tuesday.

Police on patrol found the girl walking on the side of the busy ring road around Rome and took her to a station. Italian newspapers reported that the girl had received grades of nine out of 10 in other classes, but had barely passed in Latin, receiving a five.

She told officers she and her mother had been arguing, her mother pulled over and told her to get out of the car. Police cited the 40-year-old mother for suspected child abuse, referring the matter to juvenile court, according to the reports. **AFP**

لا تُحَقِّرَنَّ مِنَ الْإِحْسَانِ مَحْقُورَةً
أَحْسِنَ فَعَاقِبَةُ الْإِحْسَانِ حُسْنًا
(ابن زنجي)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB
Never belittle charitable work, but do good and you will eventually be rewarded.
Ibn Zangi
(Medieval North African Arab poet)

Opinion

International indictment of Israel is also a rebuke for the US

OSAMA AL-SHARIF

Horrifying images of decapitated babies, charred bodies, and burnt tents in an Israeli-designated "safe area" where thousands of distressed Palestinians in Gaza were forced to flee a few weeks ago have drawn condemnation from all parts of the globe. The raid by Israeli fighter jets on a Rafah refugee camp on Sunday killed more than 30, all civilians, and injured many others. This was one more war crime committed by Israel since it unleashed its military on the enclave to kill as many of the population as possible — extermination, in the words of the International Criminal Court prosecutor — and level the 365 sq. km strip, home to more than 2 million people.

The list of crimes and atrocities committed by Israel in the past eight months is long and shocking. But while Israel is now being condemned by most European countries, days after the International Court of Justice ordered it to halt

its Rafah offensive and avoid harming civilians, and following the ICC's intent to issue arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his Defense Minister, Yoav Gallant, on charges of war crimes and others, one government in particular has chosen to either ignore the carnage, or disguise its position on the genocidal war through empty rhetoric, denial, and obfuscation. That is the Biden administration, which has the power to stop the slaughter.

The ICJ and the ICC have come under shameful attack and intimidation by neocons and pro-Israel US lawmakers. Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Mike Johnson, said he wants to pass legislation to sanction ICC officials. He had slammed the court's request for arrest warrants, writing in a statement that its "baseless and illegitimate decision should face global condemnation." He added: "International bureaucrats cannot be allowed to use 'lawfare' to usurp the authority of democratic



Osama Al-Sharif is a journalist and political commentator based in Amman. X: @plato010
For full version, log on to www.arabnews.com/opinion

nations that maintain the rule of law." President Joe Biden described the ICC's move as "outrageous." At the same time, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing that he would like to work with Congress to take action against the ICC following its move on arrest warrants.

In a show of disdain for the ICC, Johnson confirmed he was moving ahead with an invitation to Netanyahu to address Congress. US lawmakers have warned that if the UN recognizes Palestine as a state, Washington will defund the international body.

The hysteria regarding the highest world court, the ICJ, as well as the ICC, even considering a genocide case and other serious charges against Israel and its leaders has been evident for months. Last week, hawkish Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham, a fervent supporter of Israel, condemned the ICC and said it can "go to hell" for moving against Netanyahu. Another pro-Israel senator, Republican

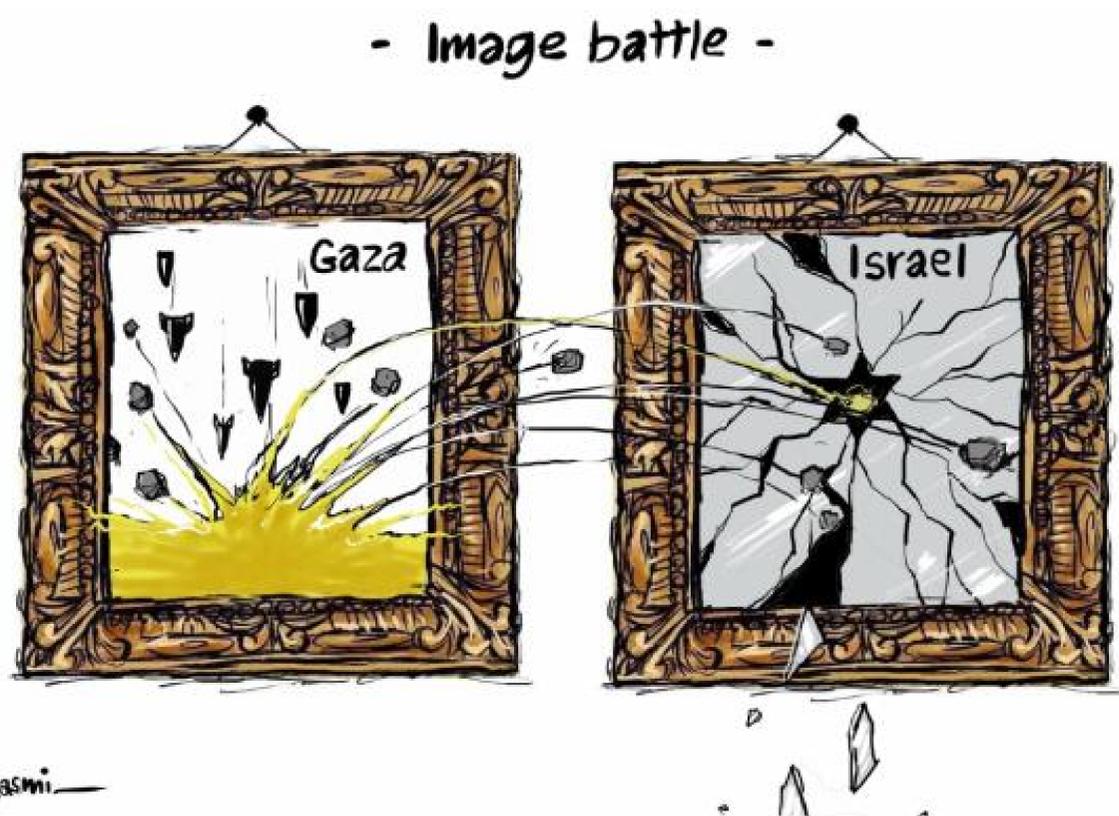
Tom Cotton, was one of several lawmakers who signed a letter warning ICC prosecutor Karim Khan days before he made his historic decision. The letter said that if you target Israel, we will target you.

Only Israeli politicians, including the opposition, have taken similar hostile positions against the symbols of international law, especially the UN, ICJ, and ICC.

When the truth about Israel's war on Gaza began reaching the rest of the world, most Western governments started reversing their initial position of supporting Israel's right to defend itself at any cost. France, Belgium, Spain, Norway, Sweden, Ireland, and others now condemn the atrocities and demand an immediate ceasefire. The UK Conservative government has refused to stop arms sales to Israel and grudgingly demanded a ceasefire despite a significant shift in public opinion against Israel. Canada, too, has suspended arms sales to Israel, while Germany now says that it will arrest Netanyahu if a warrant is issued.

There is a marked departure in policy position between the US and its Western allies

COURTESY: AMAAD RASHMI/SHARIF AL-JARISAT



Exposure to trauma in childhood can affect behavior later in life

When the guns fall silent in Gaza, trauma will still remain

YOSSI MEKELBERG

When the guns eventually fall silent in Gaza and the full devastation of the war becomes apparent, there will also be an urgent need to address the less visible, albeit no less harmful, impact on the mental health of hundreds of thousands of innocent people on both sides of the border. Special attention will have to be paid to so many children who have suffered an unimaginable trauma, and who, without adequate care, will carry this with them for the rest of their lives, with an adverse effect on themselves and their societies.

