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SUNDAY, June 9, 2024
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ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

SINCE 1975

MIDDLE EAST WAR

Israel kills 210 in Gaza

- President Abbas calls for emergency UN Security Council session on Nuseirat carnage
- 4 hostages rescued, special forces officer slain in operation
- 4 soldiers die in IED blast

Arab News Jeddah

Israeli forces rescued four hostages held by Hamas since October in a raid in Gaza on Saturday that killed 210 people, one of the single bloodiest Israeli assaults of the eight-month-old war.

The hostage rescue operation and an intense accompanying air assault took place in central Gaza's Nuseirat, a densely built-up and often embattled area in the conflict between Israel and Hamas.

An officer in the police's special counterterrorism unit was killed in the operation.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called for an emergency UN Security Council session on "the bloody massacre that was carried out by the Israeli forces."

Gazan paramedics and residents said the assault killed scores of people and left mangled bodies of men, women and children strewn around a marketplace and a mosque.

Social media footage showed bodies spilling entrails onto bloodstained streets.

"It was like a horror movie but this was a real massacre. Israeli drones and warplanes fired all night randomly at people's houses and at people who tried to flee the area," said Ziad, 45, a paramedic and resident of Nuseirat.

Emergency response teams sought to ferry the dead and wounded to hospital in the nearby city of Deir Al-Balah but



A medic at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital waits to receive an injured Palestinian following the Israeli bombardment in the Gaza Strip on Saturday. AFP

The airstrikes burnt the tents, the tents are melting and the people's bodies are also melting.

A Gaza resident at the Kuwaili Hospital in Rafah.

many bodies were still lying in the streets, including around the market district, Ziad and other residents said.

Two people were killed on Saturday in an Israeli airstrike on the outskirts of the southern Lebanese town of Aitaroun.

Meanwhile, four Israeli

soldiers were killed and several wounded in Gaza City's Zeitoun neighborhood on Friday. They were hit by an explosive device or devices in an alleyway, said Israel's army.

Elsewhere, thousands of people marched through central London to Parliament on Saturday calling

for a permanent ceasefire in the Gaza-Israel war.

Protesters waved Palestinian flags and chanted: "End the genocide" and "Free, free Palestine."

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• **Opinion:** Yossi Mekelberg Page 9

DEFIANT MILITIA

Yemenis' abduction by Houthis slammed

Saeed Al-Batati Al-Mukalla

Human rights groups on Saturday strongly denounced the Houthis' abduction of scores of Yemenis working for the UN and for US organizations in Yemen.

Yemeni Human Rights Minister Ahmed Arman said on Friday that the Iran-backed militia had kidnapped around 50 Yemeni personnel from various UN agencies, the US Embassy, US-funded NGOs, and other foreign organizations in Sanaa after storming their residences.

The Houthis also reportedly abducted Yemeni workers in other Yemeni provinces under their control.

On Saturday, Arman told Arab News that the Houthis had resumed their raids on residences in Sanaa and abducted more Yemenis working for foreign organizations, but did not provide the names of those people or the organizations they work for.

In a joint statement, 118 Yemeni human rights organizations said the Houthi intelligence and security services had conducted simultaneous raids on the homes of Yemenis working for the UN and other international organizations in Sanaa, Hodeidah, Saada, and Amran, abducting them and taking their mobile phones and laptops.

"The Houthi militia's continued crimes constitute a blatant breach of national and international laws and standards, as well as a manifest disrespect for all international and regional attempts aimed at restoring peace in the country," the Yemeni groups said.

The Brief

REST STATIONS

The UAE is opening 6,000 rest stations for delivery riders to help them combat the hot summer months. **P7**

MODI'S OATH

India's incumbent Premier Narendra Modi and his Cabinet will take an oath of office for a third term on Sunday. **P8**

SAUDI CAR SALES

The Saudi automotive market surges ahead, dominating over half of the GCC car sales and claiming a spot among the top 20 global markets. **P11**

GUESTS OF GOD

Saudi girl scouts help Hajj pilgrims in Makkah, Madinah

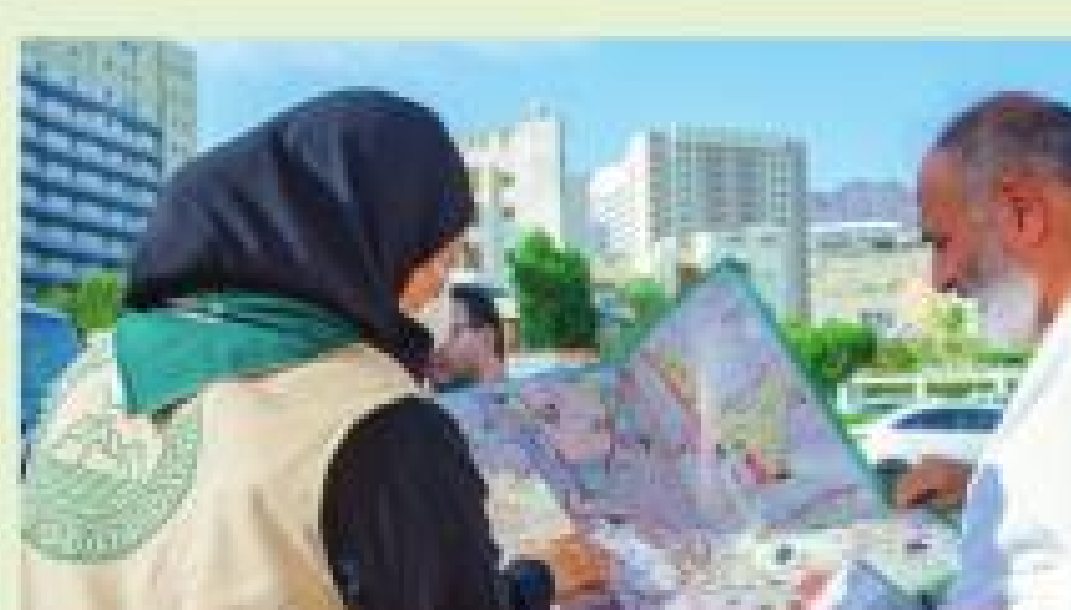
Women playing pivotal roles in various sectors as their participation in national development growing



Arab News Jeddah

The Saudi Arabian Boy Scouts Association has enlisted more than 220 members from the Saudi Girl Scout Committee to help pilgrims during Hajj.

Abdulrahman Al-Mudaires, deputy chairman of the association, emphasized its commitment to increasing the participation of



girl scouts in such camps.

"The aim is to empower young girls, harness their energies and abilities, and broaden their opportunities for volunteer work," he

said, adding that this initiative is a step toward ensuring equal opportunities for both male and female youth in Saudi society.

Commending the efforts of

The initiative reflects the Kingdom's commitment to empower and support Saudi girls. Supplied

Hajj coverage
Pages 4 & 5

Princess Sama bint Faisal bin Abdullah, chairwoman of the Saudi Girl Scout Committee, Al-Mudaires said: "Princess Sama's dedication to ensuring the presence of girl scouts in diverse volunteer activities has proven instrumental in their achievements and contributions," he said.

Last year, 150 members of the Saudi Girl Scouts Committee served pilgrims at King Faisal Hospital in Makkah, and guided them in cooperation with the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah.

The participation of Saudi

girls in national development has been steadily growing, with them now playing pivotal roles in various sectors, including volunteering and community service, said a report.

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Our marine environment is an important wealth that we must preserve and enhance its sustainability.

Ahmed Al-Khateeb

Saudi tourism minister



Radar

KSA today



Jeddah Diving

Discover the mysteries of the underwater world. Instructors will take divers through the basics to ensure the best experience and safety. The session takes place on Friday and can be booked through [experiences.suplift.com](#).



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Riyadh Padel

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The Register

THE PICTURES THAT MARK THE DAY



Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Climate Envoy Adel Al-Jubeir headed the Kingdom's delegation at the high-level event on ocean action "Im-

mersed in Change," which took place in the Costa Rican capital, San Jose.

The event, held between June 7-8, discussed best practices and experiences related to ocean management. It also

highlighted the most important topics related to international ocean conservation and addressed the pressing environmental crisis affecting oceans, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Saturday.

Today's Number

35m

The Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Call and Guidance recently broadcast more than 35 million text messages through all mobile phone operators of telecommunications companies in the Kingdom as part of the Islamic awareness work on Hajj for this year, Saudi Press Agency reported.

Review

'Grit'

HEBISHI ALSHAMMARI

In "Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance," Angela Duckworth challenges the idea that natural talent is the sole recipe for success.

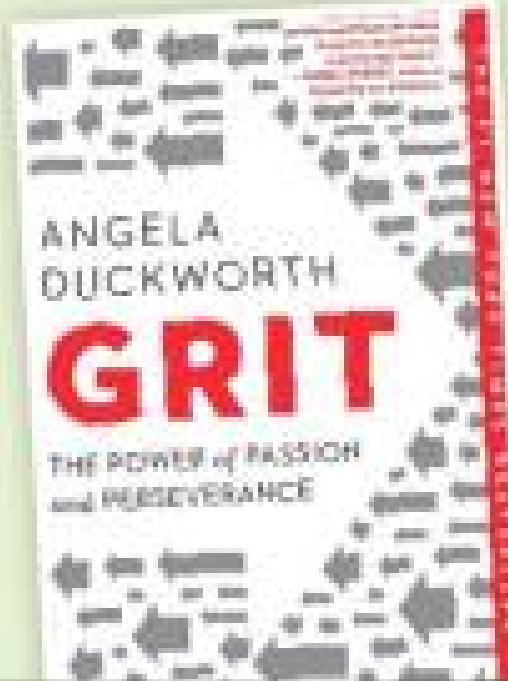
Duckworth argues that a powerful combination of passion and perseverance, which she terms "grit," is a far more reliable predictor of achievement.

Duckworth delves into the concept of grit through captivating stories of West Point cadets, spelling bee champions, and everyday individuals. She weaves together research and personal anecdotes to illustrate the importance of long-term goals, sustained effort, and bouncing back from setbacks.

Grit is not just about blind hard work; it is about working smart and strategically. Duckworth emphasizes the power of deliberate practice, a focused approach to honing your skills and mastering a craft.

The book offers a refreshing and empowering perspective on the path to success. It acknowledges the role of talent but underscores the significance of dedication and a never-give-up attitude.

"Grit" is a motivating read that will inspire you to identify your passions and pursue them with unwavering determination.



What's Trending

Today's hot topics explained by Ameera Abid



'I GOT RID OF MY PHONE' Ed Sheeran

Grammy-winner Ed Sheeran has revealed that he has not had a phone since almost 2015.

The singer and songwriter appeared on the talk show *Therapuss* with Jake Shane. The fun fact came up when he offered to give the host Shane his email instead of giving him his number: "I don't have a number, that isn't me playing off either."

Sheeran said that he moved everything to email to which he responds once a week: "I just was losing real-life interaction, so I got rid of my phone."

He realized in 2015 that he had an overwhelming amount of contacts: "I had the same number from like, age 15, I think and I got famous and I had 10,000 contacts in my phone that would just ... people would just text the whole time. And I was just constantly in touch with a lot of people."

'HIT MAN'

Richard Linklater

Richard Linklater's noir comedy "Hit Man," inspired by real events, has been receiving rave reviews.

The movie was co-written by the film's star Glen Powell. The star-studded cast includes Adria Arjona, Austin Amelio and Molly Kate Bernard.

In a deep dive shared on the Netflix website, Linklater said that the movie "is about a lot of things."

"It's about identity and self and passion. But on a plot level, it's just a guy who gets in a little too deep," Linklater said. "His passions lead him in a direction where he's deceiving someone he's in love with, and being someone else ... they have to deal with those repercussions."