Both Israeli and Palestinian societies have been and are being traumatized, and as a result many children and adolescents are enduring a post-traumatic stress disorder that manifests itself in different ways and should leave no one in any doubt about its long-term ramifications, including how they will view the idea of peace, reconciliation

and coexistence between the two peoples. One of the many tragedies of war, and a heart-wrenching one, is that those who are the most vulnerable in society are those who face the gravest consequences of such hostilities, both physically and psychologically. According to the human rights organization Save the Children, 68 million children, more than one in six worldwide, live in areas affected by armed conflict, and the numbers are on the rise. Moreover, children are far more likely to die from conflict than are armed actors.

Thanks to visual media, we can witness in real time the horrors that take place during conflicts and inflict unbearable suffering on civilians, especially children. In the Gaza Strip, almost half of the population is under 18 and bears the brunt of the war's horrors. Every day for nearly eight months we have watched the cruel and brutal violence that was committed by Hamas on Oct. 7, and since then by the Israeli military in response to it. Even without a single



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

shot fired or bomb dropped, it is enough for a child to constantly hear the roar of assault aircraft or of advancing tanks, or see fully armed soldiers on their streets; to be terrified, even traumatized, particularly when they are exposed to this day and night for months on end. But in the case of the war in Gaza in all its intensity, it is not about seeing or hearing the war machines, but being on the receiving end of their full firepower, and being caught up in the crossfire between two sworn enemies.

Children are paying with their lives daily, and many have physical and mental injuries that they will bear for the rest of their lives. At the beginning of this month, the UN estimated that 7,797 children have been killed in Gaza since the beginning of the war, and their numbers are rising every day. However, beyond the terrible tragedy of individual lives being cut short, it is also their families, and their young siblings and friends, who are left scared and scarred, fearing that they might be the next to die

and feeling guilty for surviving.

Research conducted by the UK government has established that exposure to trauma in childhood can affect behavior later in life, and that in cases of prolonged trauma, "children can suffer 'toxic stress,' which can become biologically embedded." Further findings show that the prevalence of mental health problems in conflict zones is extremely high, with 47 percent of children showing symptoms of PTSD and 43 percent of depression. Frightening as these figures are, they should come as no surprise, as those children experience, as we are witnessing in Gaza, the loss of loved ones, war-related injuries, and other types of violent scenes and events.

Even before the current war, data show that 71 percent of Gaza's people suffered from depression, and 80 percent reported being in a perpetual state of fear, worry, sadness and grief, while three-quarters of its children were bedwetting in fear, and a growing number were exhibiting reactive mutism.

Opinion

Will Saudi-Iranian relations be affected by Raisi's demise?

HASSAN AL-MUSTAFA



Hassan Al-Mustafa is a Saudi writer and researcher interested in Islamic movements, the development of religious discourse and the relationship between the Gulf Cooperation Council states and Iran. X: @Halmustafa

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On May 19, the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement expressing deep concern over media reports regarding the helicopter crash involving Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his accompanying delegation.

The statement emphasized that "the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stands with the sisterly Islamic Republic of Iran during these difficult times," and expressed its "readiness to provide any assistance needed by the Iranian authorities."

Upon confirmation of the tragic demise of Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman sent cables of condolence

to Acting President Mohammed Mokhber.

Simultaneously, Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister Waleed bin Abdulkarim Al-Khuraifi visited the Iranian Embassy in Riyadh to offer condolences for the death of President Raisi.

The Saudi government took further steps by dispatching a delegation to Tehran, including Prince Mansour bin Miteb bin Abdulaziz, adviser to King Salman and minister of state, and Foreign Minister

Prince Faisal bin Farhan. They were joined by Saudi Ambassador to Tehran Abdullah Al-Anazi. The delegation met with Acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani and paid their respects to the victims of the helicopter crash.

Further emphasizing its diplomatic outreach, the crown prince personally called Mokhber on May 24. He expressed his condolences and highlighted "the

progress made in bilateral relations between the two countries," stressing the "importance of continuing to enhance cooperation in various areas."

While some might view these actions as merely ceremonial, they convey a clear political message. Saudi Arabia's gestures reflect a desire to develop positive relations with

Iran and a commitment to the political and security stability of the Islamic Republic.

Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic ties with Iran in January 2016 after Iranian extremists attacked Saudi diplomatic missions in Tehran and Mashhad. This led to a period of heightened tensions, negatively impacting regional peace, especially with Iran's external proxies in Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon targeting Saudi security and causing damage to economic, civilian and

military installations. Riyadh responded firmly yet cautiously, aiming to avoid escalation while protecting its national interests.

Over the years, Iran found itself increasingly isolated regionally, with strained relations in the Gulf and a deteriorating economic situation. Realizing that hostility toward Saudi Arabia was detrimental, Tehran pursued a new approach based on reconciliation and overcoming past animosities.

Saudi Arabia's strategy of dialogue and de-escalation culminated in a landmark agreement in March 2023, brokered by China, to restore diplomatic relations. The joint statement read: "The three countries announce that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran have reached an agreement to resume diplomatic relations and reopen their embassies and missions within two months."

Iran appointed Mohammed Reza Nouri Shahroudi as its ambassador to Riyadh, while Al-Anazi became Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Tehran.

In recent months, both ambassadors have engaged in various visits and activities in their respective capitals, practicing cautious yet active public diplomacy,

signaling a mutual desire to strengthen ties without overstepping established boundaries.

Although progress might seem slow to some, this is a natural pace after years of distrust and Iran's support for armed proxies that attacked Saudi Arabia and incited against it, both militarily and in the media.

Observers note that the "agreement" is built on a solid security foundation with

security negotiations forming the basis. Saudi Arabia sought assurances from Iran on several key points: noninterference in internal affairs, respect for sovereignty, cessation of support for and training of armed opposition groups, and not using pro-Iranian armed militias to attack the Kingdom from Iraq and Yemen. Additionally,

the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps was to cease supporting cells that conduct sabotage operations within Saudi Arabia.

So far, in the security arena, Iran appears to be complying and a key element is solidifying the previously known "Nayef-Rouhani Agreement," named after then-Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz and former Iranian National Security Council Secretary Hassan Rouhani.

Saudi Arabia's gestures reflect a commitment to the political and security stability of the Islamic Republic

Realizing that hostility was detrimental, Tehran pursued a new approach based on reconciliation

US is punishing itself by undermining international law

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.

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Like Johnson, the speaker of the House of Representatives, last week said he was considering introducing legislation to sanction International Criminal Court officials. He added that the US does not consider any legal system to be above American sovereignty. However, this attitude greatly harms the US. Before anything else, it compromises its credibility and compromises an international system that favors the US.

After the Second World War, the victorious states put together a world order that favored themselves. The losers in the war, such as Germany and Japan, were dismissed. The postwar world order legitimized US supremacy. Hence, it has a vested interest in asking states to respect it. By saying that Israel and the US do not have to abide by any system above their own sovereignty, Washington is hugely undermining its credibility. It wants to create a system that it can impose on others but with which itself and its allies do not need to comply. The irony is that the current Gaza war broke out after the Ukraine war. If the US does not respect the ICC, how can it expect Vladimir Putin to respect it?

Karim Khan said in a media interview that he received a call from a senior leader, who told him that the ICC was "built for Africa and thugs like Putin." This should be extremely embarrassing for the West. Though Khan did not name the official, the official position of the US has not been far from such a statement. Hence, the US expects the world to abide by the decisions of the institution it set up to ensure its

supremacy in the post-Second World War era. At the same time, it is not ready to abide by the court's decisions itself. This might have worked if we were still in a unipolar moment. However, the US' competitors will today take advantage of this arrogance.

This offers a golden opportunity for countries

like Russia and China to engage with the Global South. The Western world's attitude to the Gaza war has been a flagrant demonstration of its double standards. While Russia was crippled with sanctions for attacking Ukraine, Israel faces nothing but some occasional light criticism from the Biden administration.

Countries like China and Russia have already begun trying to create a parallel system to the US-led structure. The BRICS grouping, which was founded in Russia in

2009, was able to attract countries with huge populations and gross domestic products like China and India. And the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which gathers Eurasian countries, has been described as a rival to NATO.

These organizations, which have been emerging over the last 20 years, have been challenging the postwar order, in which global politics is US and Europe-centric. EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borell was very wise when he alluded to the fact that European countries will have to either stand with Israel or with international law. He said the bloc would have to state its position on last week's International Court of Justice ruling that ordered Israel to halt its Rafah offensive. In fact, the international law he refers to is one that favors Europe and the West. He understands that, if European countries do not stand up and respect international law, no one will. This will definitely strengthen Putin's case against the international justice system.

Nevertheless, the US is still sticking with its unwavering support of Israel. One might ask why. Johnson's excuse is that the international system cannot be

above American sovereignty. However, this is exactly the definition of international law. It is an international body above national sovereignty.

However, American lawmakers are blinded by campaign funding and their desire to get reelected. This means the national interest is being subjugated by special interest groups. There is no clearer example than the statement

made by Johnson. Here, the interests of Israel, which are being pursued by a small segment of affluent pro-Israel Americans, come before the interests of the nation. The interest of the US is to maintain the international order that guarantees its supremacy.

Israel is the most

flagrant example of the US national interest being hijacked by special interest groups. In a way, lawmakers have been able to make this compromise because, after the Cold War, the national interest became a vague concept. During the Cold War, it was clear. It was about containing communism. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of a unipolar world, the national interest became a vague concept that could be influenced by special interests.

It wants to create a system that it can impose on others but with which itself and its allies do not need to comply

This self-defeating attitude of the US boils down to the average politician and their reelection ambitions

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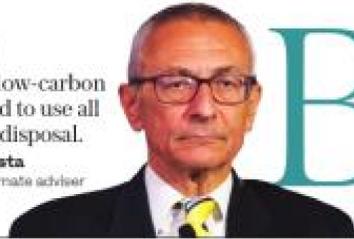
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To transition to a low-carbon economy, we need to use all the tools at our disposal.
John Podesta
 White House senior climate adviser



Business

FORECAST

GCC healthcare sector value to reach \$135bn by 2027

Sector spending in Gulf region is poised to hit \$124 billion in 2028: report

Arab News Riyadh

The value of the healthcare sector in the Gulf Cooperation region is projected to reach \$135 billion by 2027 driven by rising investor confidence, an analysis showed.

In its latest report, real estate and investment management firm JLL noted that investors are increasingly becoming more optimistic about the healthcare market in the region as Gulf states push for the transformation of the sector in line with their economic diversification plans.

The study also pointed out that regional governments are pushing for increased localization to attain self-sustainability in the healthcare sector, a crucial factor that elevates investor confidence.

Sandeep Sinha, head of Healthcare Consulting at JLL for the Middle East and Africa, said that sector spending within GCC alone is poised to reach \$124 billion in 2028.

"Under their economic diversification agenda, countries in the GCC are driving the transformation of this critical sector with infrastructure development, clinical capabilities, human capital development, digital transformation, and establishment of healthcare innovation



Investors are becoming more optimistic about the healthcare market in the region as Gulf states push for the transformation of the sector. File

FASTFACTS

● **Healthcare market in the GCC region reached \$67.9 billion in 2023 and is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 6.4 percent until 2023 to hit \$118.6 billion.**

● **Rising adoption of digital health technologies, the increase in sedentary lifestyles, and the escalating aging population are factors propelling the market.**

hubs," said Sinha.

He added: "This has attracted more private equity companies and witnessed an increase in active deal-making, further positioning the region as a key healthcare player on the global stage."

According to the analysis, more regional players in the GCC's healthcare landscape are acquiring local companies or international brands to build their portfolios and transform their business models.

In April, an additional report released by Ireland-based firm Impactful Insights revealed that the healthcare market in the GCC region reached \$67.9 billion in 2023 and is expected to grow at a

compound annual growth rate of 6.4 percent until 2023 to hit \$118.6 billion.

According to that release, the rising adoption of digital health

technologies, the increase in sedentary lifestyles, and the escalating aging population are factors propelling the market.

Earlier in May, Adeel Kheiri, a partner in Oliver Wyman's India, Middle East, and Africa health and life sciences practice, told Arab News that Saudi Arabia's bold healthcare reforms promise valuable lessons for the region and beyond.

He added that the Kingdom has embarked on a journey to prioritize the health and well-being of its citizens, laying a robust foundation for progress.

"Saudi Arabia's ambitious healthcare reforms stand out for their scale, complexity, and rapid timeframe. This unique approach will undoubtedly offer valuable lessons learned for the IMEA region and beyond," said Kheiri.

HALAL

PIF firm invests in Singapore's cosmetics company

Arab News Riyadh

In a bid to localize the Kingdom's cosmetics and personal care industry, the Halal Products Development Co. announced an investment in a Singapore-based fast-moving consumer goods conglomerate.

The Public Investment Fund-owned company signed a binding agreement with Believe — a company specializing in the halal cosmetics and personal care field. As per the agreement, the company will relocate its headquarters from Singapore to Saudi Arabia and establish a factory to manufacture its products, the Saudi Press Agency reported. The new headquarters will also serve as a major center for exporting the company's products to various countries of the world.

HSBC honoured at Euromoney 2024 Awards for Excellence



Euromoney Magazine has honoured HSBC in a series of significant regional awards at its 2024 Awards for Excellence programme. HSBC was named 'Best Investment Bank in the Middle East', 'Best Bank for Sustainable Finance', and 'Best Bank for Financing' in the region.

In addition, HSBC was named the 'World's Best Bank for Islamic Financing' in the Euromoney Islamic Finance Awards 2024 alongside accolades for as 'Best International Islamic Bank' in both Saudi Arabia and Malaysia.

Stephen Moss, Regional CEO, HSBC Middle East, North Africa and Türkiye "The Middle East is an integral part of global financing flows and has an important role to play in a transition that delivers both energy security and a net zero future. These awards are reflective of our scale and heritage in the Middle East which, combined with our

global network and international expertise, gives us the ability to connect clients across the world to opportunities in the Middle East."

The region's capital markets have been a relative bright spot of activity in the global financing landscape, reflective of their increasing international appeal and resilience. Issuers in the Middle East and North Africa raised over US10 billion in 2023 while the region's investors are offering international markets a deep and alternative capital pool. HSBC has continued to help clients across sectors and geographies to navigate uncertainty, to capitalize on opportunity and to re-open markets, allowing access to previously unavailable sources of funding. In 2023 HSBC led the market across the financing product suite in the Middle East, claiming the 1 positions in the ECM, DCM, ECA Financing and MLA

league tables.