Arjona said that the chemistry between the two leading characters came easy. When she first met Glen Powell, they spent four hours talking. "We were both doing Sober January, and an hour

into dinner, we were both cutting loose, drinking tequila and celebrating the fact that we were going to do this movie together."

"Sitting down with Adria the first time, it felt like the best first date, but also like I'd known her forever," Powell added.

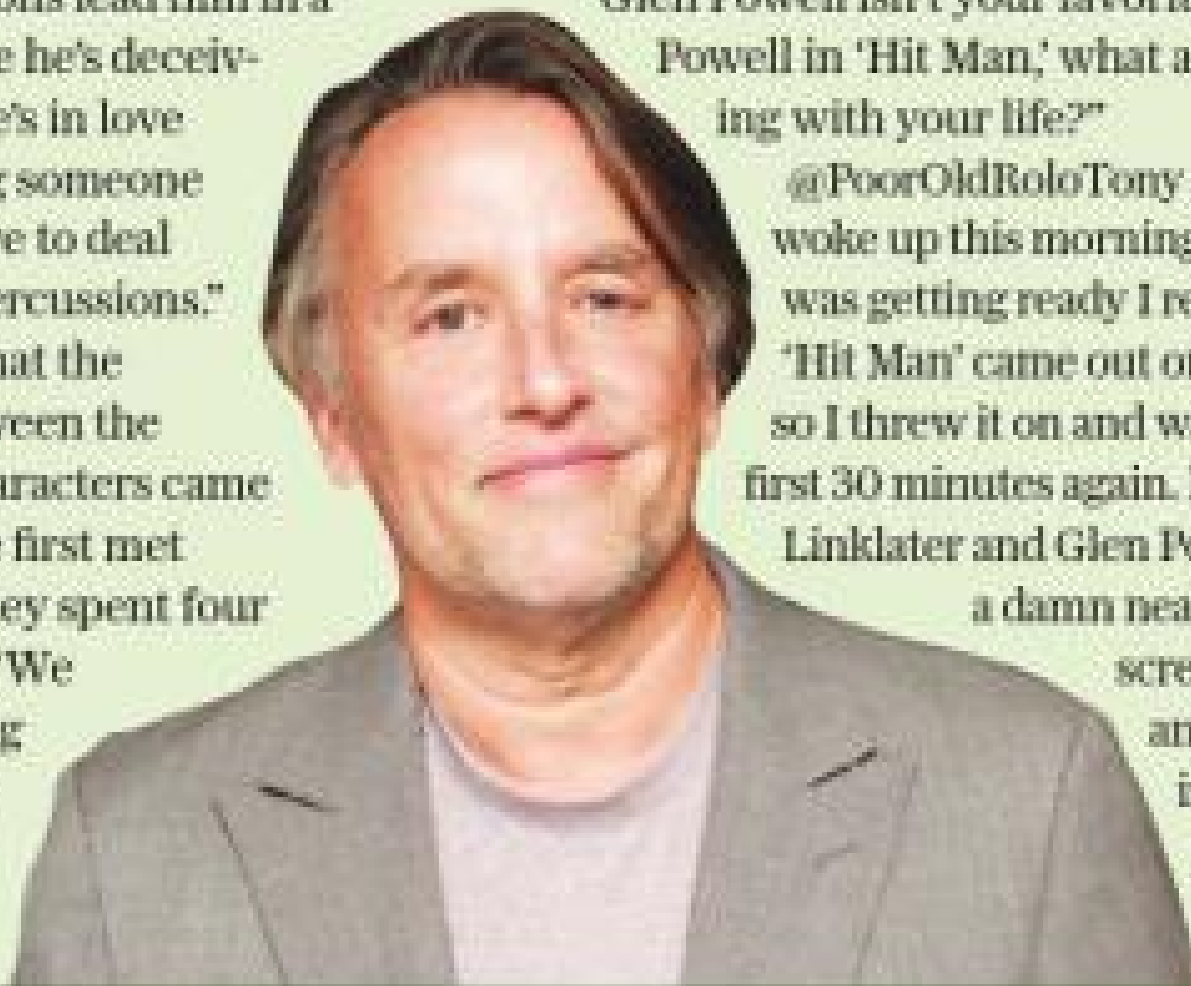
The movie is currently rated 98 percent on Rotten Tomatoes.

@brockwilbur said on X: "'Hit Man' is worth watching just for the scene of Glen Powell doing his best Patrick Bateman"

@blewis1103 posted: "If Tilda Swinton Glen Powell isn't your favorite Glen Powell in 'Hit Man,' what are you doing with your life?"

@PoorOldRoloTony said on X: "I woke up this morning and while I was getting ready I remembered 'Hit Man' came out on Netflix, so I threw it on and watched the first 30 minutes again. Richard

Linklater and Glen Powell wrote a damn near perfect screenplay and it's so immediately apparent."



TheRegion

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Jeddah

- The Chocolate Factory at Jbeil, Lebanon, is inviting people to fulfill a childhood dream to see, smell, touch, and taste chocolate in a fully automatic factory and learn about the production process, from raw materials to end products. The tour takes place every Saturday until Sept. 28.

- The Gulf Bride Show 2024 gathers designers, artists, professionals, corporate manufacturers, and related sectors with an audience to see the latest trends in the bride supply world. Held at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre until June 9.

- Qatar Auto Museum's "A Sneak Peek" exhibition explores

the past, present, and future of the automobile and its impact on global life and culture. It also celebrates the mission to drive culture forward and to inspire the next generation of innovators, designers, engineers, collectors, and policymakers through a shared passion for cars. The exhibition will run until Jan. 26, 2025.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

June 9	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghreb	Isha
Makkah	04:11	05:37	12:20	03:38	07:02	08:32
Madinah	04:02	05:32	12:21	03:42	07:09	08:39
Riyadh	03:33	05:03	11:53	03:14	06:41	08:11
Abha	04:09	05:33	12:09	03:31	06:45	08:15
Dammam	03:13	04:46	11:39	03:05	06:31	08:01

Stromatolites are a vestige of the earliest life on Earth.
Volker Vahrenkamp
Professor of geology at KAUST



Spotlight

RESEARCH & STUDIES
THE MIDDLE EAST, BETTER EXPLAINED

ARAB NEWS

SCIENCE

A short stroll along the beach, one giant leap back in time

Geological structures discovered off Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast offer glimpse of how life originated on Earth

Jonathan Gornall London

It was something of an accidental discovery, admits Volker Vahrenkamp with a smile.

"Sometimes, these things need a little luck."

Vahrenkamp, a professor of geology at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Thuwal, on Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast, had set out with a team of colleagues to take a closer look at a coastal geological phenomenon they had spotted on satellite images. The so-called teepee structures, a tent-shaped buckling of sedimentary deposits found in intertidal zones, are valuable indicators of environmental changes, ancient and modern.

The team was delighted to discover there were examples virtually on their doorstep — just 400 km up the coast from KAUST, off the southern tip of Sheybarah Island, best known for Red Sea Global's luxury tourism resort of the same name.

"There aren't really many good examples of teepee structures, where people can study how they form," Vahrenkamp told Arab News.

"Then we spotted this, and it's the most spectacular example that I'm aware of."

The satellite images had shown that there were two teepee fields in the island's intertidal zone and, after a short boat trip across from the mainland on a converted fishing boat, "we landed on the island, examined one field, and then started walking across to the other."

And then, as they crossed the foreshore between the two, "we literally stepped on these stromatolites."

Stromatolites are layered rock-like structures created by tiny microbes, individually invisible to the naked eye, some of which trap sediment in their filaments.

Living on rocks in the intertidal zone, they are covered and uncovered daily by the coming and going of the tides and, in a process known as biomineralization, slowly transform the dissolved minerals and sand grains they capture into a solid mass.

Human beings, and every other living thing on Earth that relies on oxygen to survive, owe their very existence to the tiny, so-called cyanobacteria that have been creating stromatolites for about 3.5 billion years.

Cyanobacteria were one of the first lifeforms on Earth, at a time when the planet's atmosphere consisted mainly of carbon dioxide and methane. When they emerged about 3.5 billion years ago, they



KAUST scientists examine the stromatolite field (main) off Sheybarah Island (inset and below), now a Red Sea Global resort. Photo by Viswasanthi Chandra



possessed a particular skill — the ability to generate energy from sunlight.

This process, photosynthesis, had a crucial by-product — oxygen. Scientists now believe that the microscopic cyanobacteria were responsible for the biggest thing that ever happened on the planet — the Great Oxidation Event, which saw Earth's atmosphere transformed and set the scene for the evolution of oxygen-dependent life as we now know it.

Most stromatolites today are merely fossils. As other life on Earth developed, they lost their foothold in the planet's oceans to competitors, such as coral reefs.

In a few places in the world, however, "modern" living stromatolites, "analogs for their ancient counterparts," as Vahrenkamp puts it, continue to grow.

"Stromatolites are a vestige of the earliest life on Earth," he said. "They ruled the Earth for an incredible period of time, about 3 billion years."

"Today they are part of the rock record in many parts of the world, but from these old rocks it is impossible to work out what type of microbes were involved and exactly how they did what they did." That's why the discovery of a rare colony of living stromatolites, such as the one off Sheybarah Island, is such a gift to geologists, biologists and environmental scientists. "When you find a

IN NUMBERS

400km

Distance of teepee fields from KAUST campus

3bn

Years when rock-like stromatolites ruled the Earth

120m

Meters by which sea level was lower during last Ice Age

modern example such as this, the chances are that you might be able to better understand how the interaction of this microbial community led to the creation of stromatolites."

Other examples are known, but they are almost always found in extreme environments, such as alkaline lakes and ultra-saline lagoons, where competitors cannot thrive.

One previous colony has been found in a more normal marine environment, in the Bahamas — which Vahrenkamp has visited, which is why he so readily recognized what he was walking on off Sheybarah Island — but this is the first example of living stromatolites discovered in Saudi waters.

It is not yet clear how old these stromatolites are, "but we can bracket it a little," said

SIGNS OF ANCIENT LIFE

Scientists have identified descendants of the earliest life forms on Earth, living just off Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast



Vahrenkamp. "We know that during the last Ice Age, the sea level here was 120 meters lower, so they were not there 20,000 years ago. The area where they are was flooded about 8,000 years ago to a height about 2 meters above where it is now, and then the sea level receded again to where it is now about 2,000 years ago."

This does not mean the stromatolites are 2,000 years old. No one knows how long it takes the microbes to create their sedimentary layer cake and "no one has yet come up with a good way of dating the layers."

"The tide and the waves come along and throw in sand and material from the surrounding reefs and so all kinds of ages might be present. This makes it very difficult to precisely date the stromatolites and to estimate the growth rate." That is why Vahrenkamp and colleagues are now devising an experiment to recreate the natural environment of rising and falling tides

and alternating sunlight and darkness in an aquarium, in an effort to grow stromatolites under controlled, easily observable conditions.

Whether this will take weeks or many years, "we honestly don't know." The team is also working on genetically sequencing many of the thousands of different types of microbial bacteria at work in the stromatolite factory.

"It's a question of finding out 'who' is there, and who's doing what," said Vahrenkamp.

"But then there is also the question of what kind of functionalities do these bacteria have, and whether we can use it in other ways, perhaps in medical applications."

"Scientists are now looking intently at the microbial composition of our guts, to find out which microbes cause cancer, for example, and which prevent it. The microbacteria at work in stromatolites could contain functional secrets that we simply are not yet aware of."

The discovery also has resonance for the environmental ambitions of the Saudi Green Initiative, announced by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in 2021 and which aims, together with the Middle East Green Initiative, to combat climate change through regional cooperation.