Julian Wentzel, Head of Global Banking, HSBC Middle East, North Africa and Türkiye "Our strength across every investment banking product continues to make us the go-to bank for clients that are emerging as some of the world's largest and most significant issuers and investors. HSBC delivered one of our best years on record, but we do so in partnership with our clients."

Over the course of the year, HSBC cemented its position as the Best Bank for Sustainable Finance in the Middle East both by volume and value, and importantly as a partner in supporting the development of the region's sustainable finance capabilities and regulations. Taken together, this series of significant awards demonstrate the breadth of HSBC's network, the depth of its expertise, and its access to deep pools of finance.

Advertisorial Ad

TECH

Saudi tech firm MIS invests \$1m in Elon Musk's AI venture

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi tech firm Al-Moammar Information Systems Co. plans to invest \$1 million in a controlling stake in Elon Musk's artificial intelligence company, xAI Corp., according to Al-Ekhbariya.

The Saudi company clarified that this investment constitutes a portion of xAI's Series B funding round, with a pre-money valuation of \$18 billion.

As per its website, Musk's xAI is focused on developing AI to accelerate human scientific discovery.

"We are guided by our mission to advance our collective understanding of the universe," it says.

Al-Ekhbariya reported that in January, MIS's board of directors approved the allocation of SR40 million (\$10.6 million) to establish an investment portfolio through self-financing in global AI companies, aiming to capitalize on growth opportunities in this promising sector.

Additionally, MIS has achieved the Cisco Master Security Specialization in Saudi Arabia, showcasing its capacity to deliver advanced, value-added Cisco solutions through its comprehensive sales expertise, technical skills, and service offerings.

In recognition of this

HIGHLIGHT

The Saudi company clarified that this investment constitutes a portion of xAI's Series B funding round, with a pre-money valuation of \$18 billion.

achievement, the company is set to be listed as a holder of the Cisco Master Security Specialization in the Cisco Partner Locator.

Under the title "Understand the Universe," Musk, CEO of Tesla and SpaceX, aims to advance the sector following the

introduction of major initiatives such as AlphaStar, AlphaCode and Inception as well as Minerva, GPT-3.5, and GPT-4.

The tech firm, launched in July 2023 to rival existing AI models, works closely with X Corp to deliver its technology to over 500 million users of the X app, formerly Twitter.

Saudi Arabia continues to invest in the tech sector, aiming for sustainable global development by playing a pivotal role in AI.

At the third G7 finance ministers' meeting under the Italian presidency in Stresa, Italy, Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan highlighted the Kingdom's dedication to advancing AI technology for inclusive growth.

This effort aligns with Saudi Arabia's National Strategy for Data and AI, which seeks to establish the Kingdom as a global tech leader by 2030.

Business Saudi Arabia

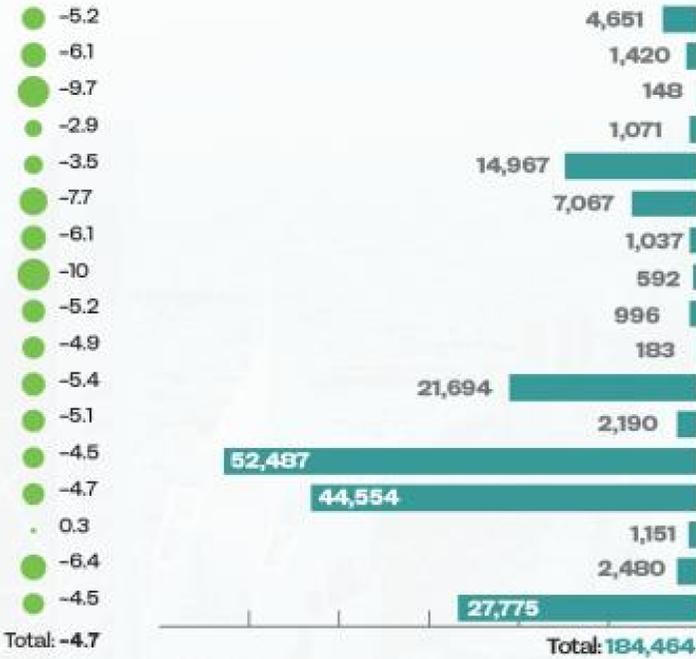
Transaction trends: A weekly snapshot of Saudi Arabia's point-of-sale activity

WEEK FROM 19 MAY TO 25 MAY 24



NUMBER OF TRANSACTIONS

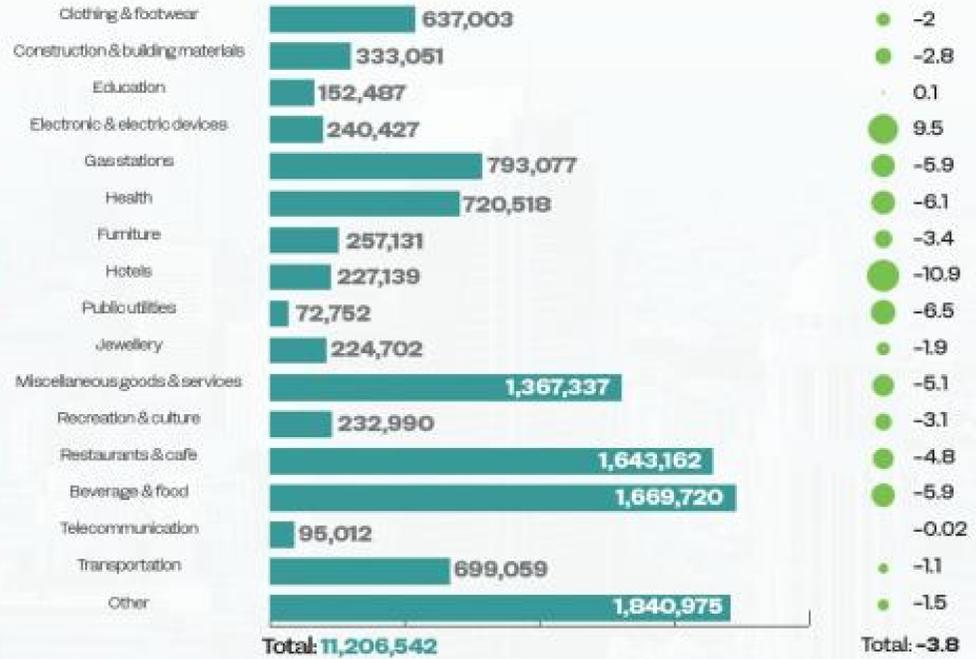
■ In thousands ● Percentage change



VALUE OF TRANSACTIONS

■ In SR, thousands ● Percentage change

SECTORS



Source: Saudi Central Bank

ARAB NEWS

CASHLESS SOCIETY

Saudis spent more on electronic items during 4th week of May

Transactions at restaurants and cafes amounted to SR1.64 billion, SAMA data shows

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's point-of-sale spending reached SR11.2 billion (\$2.98 billion) in the fourth week of May, official figures showed.

The latest data from the Saudi Central Bank, also known as SAMA, revealed that spending on electronic and electric devices surged by 9.5 percent to reach SR240.4 million.

Beverages and food, which accounts for the largest share at 14.9 percent, saw a 5.9 percent decline, reaching SR1.66 billion, during the week from May 19 to 25.