As Vahrenkamp and his seven co-authors wrote in a paper published recently in *Geology*, the journal of the Geological Society of America, "the discovery of the Sheybarah stromatolite fields holds important implications, not only in the scientific perspective, but also in terms of ecosystem services and environmental heritage awareness in line with the ongoing projects for sustainability and ecotourism development promoted by Saudi Arabia."

In the paper, the KAUST scientists thank Red Sea Global for its support in accessing the stromatolite site, which is currently being considered for designation as a conservation zone.

As for the tourists relaxing in the spectacular new overwater villas on Sheybarah Island's crystal-clear Al-Wajh Lagoon, an extra attraction now is that a short stroll along the beach will take them back in time for a glimpse of life on Earth 3.5 billion years ago.



Layered rock-like structures, stromatolites are created by tiny microbes, individually invisible to the naked eye, some of which trap sediment in their filaments. Photo by Elisa Garuglieri

HAJJ WORKFORCE

Saudi HR ministry promotes seasonal work during Hajj

42,853 work permits issued across various fields

The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development is continuing its Ajeer Al-Hajj and Seasonal Permits services as part of efforts to encourage seasonal work during this Hajj season.

The Ajeer Al-Hajj service allows facilities to issue work permits, and employ Saudis and residents temporarily, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Saturday. It also enables them to post job openings during the Hajj season through the Bab Ajeer platform, in addition to allowing job seekers to review and apply for work.

Ajeer Al-Hajj has several goals, including enhancing workforce flexibility and increasing its

competency in the market, providing flexible solutions, and reducing dependence on outside labor. The service is easily available electronically for facilities and individuals through the platform's website. A total of 924 facilities benefited from the service, with 11,715 permits issued, SPA reported.

The seasonal permits service allows facilities working during the Hajj season to cover the number of workers needed and contributes to serving pilgrims, as the ministry had earlier worked on issuing seasonal permits to facilities under facilitated and easy terms.

The number of seasonal work permits issued reached 42,853 for several professions in different fields, SPA said.

The ministry's oversight committees carry out follow-ups

HIGHLIGHT

Ajeer Al-Hajj has several goals, including enhancing workforce flexibility and increasing its competency in the market, providing flexible solutions, and reducing dependence on outside labor.

to ensure that facilities operating during the Hajj season abide by the requirements and terms of the seasonal work permit regulations.

They also ensure that facilities comply with the regulations and instructions.

The ministry carried out several field visits to oversee facilities and follow up on the work system provisions and regulations in Makkah and the holy sites.



The annual exercises are crucial for the Civil Defense forces to ensure optimal preparedness for Hajj. SPA

HAJJ READINESS

Civil Defense conducts bus fire drill inside King Fahd Tunnel toward Mina

The Civil Defense Forces conducted a fire simulation exercise involving a bus fire inside the King Fahd Tunnel toward Mina, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

The drill, carried out with the participation of relevant authorities, aimed to enhance evacuation procedures, measure gas and pollutant levels during a fire, practice smoke-removal techniques, and refine firefighting tactics.

The annual exercises are

HIGHLIGHT

The drill, carried out with the participation of relevant authorities, aimed to enhance evacuation procedures, measure gas and pollutant levels during a fire, practice smoke-removal techniques, and refine firefighting tactics.

crucial for the Civil Defense forces to ensure optimal preparedness for the Hajj season.

The forces' commitment

prioritizes the safety and security of pilgrims and enables them to effectively respond to any emergency, SPA reported.

The General Directorate of Civil Defense raised the level of readiness in Mina to receive pilgrims, adopting several measures to maintain their safety, monitoring the causes of risks in the Hajj pilgrims' camps by intensifying field tours, and following up on the Hajj pilgrimage institutions to confirm their compliance with safety instructions and procedures.

TheSpace

PIF named most valuable sovereign wealth fund brand

TALAT ZAKI HAFIZ



A recent report from Brand Finance — a London-based independent brand valuation consultancy — named Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund as the world's most valuable sovereign wealth fund brand.

The report also ranked the US multinational BlackRock as the world's most valuable asset management brand.

The report valued the PIF at \$1.1 billion and ranked it sixth globally in terms of the ratio of assets it manages to the value of its brand.

The PIF's brand overperformed in several areas, according to the report, including "brand awareness and the goal" — which measures the extent of the public's knowledge of the brand and takes into consideration environmental, social, and governance practices — and "commitment to growth."

The PIF ranked second among sovereign wealth funds in the "Brand Strength" criterion, obtaining 62.1 points with an A+ rating.

Brand Finance based its evaluation process on several steps, including determining royalty ranges for each industry to reflect the importance of the brand to purchasing decisions, calculating royalty rates, and determining brand-specific revenues and forecasted revenues.

For more than 25 years, Brand Finance has managed to consider both marketing and

finance to accurately evaluate the strength of brands, quantifying their financial value to help organizations of all kinds make strategic decisions, and I believe that Brand Finance has done a great job in its valuation of the PIF's strength in different aspects of the business. The PIF deserves its ranking, as it has managed to build an excellent brand since its establishment in 1974.

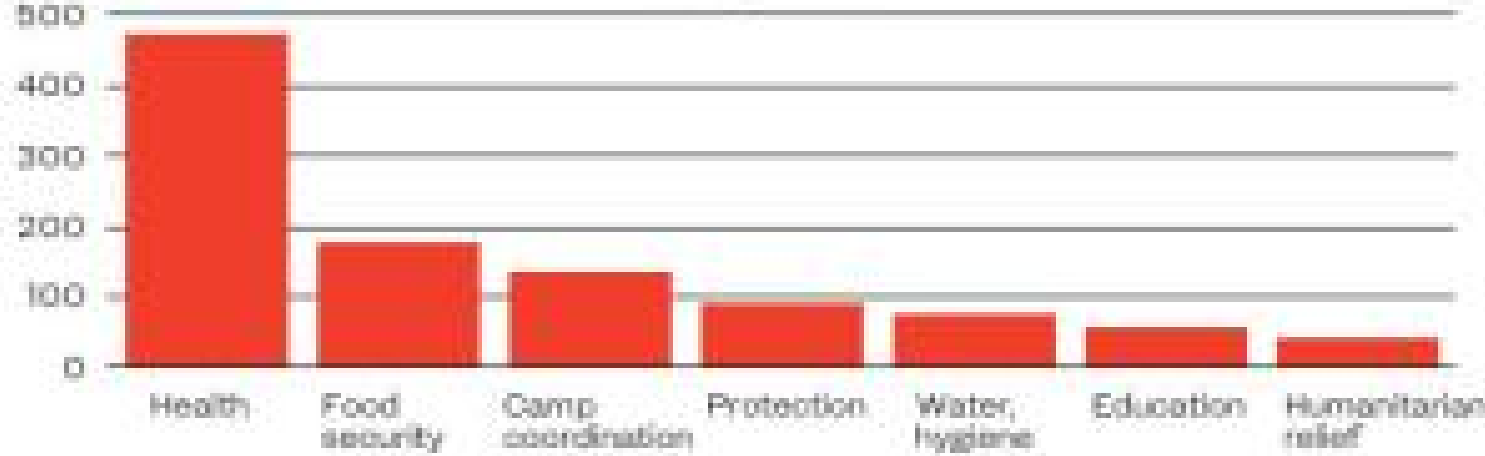
Initially created to help establish companies of foundational importance to the Saudi economy, the PIF was reborn in March 2015 when its management was shifted to the Council of Economic and Development Affairs, and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was appointed chairman. This major change gave PIF greater autonomy and better-defined national strategic responsibilities and enabled the fund to accelerate its performance and become a key driver for Saudi Vision 2030, achieving positive, sustainable economic and social change.

Since 2017, the PIF has launched 94 new companies and created more than 644 job opportunities, while its assets have grown from \$153 billion in 2015 to more than \$930 billion in 2023. The PIF represents the growth and new opportunities that are beginning to reshape the Kingdom's economy, as well as the global economy.

Talat Zaki Hafiz is an economist and financial analyst. X: @TalatHafiz

The Day's FIGURES

SAUDI AID AGENCY PROJECTS IN YEMEN May 2024



Source: ksrelief.org

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Pilgrim care
4,700 violations in Makkah hospitality checks

The Ministry of Tourism announced it will increase its monitoring and inspection of various tourist hospitality facilities in Makkah, including hotels and serviced apartments.

The goal is to enhance the quality of services provided to pilgrims during Hajj.

The ministry's oversight teams have already carried out over 4,500 inspection tours of hospitality facilities in Makkah, the SPA reported.

During the inspections, they identified over 4,700 violations, most of which were related to low cleanliness and maintenance standards, and activities carried out without the necessary licenses. **AN Jeddah**

Relief efforts
Saudi aid agency expands food, aid distribution

Saudi aid agency KSrelief distributed 150 shelter bags to displaced families at a shelter center in Al-Damer in northeast Sudan, benefiting 863 individuals.

In Chad, KSrelief distributed 600 food baskets to needy families in the Batha region, benefiting 3,600 individuals.

KSrelief also distributed 25,000 bundles of bread to Syrian and Palestinian communities in northern Lebanon, benefiting 62,500 individuals.

The Saudi aid center delivered more than 25 tonnes of dates each to Kyrgyzstan and Montenegro as a gift from the Kingdom. **AN Riyadh**

Border control
Kingdom arrests 12,974 illegals in one week

Saudi authorities arrested 12,974 people in one week for breaching residency, work and border security regulations.

According to an official report, a total of 8,044 people were arrested for violations of residency laws, while 3,395 were held over illegal border crossing attempts, and a further 1,535 for labor-related issues.

The Ministry of Interior said that anyone found to be facilitating illegal entry to the Kingdom could face imprisonment for a maximum of 15 years, a fine of up to SR1 million (\$260,000), as well as confiscation of vehicles and property. **AN Riyadh**

HAJJ 2024

HIGH TEMPERATURES

Pilgrims advised to take precautions against scorching heat

Government agencies have implemented protective measures such as more areas for pilgrims to rest in

Halifa Alshammari Riyadh

Millions of Muslims from across the world have arrived to perform Hajj in Makkah during the hottest season of the year in the Kingdom, leading to concerns regarding the challenges that may await them in the days to come.

Unpredictable weather can affect the health and safety of pilgrims, especially the elderly. A primary concern is the extreme heat. As global temperatures continue to rise, heat waves in the region have become more frequent and intense every year.

Last year, temperatures in Makkah ranged between 43-45 degrees Celsius during Hajj, affecting the health of pilgrims, particularly the elderly, who are vulnerable to heat-related problems such as heat stroke and dehydration.

Ayman bin Salem Ghulam, CEO of the Saudi National Center for Meteorology, recently told a press conference in Makkah that maximum temperatures at the holy sites were expected to reach between 45-48 degrees Celsius in the afternoons.

Many elderly pilgrims have underlying medical conditions that can be triggered by heat, making them even more susceptible to health complications.

Dr. Fakhr Al-Ayoubi, president of the Cardio Clinical Pharmacy Group in Saudi Arabia, explained to Arab News how the rising temperatures impact the immune system and increase the risk of developing critical health conditions.

"Increased heat can lead to dehydration, heat stroke, and other heat-related illnesses, which can weaken the immune system and make individuals more



Saudi Hajj scouts spray water on pilgrims to bring them relief from the hot weather during Hajj last year. AN photos



susceptible to infections or illnesses," she said. "It is therefore advisable for Hajj pilgrims to take appropriate precautions to stay hydrated, cool, and healthy during the pilgrimage, especially in the face of changing climate conditions."

She also talked about the significance of vaccination prior to performing Hajj, not only to protect the health of the individual but also that of other pilgrims.

"Vaccines save lives, prevent diseases, and keep people safe. Sometimes it's easy to forget this with how busy our lives get, but by ensuring that we stay safe as individuals through immunizations, we can all play a role in building

HIGHLIGHTS

● Maximum temperatures at the holy sites are expected to reach between 45-48 degrees Celsius in the afternoons, says CEO of National Center for Meteorology.

● The imams and khatibs of the Two Holy Mosques have been directed to shorten Friday sermons and prayers during Hajj season in consideration of the severe heat pilgrims are facing this year.

● The decision is based on the Islamic principle of alleviating the difficulties of worshippers, such as those attending Friday prayers during the Hajj season.



a healthier, more productive community," she explained.

Al-Ayoubi emphasized the importance of strengthening and safeguarding the immune system to protect pilgrims.

"If pilgrims become faced with weakened immune systems, that

means that they are more vulnerable to catching diseases, and this creates a need to safeguard their health through vaccination," she said. "This is especially important during Hajj, where it is commonly crowded, and people are in very close proximity to each other."

The Saudi government and Hajj authorities have implemented a range of measures, including expanding medical facilities at various Hajj locations, providing more areas for pilgrims to rest in, and enhancing transportation and logistics to better accommodate the needs of pilgrims.

The imams and khatibs of the Two Holy Mosques have been directed to shorten Friday sermons and prayers during the Hajj season in consideration of the severe heat pilgrims are facing this year.

Sheikh Abdulrahman Al-Sudais, head of the Presidency of Religious Affairs at the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque, said the directive aims to ensure the safety of worshippers in the mataf, roof, and courtyards of the mosques.

The decision is based on the Islamic principle of alleviating the difficulties of worshippers, such as those attending Friday prayers during the Hajj season.

Al-Sudais noted the importance of delivering concise and impactful messages during sermons. He had previously instructed imams

to reduce the amount of recitation and the gap between the adhan and iqamah during the Hajj season to ease the burden on worshippers, particularly considering overcrowding and the presence of vulnerable and elderly people.

SERVING PILGRIMS

Makkah deputy governor receives Indonesian pilgrims, inspects services

Arab News Jeddah

Prince Saud bin Mishal bin Abdulaziz, the deputy governor of Makkah province, received some 400 pilgrims arriving at the Jeddah airport early Saturday from the city of Surabaya, Indonesia, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

They were among those who utilized the Makkah Route, an initiative launched by the Saudi government six years ago to streamline travel procedures for Hajj pilgrims in the Kingdom.

Prince Saud presented gifts to the arriving pilgrims while inspecting the progress of work at the Hajj and Umrah lounge complex of King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah.

As vice chairman of the Central Hajj Committee, the deputy governor also inspected the services being provided to the "Guests of God" by the public and private agencies operating at the airport.

Prince Saud was accompanied by the director general of passports, Lt. Gen. Sulaiman Al-Yahya; president of the General Authority of Civil Aviation, Abdulaziz Al-Duailej; Hajj and Umrah Deputy Minister Abdel Fattah Mashat; Jeddah airport board chairman, Raed Al-Mudahim, and other officials.

He also monitored work at the security procedures area for passengers and the 143 passport platforms, the customs area, which includes 31 customs inspection devices, in addition



Makkah's deputy governor presented gifts to pilgrims and inspected the progress of work at the Hajj and Umrah lounge complex at King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah. SPA

to the security and operational authorities and service sites at the airport.

Prince Saud also reviewed work at the health center for pilgrims in the

Hajj and Umrah halls, and the group luggage acceptance area, which is located on an area exceeding 35,000 sq. m. and includes 24 external loading lane stops. The service aims to provide an easy travel experience, facilitate pilgrims' procedures and transport their luggage to their locations of residence in Makkah and the Holy Sites.

The deputy governor checked the area designated for the "Pilgrim Without a Bag" initiative, and inspected the locations of the air-conditioned lounges in the general area, as well as the locations of government agencies operating at the airport.

Meanwhile, guests of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Program for Hajj, Umrah and Visitation have said

that the invitation they received to perform Hajj was the best evidence of Saudi Arabia's care and concern for Islam and Muslims, SPA reported.

They said that Saudi Arabia's hosting of Hajj was an extension of the humanitarian work carried out by the Kingdom for all Muslims.

Mustafa Yusuf, secretary-general of the Islamic Society of Vietnam, told SPA: "It is no secret that the Kingdom is making great services for the comfort of the guests of God and meeting their needs. These are tangible efforts with an honorable history, and they are not limited to serving pilgrims or the feelings only, but rather they extend to include Makkah and Madinah."

EXODUS OF MEDICAL STAFF

Syria's forgotten health crisis needs healing: WHO regional chief

AFP Geneva.

Syria's shattered healthcare system has been forgotten by the world at large, a top WHO official said, urging new, creative thinking to halt the exodus of medical staff abroad.

Dr. Hanan Balkhy, the World Health Organization's Eastern Mediterranean regional director, said young doctors needed to be offered better prospects than practicing fourth-century medicine in dire conditions.

Balkhy, who took office in February, visited Syria from May 11-16, describing the situation on her return as "catastrophic," with a "staggering" number of people in need and alarming rates of child malnutrition.

She said almost half the health workforce had fled the country.

Balkhy said Syria was facing "multi, multi-layered crises," with 13 years of civil war, sanctions and last year's major earthquake compounded by a complex geopolitical situation.

Only 65 percent of hospitals and 62 percent of primary healthcare centers are fully operational, and they have severe shortages of medicines and equipment.

"We need to think out of the box when it comes to maintaining the health workforce, bringing in younger people, keeping them engaged so that we still have people signing up," Balkhy said.

Young doctors need to be offered better prospects than practicing fourth-century medicine in dire conditions.

Hanan Balkhy
WHO director



Healthcare workers were facing "very, very low" wages, if they can get a salary.

And if surgeons don't have an operating room, anesthetics, professional nurses and sterilization units, "then what's the use of having a surgeon?" she argued.

"Then you have to have medications. If you're not producing your own medications and you could not import your medications, the doctor is paralyzed, in a way.

"So either you have to accept to practice medicine in the fourth century, where you cauterize people and send them on their merry way,

or we try to figure out creative ways."

Balkhy said such solutions needed to make health professionals more content to stay in Syria or to return to the country, which she said many would "willingly" do, "if they were given some kind of support."

"They're learning German in medical school on the side so that they can be ready to jump, and that's scary for the region," the doctor lamented.

She proposed getting young physicians engaged on research projects with a pathway to publishing, so they can "feel that they're doing something worthwhile" — and making sure that they "at least have the equipment" for surgical operations.

And because doctors cannot travel to conferences to present papers, they need access to virtual platforms to stay in touch with the international health community, she said.

As for medication, Balkhy suggested ramping up pooled procurement and supporting local manufacturing of basic products such as painkillers, antibiotics, and antihypertensives for the "silent killer" — high blood pressure.

Balkhy, who was in Geneva this week for the WHO's executive board meeting, said the intermittent electricity in Syria had broader knock-on health effects than people might realize.

ISTANBUL MEETING

Developing countries urge world to up pressure on Israel

Foreign ministers from D-8 group call on US to lift its veto on full Palestinian UN membership

AFP Istanbul

An alliance of mostly Muslim-majority countries including Turkiye, Egypt and Iran on Saturday demanded full Palestinian membership of the UN and greater international pressure on Israel amid the Gaza war.

The D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, which also includes Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria and Pakistan, called for an immediate ceasefire in the devastated Palestinian territory, where Israel has been battling militants for more than eight months.

Foreign ministers from the group meeting in Istanbul called on the US to lift its veto on full Palestinian UN membership and on all countries to "exert diplomatic, political, economic and legal pressure" on Israel.

They also urged states to ensure Israel complies with the International Court of Justice's decisions, withdraws from the southern Rafah governorate and guarantees the safe entry of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Denouncing an "ongoing genocide and grave violations of international law," the group called on states to contribute to and join legal proceedings against Israel at international courts.

The eight countries also demanded an end to arms and ammunition deliveries to Israel and that all measures be taken to protect Palestinian civilians, rejecting any attempted forced displacement.

They advocated a two-state solution based on 1967 borders with east Jerusalem as a Palestinian capital and a guarantee mechanism to protect a future settlement.

The Gaza war was sparked by Hamas's unprecedented Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel.

Israel's retaliatory military

BACKGROUND

The eight countries demanded an end to arms and ammunition deliveries to Israel and that all measures be taken to protect Palestinian civilians, rejecting any attempted forced displacement.

offensive has killed at least 36,801 people in Gaza, also mostly civilians, according to the territory's Health Ministry.

Israel has also delayed the entry of aid into Gaza, depriving the territory's 2.4 million people of clean water, food, medicines and fuel.

Last week, the World Health Organization said that more than four in five children had gone a whole day without eating at least once in 72 hours.

According to the government media office in Gaza, at least 32 people, many of them children, have died of malnutrition in Gaza since the war began.



Protesters gather on Saturday in Parliament Square, central London, at the end of 'National March for Gaza.'

DESTRUCTION

Israeli strikes spark massive wildfires in southern Lebanon

AFP Beirut

Israeli strikes Saturday on southern Lebanon sparked massive wildfires, state media and a first responder said, the latest fallout from escalating cross-border violence involving Hezbollah.

Hezbollah has traded near-daily fire with Israeli forces in the eight months since the Gaza war began, triggered by the Palestinian militants' Oct. 7 attack.

The deadly clashes have intensified in recent weeks, causing multiple brush fires on both sides of the Israel-Lebanon border.

Lebanon's National News Agency said on Saturday that "Israeli artillery bombarded the outskirts of the town of Alma Al-Shaab with incendiary phosphorus shells, causing fires in the forests that spread to the vicinity of some homes."

It added that the fire had reached "large areas of olive trees."

Lebanese authorities and several international rights groups have accused Israel of using white phosphorus rounds in its strikes on its northern neighbor.

White phosphorus, a substance that ignites on contact with oxygen, can be used as an incendiary weapon.

Its use as a chemical weapon is prohibited under international law, but it is allowed for illuminating battlefields and can be used as a smokescreen.

Rescuer Ali Abbas of the Risala Scout association, affiliated with Hezbollah ally the Amal movement, said that "Israel deliberately bombs forested areas with phosphorus with the aim of starting fires."

According to him, rescuers on the grounds have been struggling to extinguish the flames, while the Lebanese military avoids sending helicopters to assist for fear of more Israeli attacks.

Further east, the NNA reported that "a large fire broke out at positions belonging to the Lebanese army and UNIFIL," the UN peacekeeping mission, in the area of the border village of Mais Al-Jabal.

News Middle East

TRAGEDY

Rescue ship recovers 11 bodies from sea off Libya

UN records 20,000 deaths in central Mediterranean since 2014

Reuters Rome

A charity rescue ship has recovered the bodies of 11 migrants off the coast of Libya on Friday after saving more than 160 people from boats close to the North African country, the Doctors Without Borders or MSF group said.

MSF said its Geo Barents search and rescue vessel picked up 146 migrants in two operations and then found a further 20 in a separate boat.

However, they also plucked the bodies of 11 people who were seen by a spotter plane floating in the sea.

"We do not know the precise cause of this tragedy, but we know that people continue to die in a desperate attempt to reach safety. This slaughter must end," MSF said on the social media platform X.

The Sea Watch group, whose plane saw the bodies, said they tried to contact Libya's coast guard to go and retrieve the dead, but received no reply.

"This is what happens in the Mediterranean, even when nobody sees it," it said in a statement.

The UN has registered more than 20,000 deaths and disappearances in the



Volunteers prepare to evacuate a migrant in critical condition following a rescuing operation near Libya in international waters. File/AFP

central Mediterranean since 2014, making it the most dangerous migrant crossing in the world.