Meanwhile, transactions at restaurants and cafes, holding a 14.6 percent share, recorded a slower decline of 4.8 percent, amounting to SR1.64 billion.

Saudi spending on miscellaneous goods and services, including personal care items, supplies, maintenance, and cleaning, constituted the third-highest share and witnessed a 5.1 percent decline that week, reaching SR1.36 billion.

Despite composing only 1 percent of the week's overall POS value, spending on education

recorded a minimal increase of 0.1 percent to SR152.48 million.

In the past few years, this sector has been allocated the largest share of government expenditure in comparison to other divisions of the economy.

Efforts are underway to revamp the education system, aiming to equip the national workforce with the necessary skills to thrive in a technological and information-centric global economy.

The hotel sector experienced the largest decline in POS transaction value, dropping 10.9 percent to SR227.13 million.

According to data from SAMA, 35.44 percent of POS spending occurred in Riyadh, with the total transaction value reaching SR3.97 billion. However, this represents a 1.6 percent decrease from the previous week.

Riyadh has undergone considerable expansion, evolving into a pivotal center for growth and progress. The city is witnessing a surge in new businesses setting up operations, drawn by its vibrant economic landscape and strategic prospects for investment and innovation.

Spending in Jeddah followed closely, accounting for 14.3 percent of the total and reaching



According to SAMA, the key objective of the Financial Development Program is to promote digital payment solutions. File

FASTFACTS

• Data showed 35.44 percent of POS spending occurred in Riyadh, with the total transaction value reaching SR3.97 billion.

• Spending in Jeddah followed closely, accounting for 14.3 percent of the total and reaching SR1.60 billion.

SR1.60 billion; however, it marked a 3.1 percent weekly drop. The two cities that registered the highest declines in POS spending were Makkah and Madinah, with decreases of 11 percent and 6.8 percent, respectively. The value of transactions in Makkah reached SR380.98 million, while in Madinah, it was SR393.26 million.

According to SAMA, the key objective of the Financial Development Program is to promote

digital payment solutions in transforming the Kingdom into reaching 70 percent non-cash payments by 2025.

The Kingdom's goal to transition to a cashless society encourages the use of electronic payment methods, including MADA cards.

MADA cards are often used for receiving government payments, including salaries, social benefits and subsidies. The digitization of government

payments has further boosted card usage and sales value.

MADA cards are commonly used at ATMs for cash withdrawals and balance inquiries. As the number of ATMs increases, so does the usage of MADA cards.

The increase in MADA card usage may be driven by an increasing number of individuals and businesses shifting toward electronic payments, including online purchases, bill payments and fund transfers, which reduces the need for physical ATM withdrawals.

Another factor could be the prevalence of contactless payment technology that allows individuals to make quick and secure transactions using their MADA cards without physically inserting them into a card reader.

This aspect has become popular for small-value purchases, reducing the reliance on ATMs.

While the number of ATMs may decrease, the overall trend suggests a shift toward digital and card-based payments whereby Saudis are increasingly comfortable with electronic transactions and use the teller machines less frequently for cash withdrawals.

Business News



Egypt's new economic path, focused on structural reforms to attract foreign investment, has begun to yield positive results. Shutterstock

ECONOMY

Egypt sees 30.2% surge in foreign workers

North African country aims to strengthen its private sector

Arab News Riyadh

Egypt's private and investment sector experienced an annual increase of 30.2 percent in the number of foreigners acquiring work licenses in 2023.

Data from the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics revealed a significant surge in the total count of foreign nationals granted licenses, reaching 17,357 individuals, a leap from the previous year's 13,331.

Of these permits, 7,973 were issued for the first time in 2023, constituting a significant portion of the total influx at 45.9 percent.

Official figures showed that a total of 9,384 foreigners had their contracts renewed, making up 54.1 percent of the workforce.

Among the foreign workers,

those from non-Arab Asian countries constituted the largest group, with 6,275 individuals (36.2 percent). Europeans followed closely with 5,975 individuals (34.4 percent), while Arabs accounted for 3,487 individuals (20.1 percent). Americans and non-Arab Africans represented smaller portions, with 779 (4.5 percent) and 662 (3.8 percent) individuals, respectively. The smallest group hailed from Oceanian countries, comprising only 71 individuals (0.4 percent).

Labor directorates issued the majority of work permits to foreign workers in the private and investment sectors in 2023, granting 8,122 permits (46.8 percent). Investment offices issued 6,227 permits (35.9 percent), company offices issued 2,246 permits (12.9 percent), and petroleum offices issued 762 permits (4.4 percent).

FASTFACTS

36.2%

Workers from non-Arab Asian countries constituted the largest group, with 6,275 individuals.

34.4%

Europeans followed closely with 5,975 individuals, while Arabs accounted for 3,487 individuals.

The report also highlighted the occupational distribution of foreign workers. The largest category consisted of senior officials, and managers, totaling 5,413 individuals (31.2 percent).

Professionals in scientific fields followed closely with 4,215 individuals (24.3 percent), while technicians and associate professionals accounted for 3,337 individuals (19.2 percent).

Egypt's new economic plan, focused on structural reforms empowering the private sector to lead growth and attracting investment, has begun to yield positive results, said the country's finance minister last month. Mohamed Maait highlighted that despite the harsh impacts of global and regional economic crises, Egypt has seen financial indicators surpass budget estimates and targets over the past nine months of the fiscal year 2023-24.

The minister noted that this success reflects the international recognition of the North African country's economy for achieving better-than-expected performance metrics.

to their hometowns and for people to start businesses in the countryside.

He called for stabilizing the income of people who had been lifted out of poverty and preventing large-scale return to poverty due to unemployment, Xinhua said.

Companies and industries with strong job creation capabilities will be supported, the report said. China created 4.36 million new urban jobs in the first four months, Human Resources Ministry data showed, 36 percent of its annual job creation target.

China's statistics bureau revised its methodology by removing college students from the survey pool after youth jobless rate surged to around 20 percent last year.

Xi also said the government should take steps to promote the employment of migrant workers, guide them to return

(We should) insist that employment of young people including college graduates is a top priority.

Xi Jinping
Chinese president



POLICY

Xi calls for more jobs for youth, migrant workers

Reuters Beijing

China's President Xi Jinping called on Monday for efforts to promote high-quality and sufficient jobs for college graduates and migrant workers, while

presiding over a Politburo group study session, state media Xinhua reported on Tuesday.

"(We should) insist that employment of young people including college graduates is a top priority," the Xinhua report quoted Xi as saying at a group study session of the Politburo, a top decision-making body of the ruling Communist Party.

The Xinhua report did not give details on job promotion support measures or plans.

The survey-based jobless rate for 16-24 year-olds, excluding college students, was 14.7 percent in April, down from 15.3 percent in March, official data showed last week.

BizBriefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Cooperation

EU, Australia sign MoU on critical minerals

The EU and Australia signed a memorandum of understanding on Tuesday to cooperate on critical and strategic minerals as the EU tries to diversify its suppliers away from China and Russia.

The agreement covers exploration, extraction, processing, refining, recycling, and processing of extractive waste. "Australia is a global leader when it comes to critical raw materials," EU Commission Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis said. "This partnership marks a major step forward in our efforts to secure a more sustainable supply of critical raw materials," he said. **Reuters**

Bullion

Gold prices inch lower on profit taking

Gold prices slipped on Tuesday with investors booking profits after a recent rally and pressure from the reduced probability of the Federal Reserve rate cuts, while the market awaited key US inflation data due later this week.

Spot gold fell 0.3 percent to \$2,343.99 per ounce by 0940 GMT, after rising 0.7 percent on Monday.

The bullion fell below its 21-day moving average, which currently stands at \$2,348, but was on track for the fourth consecutive month of growth with the 2.5 percent gain in May. **Reuters**

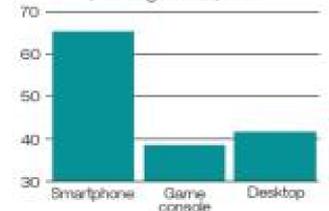
Chart of THE DAY

According to a survey in 2022, mobile phones were the most used devices for gaming in the UAE.

Source: Statista

GAMING DEVICE USAGE IN UAE

(As of August 2022) in %



What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

In This Economy?

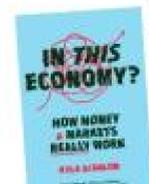
KYLA SCANLON

For anyone trying to make sense of disorienting headlines, there is no better interpreter than Kyla Scanlon.

Through her witty illustrations, creative analogies, and insights from behavioral economics, literature, and

philosophy, Scanlon breaks down everything you need to know about how money and markets really work.

This indispensable handbook reveals the hidden forces driving key economic outcomes, says a review published on goodreads.com.



Data

UK retail sales bounce back in May: CBI

British retail sales bounced back in May after a slump in April that could have been caused by the timing of Easter and bad weather, while prices charged by shops pointed to the weakest inflation in nearly four years, according to industry data.

The Confederation of British Industry's monthly retail sales balance, a gauge of sales versus a year ago, recovered to +8 this month after tumbling to -44 in April.

More retailers felt sales were normal for the time of year than at any other time in the past eight months, the CBI said. **Reuters**

Record high

Norwegian oil firms to boost investments

Norwegian oil and gas investments are expected to hit a record high this year and will remain strong in 2025, driven by a string of new developments as well as cost inflation, a national statistics office survey showed on Tuesday.

The country's biggest business sector now expects to invest 246.9 billion Norwegian crowns (\$23.58 billion) in 2024, up from a 243.6 billion crown estimate made in February and exceeding a previous record of 224 billion in 2014. Preliminary estimates for oil and gas investments in 2025 stood at 215.8 billion crowns. **Reuters**

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Through our deep understanding of market needs, we develop products and services to exceed our customers' expectations.

Tony Cripps
Managing Director and CEO at SAB



Corporate

PRESS RELEASES FROM THE WORLD OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE

DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT

Zain KSA to expand 5G on back of SR1.6bn Al-Rajhi deal

Zain KSA, a provider of communications and digital services in Saudi Arabia, announced the signing of a supplier financing agreement worth SR1.625 billion (\$433.3 million) with Al-Rajhi Bank to invest in expanding its 5G network and strengthening its infrastructure to support the business sector. This competitively rated financing solution will enable Zain KSA to expand its investments in its 5G network nationwide and enrich its portfolio with innovative digital solutions and applications targeting its individual and business users, ensuring they enjoy a top-notch digital experience.

Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al-Deghaither, Zain KSA's CEO, said: "At Zain KSA, we adopt an integrated strategy, balancing between achieving our core goals of empowering our individual and business customers and providing them with cutting-edge technologies and digital solutions, along with maximizing value for our shareholders and investors. Simultaneously, our strategy supports our astute leadership's ambitious Saudi Vision 2030 and its goal of achieving a nationwide sustainable digital transformation, marking the beginning of a new era of digital innovation across the Kingdom.

"Today, this competitively rated supplier financing agreement between Zain KSA and the



Waleed Al-Mogbel, CEO and managing director of Al-Rajhi Bank, and Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al-Deghaither, Zain KSA's CEO, at the signing ceremony.

nationally renowned Al-Rajhi Bank underscores our joint efforts to foster an enriched and inclusive digital experience across the Kingdom, mirroring Zain KSA's strategy to provide exceptional customer experience and innovative services, including distinguished spiritual tourism services for pilgrims."

Meanwhile, Waleed Al-Mogbel, CEO and managing

HIGHLIGHT

Al-Rajhi Bank's financing solution will enable Zain KSA to expand its investments in its 5G network nationwide and enrich its portfolio with innovative digital solutions and applications targeting its individual and business users.

director of Al-Rajhi Bank, said: "Our partnership with Zain KSA, the longstanding Saudi telecom leader, will open up new horizons for the development of the Kingdom's telecommunications and digital services sector. At Al-Rajhi Bank, we are glad to be a key partner supporting Zain KSA's ambitious goals and strategic plans for nationwide digital empowerment."

Through targeted investments, Zain KSA aims to cement its role as a national champion, powering up the Kingdom's digital capabilities and infrastructure. This translates to broader access to cutting-edge technology and digital services for everyone — individuals, businesses, and institutions — paving the way for a vibrant society and a thriving, knowledge-based economy.

PRESTIGIOUS AWARD

SAB named 'best bank' in Saudi Arabia by Global Finance

Saudi Awwal Bank has been awarded the "Best Bank Award 2024 in Saudi Arabia" by Global Finance for the fifth time in a row. The award is a recognition of SAB's innovative banking services and its efforts in serving its customers and enhancing their banking experiences.

The recognition came following a referendum in which a select panel of financial experts participated, considering a range of criteria that included asset growth, profitability, quality of customer service, strategic relationships, product innovation, and other relevant factors.

Tony Cripps, managing director and CEO at SAB, said: "Being honored with this prestigious award serves as a testament to our bank's strategic vision and excellence across various departments and reinforces our commitment to supporting the Kingdom's Vision 2030 in the Financial Sector Development Program. It highlights our position as a leading financial

institution in contributing to economic development."

He added: "Through our deep understanding of market needs, we develop products and services to exceed our customers' expectations, enabling us to provide distinctive and innovative banking solutions, contributing to achieving their desires and helping them reach their ambitious goals."

This year, SAB continues to strengthen its leading position in the banking sector through several achievements, including the "Accreditation in Innovation" award from the Global Innovation Institute, which makes it the first bank in the Kingdom to receive such recognition. SAB was also honored with the "Best Bank for Private Banking in the Kingdom" award by Euromoney magazine. These awards serve as a testament to the bank's exceptional services, highlighting its strength and diversity in catering to the needs of its customers with efficiency and innovative solutions.



This year's batch is the largest graduating class to date with a total of 327 students.

ASPIRING LEADERS

MBSC reports 220% surge in 2024 graduate numbers

In an unprecedented milestone, Prince Mohammed Bin Salman College of Business and Entrepreneurship, the Kingdom's world-class business school, has announced an increase of more than 220 percent in its graduates this year, marking the largest graduating class to date with a total of 327 graduates in 2024 compared to 101 in 2023. This year also marks the graduation of the first Master of Finance cohort.

The graduating class represents a diverse group of high-calibre professionals from key sectors including government, technology, healthcare, and

beyond, many of whom hold C-suite level positions. This diversity underscores the college's appeal to those aiming to boost their strategic thinking and leadership abilities.

MBSC's existing graduate programs (Executive MBA, Master in Management, and Master in Finance) showcase a commitment to meeting the demands of the business and finance sectors of the world today.