Italy has urged Tunisia and Libya to do more to stop would-be migrants from putting to sea.

It has also clamped down on



We do not know the precise cause of this tragedy, but we know that people continue to die in a desperate attempt to reach safety.

the operations of rescue ships, saying they encourage people to head to Europe — a charge the charities deny.

Underscoring the restrictions imposed on the rescue ships, Italy on Friday told Geo Barents to take its latest group of migrants to the northern

port of Genova — more than 650 nautical miles from their position and far away from the much more convenient ports in nearby Sicily.

"This will significantly delay assistance for the ... survivors who endured a lot already," MSF said.

RECREATIONAL DAY

Floating hospital in Al-Arish offers relief for Gaza children

Arab News Cairo

Staff from the UAE's floating hospital stationed in Al-Arish in Egypt have organized a recreational day for the children of Gaza, state news agency WAM reported.

The initiative aimed to provide relief for war-impacted children.

Mona Talib Ahmed, a nurse at the hospital, said that activities included painting, henna drawing and Holy Qur'an competitions.

She added, "such activities help in easing their distress," and they were meant to "alleviate their psychological and physical suffering."

The staff also organized weekly events to entertain the children, taking them for tours outside the hospital to enjoy a change of scenery. The 100-bed facility was docked in Al-Arish last February as part of the UAE's humanitarian campaign — known as Gallant Knight 3 — to provide a vital lifeline to the people of Gaza.

The hospital boasts a range of healthcare specialists, including anesthesiology, general surgery, orthopedics, emergency, intensive and internal care, alongside nurses, technicians and hospital management professionals, to ensure comprehensive care.

In December, the UAE established a field hospital in Gaza's Rafah to provide healthcare services for the injured after the healthcare system in the enclave collapsed amid Israel's relentless bombing.

WAR ON TERRORISM

Conviction of Daesh 'Beatle' upheld in US

AP Alexandria, Virginia

A federal appeals court has upheld the conviction of a British national for his role in a hostage-taking scheme by Daesh that took roughly two dozen Westerners captive a decade ago.

El-Shafee Elsheikh was convicted and sentenced to life in prison in 2022 in federal court in Alexandria, Virginia.

His jury trial established that he was one of the notorious "Beatles," captors nicknamed for their accents and known for torturing and beating prisoners.

Elsheikh appealed his conviction.

He argued that confessions he gave in media interviews after his capture in 2018 should have been tossed out of court.

He alleged that the Kurdish-led Syrian Defense Forces tortured him and forced him to conduct the interviews.

Elsheikh's lawyers also argued that FBI interviews of him while he was in foreign custody

violated his constitutional rights.

Elsheikh said he was confused by the process, in which he was initially interrogated by investigators with the Department of Defense who did not read him his rights and used the information to gather intelligence.

He was later questioned by

FASTFACT

El-Shafee Elsheikh's convictions revolved around the deaths of 4 American hostages: James Foley, Steven Sotloff, Peter Kassig and Kayla Mueller.

FBI agents who did read him his rights and told him that anything he said going forward could be used against him in court.

In both cases, a unanimous three-judge panel of the 4th US Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond ruled against Elsheikh.

The judges said the evidence

did not support his contention that he was beaten or tortured. And the judges ruled that interrogators followed proper procedures in their two-step interrogation process to inform Elsheikh of his rights.

Elsheikh was one of two "Beatles" brought to the US to face trial.

The UK agreed to the extradition and provided intelligence and evidence to assist with the prosecution after the US promised it would not seek the death penalty.

The other Beatle who faced trial, Alexandra Kotey, pleaded guilty under a deal that provided a possibility he could, after 15 years, serve the remainder of his life sentence in the UK.

Elsheikh's convictions revolved around the deaths of four American hostages: James Foley, Steven Sotloff, Peter Kassig and Kayla Mueller.

All but Mueller were executed in videotaped executions circulated online.

RELIEF

UAE to open 6,000 rest stations for delivery drivers taking summer midday breaks

Arab News Dubai

Delivery riders in the UAE will have more comfortable midday breaks during the hot summer months with 6,000 rest stations to be opened across the country, in partnership with various government entities and private-sector companies.

An interactive map of these stations will help delivery drivers to easily locate and access them during the nationwide midday outdoor work ban, which starts from June 15 and runs until Sept. 15. During that period, any task or work performed under direct sunlight or open-air areas is not allowed from 12:30 p.m. until 3 p.m. to protect workers from occupational hazards and injuries due to the extreme summer heat.

"Delivery services are a key logistical sector, unique in nature, given that its workers do not stay in one place while the Midday Break is enforced, and due to the nature of certain materials being transported that need to



be delivered on time," a statement from the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization said. The initiative is a continuation of last year's pioneering project where 365 rest stations were provided for delivery workers during their midday break. Delivery companies, including Talabat, Deliveroo, Noon and Careem, have previously partnered with government agencies, while restaurants, shopping centers, retail stores and cloud kitchens this year are also joining the effort to offer rest areas

for delivery drivers.

Now in its 20th year, the annual noon break provides respite for outdoor workers during summer months when temperatures could reach 50 degrees Celsius or even higher. Companies are required to provide shaded areas and cooling equipment for workers during the three-hour break.

Companies face fines of up to Dh5,000 (\$1,360) per worker and a maximum of Dh50,000 for multiple violations if they do not observe the regulation, although there are some exemptions to it.

FIVE MORE YEARS

Modi to take oath as India's PM for third term today

Composition of Modi's Cabinet to be revealed during swearing-in ceremony

Sanjay Kumar New Delhi

India's incumbent Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Cabinet will take an oath of office for a third term on Sunday, after he was elected leader of the coalition that won the most seats in the recent general vote.

Modi's Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party has governed India as part of the National Democratic Alliance over the past decade. While the coalition won the election last week, for the first time since 2014, the BJP has lost its absolute majority in parliament, making it dependent on allies to form a government.

The composition of the Cabinet will be revealed when Modi and his ministers are sworn in.

"The swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and the Council of Ministers following the General Elections 2024 is scheduled on 09 June 2024," the Prime Minister's Office said in a statement.

"On the occasion, leaders from India's neighborhood and Indian Ocean region have been cordially invited as distinguished guests."

Among the guests were listed the presidents of Sri Lanka and the Maldives, the vice president of Seychelles, and the prime ministers of Bangladesh, Mauritius, Nepal, and Bhutan.

"The visit of the leaders to attend the swearing-in ceremony



India's PM Narendra Modi shows a letter from President Droupadi Murmu requesting him to form the country's new government. AFP

of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for his third consecutive term is in keeping with the highest priority accorded by India to its 'Neighbourhood

First' policy and 'SAGAR' vision," the statement said, referring to Security and Growth for All in the Region — Modi's geopolitical framework of maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean region.

The statement did not mention India's rivals — China and Pakistan.

While Beijing had congratulated Modi, Islamabad said on Friday that congratulations would be "premature" as his government has not been formed yet.

On Friday, Modi was formally elected leader of the NDA, after securing support from two key allies — the Telugu Desam Party in southern Andhra Pradesh state and Janata Dal (United) in eastern Bihar state.

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Good performance

Rahul Gandhi to be leader of opposition

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's chief rival Rahul Gandhi was nominated on Saturday to lead India's opposition in parliament after an election result that rescued his party from the political wilderness.

Modi will be sworn into office for a third term this weekend following a poll that deprived his ruling Bharatiya Janata Party of a majority, forcing it to rely on coalition allies to govern. Gandhi defied analysts' expectations and exit polls to help his Congress Party nearly double its parliamentary numbers, its best result since Modi was swept to power a decade ago. **AFP**

Irish Guards

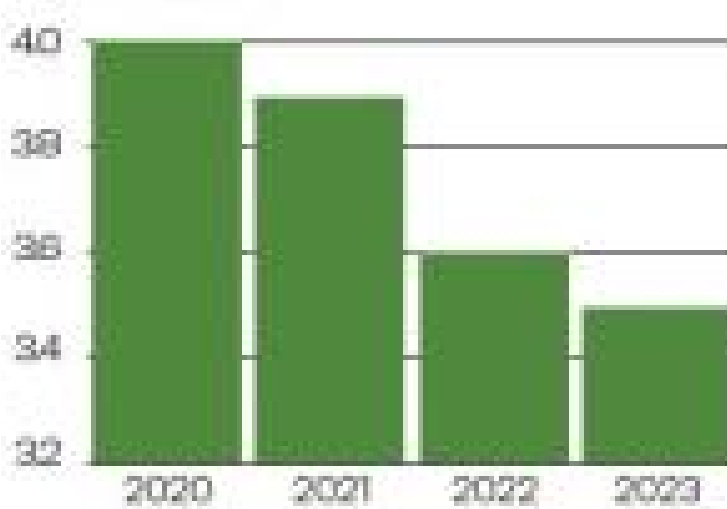
Britain's Kate apologizes for missing parade

Kate, Britain's Princess of Wales who is undergoing preventative chemotherapy for cancer, has written to an army regiment to apologize for missing a military parade on Saturday, adding that she hoped to be back very soon.

"Being your Colonel remains a great honor, and I am very sorry that I'm unable (to) take the salute at this year's Colonel's Review," Kate wrote in a letter to the head of the Irish Guards regiment. Britain's Prince William, who is heir to the throne, said last month that Kate, his wife, was "doing well." **Reuters**

The Day's FIGURES

BELARUS: UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (%)



Source: Statista

What We're Reading

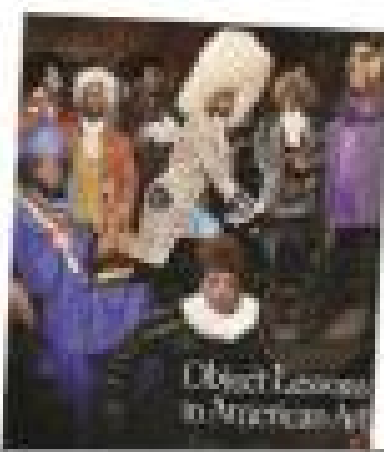
FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

'Object Lessons in American Art'

CONTRIBUTIONS BY HORACE D. BALLARD, KIRSTEN PAJ BUICK, ELLERY E. FOUTCH, KARL KUSSEROW, JEFFERY RICHMOND-MOLL, AND REBECCA ZORACH

"Object Lessons in American Art" explores a diverse gathering of Euro-American, Native American, and African American art from a range of contemporary

perspectives, illustrating how innovative analysis of historical art can inform, enhance, and afford new relevance to artifacts of the American past.



North Korea

S. Korea on alert for more trash balloons

South Korea's military said it was on alert for possibly more trash-carrying balloons arriving from North Korea on Sunday, a potential response to the propaganda balloons sent this week by South Korean activists.

North Korea sent hundreds of balloons in two waves last week with bags of trash into the South, describing them as a response to anti-Pyongyang propaganda balloons sent the other way by South Korean activists.

Pyongyang announced a halt to the balloons on Sunday but days later, a South Korean group called "Fighters for Free North Korea" said it had sent 10 balloons with USB thumb drives containing K-pop music and 200,000 leaflets against leader Kim Jong Un. **AFP**

Drone attacks

Russian-occupied Ukrainian regions under fire

Russia-installed officials in the partially occupied Ukrainian regions of Kherson and Luhansk say Ukrainian attacks left at least 27 people dead as Russia and Ukraine continued to exchange drone attacks overnight into Saturday.

A Ukrainian attack Friday on the small town of Sadove in Ukraine's partially occupied Kherson region killed 22 and wounded 15 people, Moscow-backed governor Vladimir Saldo said.

Russian state news agency Tass cited Saldo as saying that Ukrainian forces first struck the town with a French-made guided bomb, then attacked again with a US-supplied HIMARS missile. **AP**



Election campaign British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, center, waters plants as he visits a community garden project on the day of a Conservative general election campaign event in Bishop Auckland, England, Saturday. **AP**

CULTURE

Banned for decades, Chinese is now taught at Indonesia's largest mosque

Randy Mulyanto Jakarta

Twice a week, Tjong Lan Tjen travels for more than an hour from her home to central Jakarta, where she heads to Indonesia's largest mosque to study Chinese.

Tjong used to attend Mandarin classes in the mid-1960s but had to stop when General Suharto came to power and issued various policies to restrict the culture of Indonesia's Chinese minority, including banning the teaching of the language in schools.

That ban was lifted after the regime's fall in 1998, but only lately — with the development

of political and commercial connections with China — has the teaching of Mandarin once again become popular in the Southeast Asian nation.

When Tjong heard that she could learn the language for free at Istiqlal Mosque, she was initially hesitant.

"A friend said there (had been) news on TV, so I thought that I could study. I also thought: 'Is it allowed?' In the past, it was dangerous. So, I asked around," the 71-year-old told Arab News.

Once assured that it was permitted and that the classes were open to all, she signed up.

"I want to learn it, even though

I'm old. Everyone in my generation has forgotten it, my family all have forgotten. I'm the only one," Tjong said. "It's always good to gain knowledge as long as we can."

Tjong is one of 25 students enrolled in the mosque's course, which was launched in late February. Co-organized by the Chinese government, the classes were initially set up to help the mosque's staff communicate in Mandarin with tourists. However, as the mosque's spokesperson, Saparwadi, who is also a student on the course, told Arab News, anyone is welcome to register for the course.

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

*Our daily practice is not
living, but survival.*

Ziad Itani
(Contemporary Lebanese actor and artist)

Opinion

Biden's ceasefire plan offers a glimmer of hope for Gaza

YOSSI MEKELBERG

The painstaking efforts to reach a ceasefire agreement between Hamas and Israel in Gaza are inching forward, albeit at a regrettably slow pace. However, after US President Joe Biden last week presented a road map for a possible halt to the deadly hostilities, an end to the war seems closer than it has been until now.

Biden outlined a three-phase proposal that he presented as being an Israeli offer, following months of negotiations through mediators, to which Hamas responded positively, at least in principle. Yet there is always the suspicion that although the two sides might agree to the general principles of such an agreement, they could dig their heels in when the finer details, which for now remain opaque, are being negotiated.

A major obstacle to any deal is that there is not an iota of trust between the two sides. Mutual hatred and the notion of a zero-sum game in which only one side can

prevail in the conflict are ingrained in their perceptions of each other. This profound distrust means that whatever both sides might agree to, each will still believe the other will violate it, given the opportunity.

Israeli authorities would like a guarantee that if they halt their military operations and Hamas then fails to release the hostages, they would be free to resume the fighting. Hamas, and especially its leaders, would like assurances, which they most probably will not receive, that Israel will not continue to pursue them by other means.

But the logic behind acceptance of the ceasefire proposal — which rather than being an authentic Israeli offer, as it was presented, seems more likely to be the result of intensive international pressure, especially from Washington — is hard to dispute. After eight months of war there is hardly anything that either side can achieve, militarily.

Hamas, through the atrocities it committed on Oct. 7, provoked Israel into a reaction. But Israel, by declaring its goal to be the



Yossi Mekelberg is a professor of international relations and an associate fellow of the Middle East and North Africa Program at International Affairs, think tank Chatham House.
X: @YMekelberg

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complete destruction of Hamas, set itself up to fail, especially since its military strategy of maximum destruction, with little concern for civilian lives, meant it surrendered the moral high ground and left it internationally isolated, with no clear strategy for ending the war. Moreover, if the Netanyahu government was genuinely interested in seeing the hostages return home alive, it should have acted months ago to advance a deal similar to the one now on the table.

Although not without flaws, Biden's proposal brings an element of rationality to the process of ending the war, as it addresses in its three phases the immediate need to stop the fighting, the release of the hostages, and the reconstruction of Gaza.

It is perplexing why this road map was not presented toward the end of last year or even at the beginning of this year, by which time it had become apparent that there could be no decisive military conclusion to a war that threatened to drag on interminably while innocent people

continued to suffer immensely and the stability of the region was shaken.

Netanyahu could, in a final act of desperation, accept the ceasefire deal and then call a general election in one more attempt to manipulate the Israeli electorate by persuading them the war has been successful. Whatever happens, the Biden ceasefire proposal is badly in need of elaboration to ensure that the events of Oct. 7, and what followed, can never happen again.

One obvious mistake, moving forward, would be to conclude that a permanent end to hostilities can be achieved without addressing the entirety of the root causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For now, an end to the fighting, the release of the hostages, and the free flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza would be much-welcomed initial developments.

But the process cannot, and should not, stop there without moving on to agreement of a comprehensive, fair and just peace settlement within a relatively short framework of time.

**A permanent
end to hostilities
cannot be achieved
without addressing
the entirety of the
root causes of the
Israeli-Palestinian
conflict**



**The influx of
weaponry worsens
an already tenuous
security situation
across the region**

Fragmented Libya is a hot spot for many emerging threats

HAFAED AL-GHWELL

The southern Mediterranean shores are fast becoming a permanent theater for worsening geopolitical tensions and their cumulative impacts on human suffering, especially with Libya's dual crises of arms trafficking and migration. This volatile mix, worsened by the country's protracted political deadlock, has come to reflect the broader security risks facing North Africa, the Sahel, southern Europe, and, by extension, the US.

Historically, the post-2011 destabilization of Libya brought about an alarming proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The raiding of a massive state military arsenal, once among the biggest in the region, led to weapons ranging from pistols to man-portable air defense systems falling into the hands of non-state actors. This proliferation has been linked directly to the enhanced operational capacities of various armed groups, notably impacting conflict dynamics in the Sahel and Sinai.

Another growing worry, especially in Brussels and, soon, Washington, is the intersection of small arms proliferation with sprawling human trafficking operations in Libya, which not only violates human rights but also indirectly contributes to the destabilization of both transit and destination countries. Moreover, the black market for arms also provides a significant revenue stream that facilitates the trafficking of contraband and illicit substances, including drugs such as Captagon, dubbed "the poor man's cocaine." This drug has fueled what remains an enduring crisis across the Arab world, disproportionately affecting its most prolific users — the region's youth.

The situation in Libya, serving as a hub for such extensive networks, evidently engenders regional instability and compounds challenges facing local and international stakeholders in their quest to bolster the country's security, governance, and development. The EU's Operation



Hafed Al-Ghwel is a senior fellow and executive director of the North Africa Initiative at the Foreign Policy Institute of the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC.
X: @HafedAlGhwel

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Itrini, launched in 2020 to enforce the arms embargo and stem the flow of weapons, can hardly be called a success. High-profile seizures, including the interception of almost 150 armored vehicles, for instance, hint at the scale of the challenge. However, the operation's focus on larger shipments neglects the smaller, yet equally lethal, consignments of arms and ammunition that continue to slip through to cause havoc elsewhere or to fund it.

Europe's fragmented and often contradictory approach to Libya has only compounded the problem. The lack of a coherent strategy, coupled with individual member states' pursuit of narrow interests, has sustained a lawless environment that benefits malign actors. Take, for instance, the EU's reliance on Libyan factions to curb migrant flows, often through dubious deals with local militias. These not only failed to address the root causes, but also legitimized and empowered groups that now benefit both from Brussels' "generosity" and keeping those

very same trafficking routes operational.

Benghazi has become a new source of worries for the US. The city, controlled by Khalifa Haftar and his Libyan National Army, is witnessing a concerning increase in chartered flights to Nicaragua, intended to facilitate the illicit passage of migrants to the US, by crossing multiple countries, enabled by criminal networks and the tacit approval of involved states.

The absence of a unified government and stable institutions creates a fertile ground for the proliferation of illicit economies and further external meddling. Without concerted efforts to forge an "acceptable" settlement, any attempt to curb trafficking in arms or manage migration will be akin to treating the symptoms rather than the disease. Key stakeholders must acknowledge that a durable solution lies in robust support for mediation efforts and credible roadmaps, which should prioritize strengthening what remains of Libya's still-functioning institutions of governance.

Saudi consumers prioritize comfort, reliability, and status in their vehicle choices.

Aly Hefny

Show manager at Automechanika Riyadh



Business



The Kingdom imported 93,300 cars in 2023, marking a significant increase from the previous year's 66,900. This surge brings the total number of cars imported in 2022 and 2023 to 160,000. SPA

POSITIVE FIGURES

Kingdom's automotive market surges amid shifting consumer preferences

Saudi consumer preferences for new vehicles are increasingly aligned with those in Western markets

Reem Waid Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's automotive market surges ahead, dominating over half of the Gulf Cooperation Council car sales and claiming a spot among the top 20 global markets.

The Kingdom imported 93,300 cars in 2023, marking a significant increase from the previous year's 66,900, as revealed by Hamoud Al-Harbi, spokesperson for the Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority. This surge brings the total number of cars imported in 2022 and 2023 to 160,000, with major contributors including Japan, India, South Korea, the US, and Thailand.

Despite the positive figures, lingering questions persist: What exactly are the vehicle preferences of consumers in the Kingdom, and what factors influence these preferences? Moreover, what considerations guide buyers when making a purchase decision?

Additionally, what roles do the National Academy of Vehicles and Cars and the Automotive Manufacturers Association play in alignment with Vision 2030?

Driven by preference

Saudi consumers' vehicle preferences reflect a nuanced interplay between practicality and lifestyle aspirations.

Aly Hefny, show manager at Automechanika Riyadh, a regional trade event for the automotive aftermarket industry

underscores a demand for robust vehicles tailored to navigate the nation's varied terrain and climatic conditions.

"Saudi consumers prioritize comfort, reliability, and status in their vehicle choices, while also incorporating considerations for environmental impact and technological advancement," Hefny told Arab News.

He further notes the evolving mindset reflected in the growing interest in environmentally conscious options and technological innovations, such as electric and hybrid vehicles.

Furthermore, Karim Henain, partner at Bain & Co., notes that Saudi consumer preferences for new vehicles are increasingly aligned with those in Western markets. There is a growing demand for advanced connectivity, infotainment systems, and driving assistance technologies such as Advanced Driver Assistance Systems, autonomous parking, and 360-degree cameras, driven by the country's tech-savvy youth.

Moreover, according to Matthias Zeigler, managing director of Volkswagen Middle East, consumer preferences in the Kingdom present a distinct perspective compared to other markets.

"While sedans remain present, a clear trend toward SUVs is evident, particularly for larger 7-seater models that align with the strong emphasis on family transportation within the region," Zeigler told Arab News.

Within Volkswagen, Zeigler

There is a growing demand for advanced connectivity, infotainment systems, and driving assistance technologies. Supplied



revealed that their top-selling models in Saudi Arabia are the Teramont and T-Roc, "both recognized for their comfortable driving experience, spacious interiors, and comprehensive feature sets."

The managing director highlighted how these attributes resonate strongly with Saudi car buyers, who increasingly prioritize practicality and comfort for extended journeys and family outings.

"The upcoming all-new Tiguan is also expected to perform well in the market due to its continued focus on these core strengths," Zeigler asserted.

He noted the growing interest in fuel efficiency as petrol prices fluctuate.

"While not currently the primary decision factor, cost of ownership is an aspect we are actively considering in the development of future offerings for the Saudi market," he explained.