Dr. Zeger Degraeve, dean of MBSC, said: "The remarkable increase in our graduates this year is a clear indicator of MBSC's growing impact and effectiveness

in the realm of business education. Our hands-on pragmatic approach not only equips our students with essential skills but also instills an entrepreneurial mindset necessary for today's and tomorrow's leaders. We aim to provide our students with the tools to emerge as leaders and catalysts for change, ensuring they become pioneers for Vision 2030."

It is noteworthy that MBSC has been conditionally accredited by the National Center for Academic Accreditation and Evaluation, at Education and Training Evaluation Commission, from May 2024 to April 2026.

Corporate Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Digital Protection
Saudi Insurance body to promote cybersecurity

Saudi Insurance has announced the establishment of a sub-committee to enhance the insurance sector's resilience against increasing cyberthreats.

The "Cybersecurity Subcommittee," the 10th of its kind under Saudi Insurance, was formed following approval from the Insurance Authority. This new initiative will fortify the cybersecurity framework within the Kingdom's insurance industry as part of ongoing efforts to align with Saudi Vision 2030's objectives of digital transformation and enhanced cyber resilience.

Learning Language
Honor sponsors Chinese language competition

Honor has announced its official sponsorship of the 23rd Chinese Bridge-Chinese Proficiency Competition in Saudi Arabia, being organized by Confucius Institute at Prince Sultan University. Driven by a continued dedication to promote learning, teaching, and supporting cultural and intellectual activities across various linguistic and interdisciplinary domains, Honor chose to collaborate with Prince Sultan University for this event.

The competition will provide a stage for adults and college students in Saudi Arabia who are learning Chinese to demonstrate their Chinese ability, while stimulating their interest in learning the language, and enhancing their understanding of Chinese culture.

New Features
Juniper Networks upgrades AI-native platform

Juniper Networks, a leader in secure, AI-native networking, announced new additions to its premier AI-native networking platform that set the bar for proactive insight and automation, driving even more value into the industry's leading wired and wireless access solutions. The company's cloud-hosted wired, wireless and access assurance products, driven by Mist AI, have been augmented alongside Marvis — the industry's only AI-native virtual network assistant — with new capabilities that proactively find and fix network, application and security issues.

Germany's forward Thomas Mueller addresses a news conference after a training session of the German national football team in Blankenhain, eastern Germany, on Tuesday.



Sport News

FOR THE COMMUNITY

Top Saudi clubs expanding into community-building programs

Al-Hilal FC, Al-Nassr, Ittihad and Ahli are leading the push in corporate social responsibility

Razan Baker Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development announced this month the launch of its first Corporate Social Responsibility Awards 2024, marking a new age of sustainable development and community involvement in the Kingdom.

The CSR initiative recognizes and inspires private-sector firms corresponding to Saudi Vision 2030's social responsibility objectives. It promotes local initiatives to implement international standards, encourage competition, and set exemplary corporate practices.

Saudi Arabia's sports clubs, traditionally focused on sports, entertainment, and culture, are now expanding to include community-building programs. The CSR Awards 2024 will focus on these efforts, recognizing initiatives that promote social development and local progress outside of sports.

Teams including Al-Hilal, Al-Nassr, Ittihad and Ahli are leading the push in CSR. They are making significant progress in youth development, health promotion, and environmental sustainability. From grassroots football programs for poor children to scholarships for promising young players from disadvantaged backgrounds, these efforts are consistent with Vision 2030's emphasis on economic diversification and social transformation.

Furthermore, European and



Newly crowned league champions Al-Hilal are one of the top clubs involved in CSR programs across the Kingdom. X/@AlHilal_EN

Asian examples demonstrate how sports clubs advocate sustainability programs with broad reach and impact. Forest Green Rovers of England is the world's first UN-certified carbon-neutral football team. Their environmentally friendly methods, such as an organic pitch and solar-powered facilities, have spurred others to pursue greener strategies.

FC Bayern Munich in Germany

exemplifies how clubs may incorporate sustainability into their operations, with efforts such as the Allianz Arena's energy-efficient architecture and recycling programs setting a high bar for environmental care.

Japan's Kashima Antlers have introduced innovative sustainability techniques, such as rainwater harvesting and LED lighting systems, to reduce their environmental footprint in Asia.

Also, China's Guangzhou Evergrande Taobao FC has conducted large tree-planting projects to help with reforestation and ecological

conservation. The ministry hopes to develop a culture in which social impact is synonymous with financial success, resulting in a more socially responsible economic landscape in Saudi Arabia.

The award criteria include community engagement, environmental sustainability, and ethical governance, emphasizing the organizational benefit of CSR activities. Sports clubs, as role models for other businesses, have a unique power to promote social ideals and effect constructive change.

Furthermore, communication and social media are essential in

promoting CSR efforts, raising awareness, and mobilizing support. Platforms such as X, Instagram, and Facebook let clubs promote their sustainability efforts, communicate with followers, and increase their impact, resulting in a more inclusive and sustainable future.

With good communication, CSR programs in sports teams can indirectly enhance profitability by improving brand recognition, increasing fan engagement, attracting sponsorship, and lowering costs through energy efficiency and regulatory compliance.

CROWNING GLORY

Joy for Jesus as Al-Hilal complete Saudi league campaign unbeaten

Arab News Riyadh

Al-Hilal's coach, Jorge Jesus, on Monday night expressed his joy after his title-winning team beat Al-Wehda 2-1 to end the 2023-24 Saudi Pro League season without a loss.

Jesus said he is enjoying the best days of his career with the Riyadh giants.

Mohammed Kanno gave Al-Hilal a 19th-minute lead, with the home team equalizing in the 77th minute through fellow Saudi



Al-Hilal coach Jorge Jesus and his players celebrate completing an unbeaten SPL season after the final-day 2-1 win over Al-Wehda. X/@AlHilal_EN

HIGHLIGHT

FIFA award for devastating displays in Mexico will be up for auction on June 6 at the world famous Aguttes International Auction House in Paris.

international Yahya Al-Najei. But Aleksandar Mitrovic scored in stoppage time to ensure a final-day win for the "Invincibles."

"We were keen to end our

last match in the league with a victory to preserve this exceptional league season, during which we broke records after gaining 96 points, achieved the largest victory in a single match, and we also finished the league without a loss," Jesus said.

"I experienced many happy moments during my career with the clubs I coached, but my happiness with Al-Hilal is more than wonderful, especially in this exceptional season," he concluded.

SAUDI PRO LEAGUE

'Happy' Ronaldo clinches top scorer award as he looks ahead to King Cup final

Arab News Riyadh

Al-Nassr captain Cristiano Ronaldo on Monday night notched a brace in the 4-2 win over Al-Ittihad in Riyadh to close out the 2023-24 Saudi Pro League season with 35 goals and clinch the top scorer award.

Ronaldo opened the scoring in stoppage time of the first half and doubled the lead in the 69th minute.

Al-Nassr's other goals came from Abdulrahman Ghareeb (penalty, 79) and Meshari Al-Nemer (95), while Al-Ittihad's goals came from Farhah Al-Shamrani (88) and Fabinho (92).

Ronaldo's final tally broke the previous record held by Abderrazak Hamdallah, who scored 34 for



Al-Nassr in 2018-19, and was also the sixth time in the Portuguese legend's career that he has finished a domestic league season as top scorer.

Before joining the Yellows in January 2023, Ronaldo had finished top scorer in league campaigns for Sporting Lisbon in his native

Portugal, Manchester United in the English Premier League, three times for Real

Madrid in Spain and once with Juventus in Italy.