According to Sami Malkawi, managing director of sales at Ford Middle East, customers

in the Kingdom have a refined taste when selecting their next vehicle. While luxury sedans, such as the Ford Taurus, have long been popular, there is a noticeable increase in the popularity of small SUVs.

"Brands have responded to

The cost of ownership is an aspect we are actively considering in the development of future offerings for the Saudi market.

Matthias Zeigler
Managing director of
Volkswagen Middle East



the growth in interest in this kind of SUV, which offers practicality, power, interior space, and ease of handling in a smaller package – and buyers are spoilt for choice. In fact, there are currently more than 40 types of small SUVs available in this market," Malkawi disclosed.

The managing director highlighted that the company recognized the demand and launched the Ford Territory in the region in November 2022.

"Just over a year later, Territory was the Kingdom's top-selling small SUV and Ford became the fastest-growing brand in the Kingdom. We're proud to see it come out on top in such a competitive category, which holds the interest of so many consumers and auto brands."

Navigating purchase factors

A Bain & Co. survey reveals a pronounced focus on running costs, with fuel and maintenance overshadowing other considerations, particularly among the younger demographic. This aligns with global trends, where operational affordability is crucial.

"Interestingly, dealership service quality, highly valued in other markets, ranks lower among Saudi buyers, possibly reflecting different expectations or experiences with after-sales services," Henain explained.

For electric vehicle enthusiasts, charging infrastructure emerges as the linchpin,

eclipsing concerns over driving range and speed, underscoring the imperative for robust charging networks.

"Our survey further reveals distinct vehicle preferences across age groups; SUVs are preferred by Saudis aged 35 to 65 for their versatility and capacity, while sedans are favored by the 25 to 34 age group for practicality and economy," he said. Henain added that convertibles, coupes, and hatchbacks are more popular among female Saudis.

Steering industry vision

The National Automotive and Vehicles Academy and the Automotive Manufacturers Association emerge as linchpins in the Kingdom's automotive narrative. NAVA's mandate of nurturing skilled talent aligns seamlessly with Vision 2030's emphasis on human capital, while the AMA advocates for regulatory coherence and industry growth.

Zeigler stresses the pivotal role of collaboration between industry stakeholders and government institutions, propelling Saudi Arabia toward a future of mobility underscored by efficiency and environmental stewardship.

"The NAVA's focus on nurturing skilled talent aligns perfectly with the industry's need for a strong future workforce capable of driving innovation, aligning with Vision 2030's emphasis on human capital," he pointed out.

VISION 2030

Saudi Arabia's Industry 4.0 initiative drives economic diversification

Kingdom leverages its abundant energy resources for cost-effective, energy-dependent production

Mohammed Kinani Riyadh

Saudi Arabia has embarked on an ambitious journey to embrace the Fourth Industrial Revolution, commonly associated with the period around the late 2000s to the early 2010s.

Recognizing its transformative potential for economic diversification and societal advancement, the nation unveiled its ambitious Vision 2030 plan on April 25, 2016, highlighting the strategic National Industrial Development and Logistics Program, or NIDLP.

This initiative aims to cultivate high-growth sectors domestically and foster an open economy receptive to foreign capital infusion. Additionally, it serves as a catalyst for integrating Industry 4.0 technologies across diverse sectors.

Speaking to Arab News, Harsh Kumar, chief strategy officer and co-founder of Shipsey — a software platform that helps logistics companies and shippers manage their cargoes — explained that Saudi Arabia is well-positioned to become a regional hub for Industry 4.0. The Kingdom leverages its abundant energy resources for cost-effective, energy-dependent production and its strategic geographic location as a crossroads for Asia, Europe, and Africa to develop advanced supply chain infrastructure.

From investments in the tech sector to fostering an innovation ecosystem, the Kingdom has laid the groundwork for a thriving knowledge-based economy poised for the challenges and opportunities of the digital age.

As a G20 member, Saudi Arabia actively fosters a progressive environment to nurture entrepreneurship and drive technological advancement.

The establishment of innovation hubs, startup accelerators, and research institutions creates fertile ground for collaboration and creativity. Initiatives like the Saudi Venture Capital Co., the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, and the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology are fueling the development of cutting-edge applications.

By fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, Saudi Arabia empowers its youth and workforce to harness the opportunities presented by the Fourth Industrial Revolution and contribute to its economic prosperity.

Kumar added that Saudi Arabia can adopt smart manufacturing and supply chain technologies such as AI, predictive intelligence, automation, as well as IoT, and robotics to enhance efficiency and capitalize on



FAST FACT

From investments in the tech sector to fostering an innovation ecosystem, the Kingdom has laid the groundwork for a thriving knowledge-based economy poised for the challenges and opportunities of the digital age.

International collaborations could import best practices and tailor innovative solutions, setting Saudi Arabia as a leader in the region's technological transformation and supply chain excellence. SPA

growing domestic demand.

"A supportive policy framework offering incentives, investment in education to cultivate a skilled workforce, and fostering research and development through partnerships with global tech leaders will be crucial," Kumar said.

He further noted that international collaborations could import best practices and tailor innovative solutions, setting Saudi Arabia as a leader in the region's technological transformation and supply chain excellence.

Assessing the current level of digitalization and technological maturity within Saudi Arabia's industrial sector, Kumar noted that, according to tech giant Ericsson, the Kingdom has an impressive 98 percent internet penetration among its over 32 million people.

"The nation is on the cusp of significant transformation. Then, initiatives like the Digital Government Authority and Vision 2030 will fuel smart city projects, enhance digital healthcare, upgrade infrastructure, and help roll out autonomous supply chain technologies," Kumar said.

He added that the e-commerce sector is expected to exceed \$13 billion by 2025, introducing

Saudi Arabia's commitment to Vision 2030 provides a solid foundation for embracing Industry 4.0, positioning it as a leader in technological advancement in the Middle East.

Harsh Kumar
Chief strategy officer and co-founder of Shipsey



immense opportunities to enhance end-to-end warehouse and delivery operations using AI.

"Furthermore, the government has initiated a \$1.2 billion program to boost the digital capabilities of 100,000 students by 2030," he said. Highlighting the specific subsectors within the Saudi industrial landscape leading the adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies, Kumar emphasized that robust and resilient supply chain and logistics networks are critical across manufacturing, trade, retail, and other industries.

He explained that a nation's gross domestic product is directly linked to its supply chain performance. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the supply chain industry is expected to embrace advanced technologies like AI, machine learning, as well as IoT, automation, and analytics, along with predictive intelligence and blockchain.

These technologies are anticipated to reduce costs, drive sustainability, improve customer service, balance demand and supply, control prices of everyday items like groceries, vegetables, and meat, and ultimately enhance Saudi Arabia's global competitiveness.

The second

edition of the Global Machinery & Equipment Report 2024, released by Bain & Co., reveals significant opportunities for machinery and equipment manufacturers worldwide.

The study indicates that these manufacturers can achieve immediate and substantial improvements in productivity, with potential gains ranging from 30 to 50 percent.

This transformation can be accomplished by leveraging AI, lean methodologies, digital advancements, and sustainability innovations, essential components of the envisioned "Factory of the Future."

The same report added that many machinery executives increasingly consider AI adoption urgent. According to Bain's research, 75 percent of executives from the broader advanced manufacturing industry said that adopting emerging technologies such as AI is their top priority in engineering, research, and development.

Discussing the future path of Saudi Arabia's industrial sector in the era of Industry 4.0 and the key opportunities, challenges, and uncertainties ahead on this transformative journey, Kumar stated that the Kingdom's industrial sector is set to evolve through the digitalization and automation of supply chain operations, enhancing efficiency and fostering innovation.

"Key opportunities include the development of smart factories, growth in demand for e-commerce, enhanced data integration across the supply chain, and increased global competitiveness through advanced technologies like AI and IoT," he said. Kumar anticipates that the Kingdom will witness additional investments in workforce upskilling, cybersecurity risk management, and development policies that safeguard customer information, especially as AI is booming.

"Overall, Saudi Arabia's commitment to Vision 2030 provides a solid foundation for embracing Industry 4.0, positioning it as a leader in technological advancement in the Middle East," he said.

Commenting on the strides made by Saudi industrial companies in embracing advanced analytics and data-driven decision-making, Kumar said: "We see a rapid transformation occurring when it comes to embracing advanced technologies like AI, ML and automation."

He added that businesses are increasingly becoming aware of the benefits these technologies can deliver in terms of productivity, cost savings, risk mitigation, and preparedness for unprecedented events.

Under Vision 2030, the Saudi government will invest \$20 billion in AI by 2030 to develop the country's digital sector.

Business News



For the coming year, Fortis's objective is to solidify its presence in the UAE and lay the groundwork for potential expansion across the MENA region. SPA

STARTUP OF THE WEEK

Fintech Fortis targets Saudi Arabia's SME sector

Firm outlines goals and long-term vision for its operations in the region

Nour El-Shaerl Cairo

Fintech companies continue to expand in Saudi Arabia, with the nation increasingly becoming a magnet for financial technology.

UAE-based Fortis is bringing its one-stop point of sale, customer relationship management, order management system, and payments solution to support small and medium-sized enterprises in the Kingdom.

In an interview with Arab News, Arseny Kosenko, executive vice president of Fortis, outlined the company's immediate goals and long-term vision for its operations in the region, particularly in Saudi Arabia, where they see substantial growth potential aligned with the Kingdom's Vision 2030.

Fortis is strategically launching in the UAE, setting the stage for further expansion into Saudi Arabia and other Middle East and North Africa countries.

"We aim to successfully launch in the UAE market and create opportunities for expansion into other countries," said Kosenko.

A strategic Kingdom

Over the long term, Fortis intends to deeply influence the Saudi market by delivering high-quality products and services tailored to the unique needs of Saudi businesses and consumers.

"We will be able to assist small businesses in growing in line with the plans and Vision 2030," Kosenko stated.

The goal is to enhance the

operational capabilities of SMEs, thereby contributing to gross domestic product growth and enhancing the technological perception of the Saudi market.

Fortis plans to cater extensively to both domestic users and tourists, particularly during significant events like Expo 2030, by improving merchant and customer interactions through their advanced omnichannel solutions.

For the coming year, Fortis's objective is to solidify its presence in the UAE and lay the groundwork for potential expansion across the MENA region.

The company wants to empower businesses to thrive in a digital landscape by enhancing customer engagement and operational efficiency through their comprehensive digital tools.

In response to specific needs within the Saudi market, Fortis is developing tailored features in their omnichannel platform to comply with local regulations and business practices.

"Different regions, including Saudi Arabia, may require various features or regulatory considerations for businesses," explained Kosenko.

The company plans to adapt its pricing policies, marketing strategies, and partnerships to align with local business environments.

To comply with Saudi Arabia's evolving regulations, Fortis is committed to proactive monitoring of regulatory changes, maintaining strong communication with authorities, and ensuring that their team is well-trained

in compliance requirements.

This approach is supported by technology and automation to streamline compliance processes effectively, he explained.

Through these strategic initiatives, Fortis is setting a course to become a pivotal player in Saudi Arabia's digital transformation, supporting the Kingdom's economic diversification efforts and enhancing the competitive edge of local businesses in the global marketplace.

"Saudi Arabia is actively enhancing SME financing through regulatory support and digital transformation initiatives. This aligns perfectly with Fortis's mission to empower SMEs with digital tools that enhance their operations and market reach."

SMEs are a crucial segment for us, and how they engage with their clients shapes the evolution of our product.

Arseny Kosenko
EVP of Fortis



While specific details about the official launch and local office establishment in Saudi Arabia are still under wraps, Kosenko mentioned that Fortis is focused on building effective partnerships that will simplify and enhance business operations, making them more efficient and improving customer relationships and overall business performance.