"I am very happy to end the season with a victory, as well as with my record, which I was not expecting, but it is very important in my career," Ronaldo said after the win over the Tigers.

"We finished the league well, and now our goal is to win the King Cup, and I expect the team to give its best to achieve the title."

Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

In front of 15,000 fans Germany begin pre-Euro 2024 training camp

With the smell of bratwurst floating through the air, Germany kicked off their Euro 2024 training camp under blue skies in front of 15,000 fans in the central town of Jena.

Germany are based in Thuringia, part of the former East, for their pre-Euros training camp.

England will be based at the same venue during the tournament itself, while Germany will head south to Herzogenaurach — the small Bavarian village where clothing giant Adidas is headquartered.

"It gives the team a great feeling that the country is behind us and everyone supports us," coach Julian Nagelsmann said on Monday. **AFP**

Tennis Nadal: 'difficult' and 'not smart' to play Wimby

Rafael Nadal on Monday virtually ruled himself out of a final appearance at Wimbledon this year, saying it will not be "smart" to do so before the Olympics.

"I can't confirm anything, but I don't think it's smart after everything my body has been through," said Nadal after being knocked out of the French Open by Alexander Zverev in the first round.

"It will be difficult playing on grass considering that right after Wimbledon are the Olympic Games." **AFP**



Swimming Sun eyes return as drugs ban ends

Disgraced three-time Olympic champion Sun Yang hopes to return to competitive swimming "as soon as possible" after his more than four-year ban for a doping violation ended on Tuesday.

The Chinese freestyler was originally suspended for eight years by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) in 2020 for smashing vials of blood during a 2018 test, the circumstances of which he still disputes. **AFP**

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David Lynch took to social media to tease something for June 5. In a cryptic post shared on X, the filmmaker surprised his followers with a video announcement, saying: 'Ladies and gentlemen, something is coming along ... for you to see and hear.'



& Finally

CLOSE UP

Amina Muaddi marks BRITO capsule launch

Arab News Dubai

Romanian Jordanian footwear designer Amina Muaddi celebrated the launch of her BRITO capsule collection, featuring six varieties of the BRITO slipper in muted-to-neon colorways, by sharing a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the launch party on social media on Monday night.

The designer hosted a launch event in Milan in May that was attended by her loyal A-list fans, including French model and actress Tina Kunakey, who has Moroccan heritage; Italian singer and actress Elodie; and Giorgia Tordini, who is an Italian designer and the co-founder of luxury label The Attico, among many others.

For the event, the designer wore a bright orange latex dress featuring a wrap-around skirt that tied at her waist. She paired it with matching orange BRITO heels, which are created from a single block of plexiglass carved into the designer's signature flared heel.

Besides orange, the handcrafted square-toed heels, made in Italy, also come in hues of neon pink, electric green, bright blue, black and transparent.

Kunakey, who fronted Muaddi's latest campaign, attended the event in a form-fitting dress with a turtleneck collar and short sleeves. She sported a transparent pair of the BRITO heels.

For the campaign, Kunakey was photographed in Ibiza by fashion photographer Dario Cattellani.

This marks Kunakey's third collaboration with Muaddi. The model shared her thoughts on Instagram earlier this month about working with the part-Arab designer once again.



Amina Muaddi's brand is known for its signature flared heels. Getty Images

Right: Tina Kunakey attended the event in a form-fitting dress with a turtleneck collar. Instagram



BEAUTY STORE

Georgina Rodriguez collaborates with Faces

Arab News Dubai

Argentine model Georgina Rodriguez took to social media to share images from her recent visit to beauty store Faces in Riyadh Park Mall. The social media sensation - partner to football legend Cristiano Ronaldo - posted a reel on Instagram featuring moments from her trip to the store, captioning the post, "Beauty time with @facesmiddleeast," along with a pink heart emoji.

Rodriguez can be seen getting an analysis with Faces' skincare diagnosis machine and trying on several of the store's products.

Rodriguez also took a moment to congratulate Ronaldo on Instagram Stories as the Portuguese footballer - who plays for Saudi football club Al-Nassr - set a new record for goals scored in a Saudi Pro League season.



Adele in an Elie Saab gown.

FASHION STATEMENT

Adele wears Elie Saab gown at Vegas concert

Arab News Dubai

British singer Adele showed off a gown by Lebanese designer Elie Saab during her Las Vegas residency. The Grammy-winning singer performed her 42nd "Weekends with Adele" concert in a sleek black, off-shoulder gown with a deep V-neck. "Captivating elegance, @adele graces the stage in Vegas in (a) ... custom made Haute Couture gown," read a post on the official Instagram page of Elie Saab.

The Six

Stage costumes

These six superstars have sported Arab creations on stage in the past.



Adele

In March 2023, Adele showed off a gown by Lebanese designer Zuhair Murad during her Las Vegas residency. The Grammy-winning singer performed her 15th "Weekends with Adele" concert in a black beaded lace gown by the designer.



Taylor Swift

Taylor Swift showed off a tulle gown with a wide skirt and an embellished corset by Elie Saab on stage during the "Eras Tour" in New Jersey in May 2023.



Beyonce

Beyonce hit the stage in a custom-made catsuit by Lebanese designer Georges Hobeika on her "Renaissance World Tour" concert in Germany in June 2023.



Jennifer Lopez

Jennifer Lopez took to the stage at the Citizen VAX LIVE: The Concert To Reunite The World show in 2021 in shimmering jumpsuit from Lebanese couturier Zuhair Murad.



Elyanna

Palestinian Chilean singer Elyanna performed at the Coachella music festival in 2023 in an outfit created by Egyptian fashion designer Rafik Zaki.



Shakira

Shakira wore a glittering red ensemble by Lebanese label Charbel Zoe for the closing ceremony of the 2014 Fifa World Cup in Brazil.

INTERVIEW

New film fest in London seeks to 'reclaim, celebrate' Muslim identity

Tamara Turki London

A new film festival in the UK is on a mission to explore Muslim experiences through film.

The inaugural Muslim International Film Festival will begin on May 30 in London's Leicester Square. The four-day event features narratives from international Muslim filmmakers as well as productions inspired by Muslim culture and faith.

"The idea behind the festival is about reclaiming our identity

and celebrating it. For the longest time, being Muslim has felt like something we can't be proud of," MIFF director Sajid Varda told Arab News.

He added: "We've had to hide our identity, and the narrative around our faith and identities has often been controlled by others."

"There's been a persistent frustration with how to change those perceptions, while also reconnecting with wider audiences and communities.



Sajid Varda, MIFF director.

"We want to give them a glimpse into our lives and lived experiences, while also showcasing the cinematic brilliance of our creative

community and its contributions to cinema."

The event will begin with the London premiere of "Hounds" ("Les Meutes") by Moroccan director Kamal Lazraq. The film follows a father and son in Casablanca's suburbs who make ends meet by committing petty crimes for a local mob until a kidnapping goes horribly wrong.

The festival will include Q&A sessions, panels and networking events in partnership with

the British Film Commission, Netflix and the BBC.

Organizers have made the festival as accessible as possible to wider audiences, Varda said.

"We wanted to ensure that the films align with our faith and ethos, avoiding gratuitous violence, nudity and overtly sexual themes. This makes the content accessible to all, not just Muslims, but also people of other faiths and beliefs who might be sensitive to these issues."