As for the company's market position, Kosenko highlighted the importance of SMEs, stating, "SMEs are a crucial segment for us, and how they engage with their clients shapes the evolution of our product."

Fortis aspires to become an indispensable omnichannel platform that bridges the gap between merchants and customers, enhancing interactions and technological experiences for SMEs while also providing value to larger stakeholders like banks and utility companies.

Regarding industry evolution, Kosenko emphasized the shift from traditional payment terminals to more sophisticated POS systems that support comprehensive business management including transactions, inventory, and customer data.

"We're seeing an increase in the adoption of order management systems that facilitate a seamless omnichannel experience for customers," he said.

Fortis plans to leverage these trends by continuing to prioritize customer focus and simplifying payment processes, ensuring seamless interactions between sellers and buyers through a user-friendly interface.

BizBriefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Under pressure

China firms seek probe into EU dairy imports

Chinese companies plan to ask authorities to open an "anti-subsidy" investigation into imports of some dairy products from the EU, the state-backed Global Times newspaper reported on Saturday.

The report comes as trade tensions between the EU and China intensify, with the EU conducting investigations into various imports from China.

In January, China opened an investigation into brandy imported from the EU.

In May, the EU launched an investigation into flat-rolled products of iron or steel plated or coated with tin from China. **Reuters**

Made in China

Turkiye imposes 40% tariff on vehicle imports

Turkiye will impose a 40 percent additional tariff on imports of vehicles from China to halt a possible deterioration of its current account balance and protect domestic automakers.

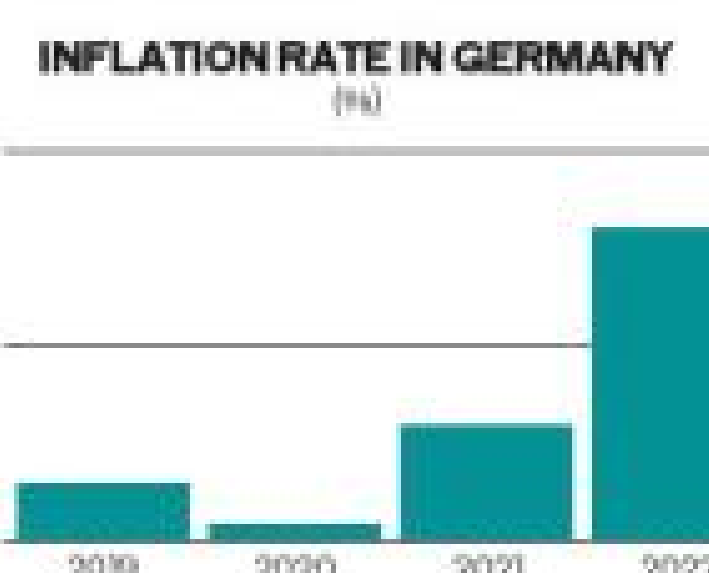
The additional Turkish tariff will be set at a minimum of \$7,000 per vehicle, with effect from July 7, a presidential decision published in the country's Official Gazette showed.

"An additional tariff will be imposed on import of conventional and hybrid passenger vehicles from China in order to increase and protect the decreasing share of domestic production," the Trade Ministry said. **Reuters**

Chart of THE DAY

In 2022, Germany's inflation rate was nearly at 8%. This was the highest figure since 1992.

Source: Statista



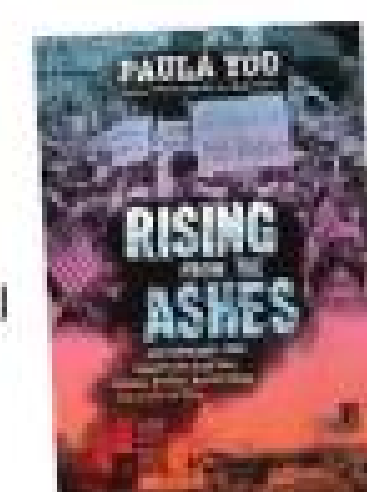
What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

Rising from the Ashes

PAULA YOO

Paula Yoo's "Rising from the Ashes" is a compelling, nuanced account of Los Angeles's 1992 uprising and its impact on its Korean and Black communities following the acquittal of police officers



charged with the beating of Rodney King and the earlier killing of teenager Latasha Harlins. The book is a vivid, propulsive, and moving story of a pivotal moment in recent American history that continues to resonate today.

Regulatory approval

Bajaj Housing Finance files for \$838m IPO

India's Bajaj Housing Finance Ltd. has filed with the country's markets regulator to raise up to 70 billion rupees (\$838.11 million) through an initial public offering.

The firm, a unit of non-bank lender Bajaj Finance, will raise funds through a primary issue worth 40 billion rupees.

The company is the first high-profile firm seeking regulatory approval for an IPO after the recent national elections.

In September 2022, the Reserve Bank of India released a list of non-bank lenders with 500 billion rupees of assets to be listed on stock exchanges by September 2025. **Reuters**

Commodities

World food prices rise for third month

The United Nations world food price index rose for a third consecutive month in May, as higher cereals and dairy product prices outweighed drops in prices for sugar and vegetable oils.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization's price index, which tracks the most globally traded food commodities, averaged 120.4 points in May, up 0.9 percent from its revised April level, the FAO said on Friday.

The uptick in May was supported by cereal prices rising 6.3 percent month-on-month amid growing concerns about unfavorable crop conditions. **Reuters**

Jeddah Logistics Park, strategically located on the vital Asia-Europe shipping route, will provide world-class multi-modal connectivity and market access.

Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem
Chairman and CEO of DP World

Corporate

PRESS RELEASES FROM THE WORLD OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE

WORLD-CLASS CONNECTIVITY

DP World, Mawani break ground on \$250m Jeddah Logistics Park

DP World and Saudi Ports Authority, known as Mawani, have commenced construction of a new SR900 million (\$250 million) logistics park at Jeddah Islamic Port. The facility will provide state-of-the-art storage and distribution services, as well as boost trade in Saudi Arabia and the wider region.

The 415,000-square-meter greenfield facility will feature 185,000 square meters of warehousing space and a sprawling multi-purpose storage yard, making it the largest integrated logistics park in the Kingdom. It will have the capacity for more than 390,000 pallet positions, offering customers an efficient platform for the seamless flow of goods to and from Jeddah.

Signed in 2022 as part of a 30-year concession, Jeddah Logistics Park will be developed in two phases with a planned opening in Q2 2025. The facility will have a rooftop solar plant on the warehouse that will generate 20 MW of renewable energy, contributing to its sustainable design.

The collaboration between Mawani and DP World also includes the management of the South Container Terminal through a separate 30-year concession signed in 2020. The terminal is currently in the final phase of a comprehensive modernization project, scheduled for completion in Q4 2024, which will see the handling capacity being ramped up to 5 million 20-foot equivalent units.

Altogether, the two DP World projects represent a combined investment of close to SR4 billion.

Speaking at the groundbreaking event, Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, chairman and CEO of DP World, said: "Saudi Arabia has always been



The state-of-the-art Jeddah Logistics Park will optimize the logistics processes for both importers and exporters, providing an integrated platform for trade and logistics.

a deeply important market for DP World and this milestone represents our ongoing commitment to the Kingdom. Jeddah Logistics Park, strategically located on the vital Asia-Europe shipping route, will provide world-class multi-modal connectivity and market access for our customers while supporting the ambitious goals of Saudi Vision 2030. This investment marks a significant step as we mark 25 years of operations in Jeddah and underscores our enduring commitment to facilitating the flow of trade."

President of Mawani Omar bin Talal Hariri said: "This new

HIGHLIGHT

The 415,000-square-meter greenfield facility will feature 185,000 square meters of warehousing space and a sprawling multi-purpose storage yard, making it the largest integrated logistics park in the Kingdom.

logistics area will be connected to DP World's South Container Terminal at Jeddah Islamic Port, facilitating growth and increasing the number of containers handled at the terminal. The project is

part of Mawani's broader efforts to expand the number of logistics centers in Saudi ports, in partnership with major national and international companies, and in line with the objectives of the National Transport and Logistics Strategy and Vision 2030."

Mohammad Alshaikh, country head, Saudi Arabia, DP World, provided details on the comprehensive project to attendees at the groundbreaking, including the UAE Consul General to Saudi Arabia Nasser Huwaiden Thaiban Ali Alketbi, senior Saudi government representatives and members of DP World's

leadership team.

Aligning closely with Saudi Vision 2030, Jeddah Logistics Park represents a major development for DP World at Jeddah Islamic Port. This state-of-the-art facility will optimize the logistics processes for both importers and exporters, providing an integrated platform for trade and logistics. Customers will be able to benefit from efficient services that link port operations to last-mile activities, as well as bonded and unbonded zones, world-class temperature-controlled storage, import and export consolidation centers and other value-added services.

Corporate Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Nationalization

Almarai to train Saudi youth for jobs

Almarai Company hosted its annual Nationalization Ceremony 2024 on May 26, under the slogan "Nationalization as a Strategic Goal."

The ceremony witnessed the signing of several agreements with Hail University, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University, Authority for the Care of Persons with Disabilities, Saudi Logistics Academy, Food Industries Institute, and Charity Orphans Care Foundation — Ekhaa.

The signed agreements aim to qualify and train more Saudi youth to attract them to the labor market in the food and beverage industry through Almarai's training and employment programs.

Automobile Offer

'Drive Now, Pay Next Year' deal for Nissan

Arabian Automobiles, the flagship company of the AW Rostamani Group and the exclusive dealer for Nissan in Dubai, Sharjah, and the northern emirates, is demonstrating its commitment to community and consumer welfare with an innovative relief initiative — "Drive Now, Pay Next Year."

As part of this offer, customers purchasing specific Nissan models during June can defer their initial monthly installment until January or February 2025, benefiting from an eight-month payment holiday.

EXCLUSIVE APPEARANCE

Trendyol hosts 'Ertugrul' star for launch of Jeddah popup store

Turkish star Engin Altan Düzyatan, renowned for his role in "Resurrection: Ertugrul," made an exclusive appearance at Trendyol's popup store at Jeddah's Mall of Arabia. The actor reflected on his positive experience of being in Jeddah, his fashion inspirations, and his collaboration with Trendyol.

The popup store, open for two weeks, showcases the Turkish e-commerce platform's own-brand womenswear and men's collection, exclusively designed by Trendyol's in-house team and produced by high quality manufacturers in Türkiye.



Engin Altan Düzyatan

The collection features romantic chiffon dresses, satin evening gowns, multi-use dresses, abayas, kaftans, tailored blazer sets and dresses, as well as feminine blouses. It also includes ruffles, belt details, voluminous sleeves, and multi-layered skirt forms, for family gatherings, occasions, and events.

This collection is now available across Trendyol's entire GCC footprint.

Trendyol launched in the GCC in late 2023 and quickly became one of the most downloaded shopping apps in the region, amassing more than 1.5 million active customers.

INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION

Malaysian F&B products shine at Saudi Food Show

MATRADE Jeddah, the commercial section of the Consulate General of Malaysia in Jeddah, recently organized the participation of 33 Malaysian exhibitors in the Saudi Food Show 2024, an international exhibition dedicated to the food and beverage industry held last month in Riyadh.

Regarded as the largest F&B sourcing event in the region, the Saudi Food Show featured more than 1,000 exhibitors from 97 countries. Among them were Malaysian exhibitors, including mid-tier companies and small-medium enterprises, promoting a diverse range of products such as ready-to-eat meals, plant-based food, health beverages, premium confectioneries, food



The Malaysian pavilions played a significant role in showcasing the country's capabilities and offerings.

ingredients, and flavorings. The Malaysian pavilions, represented by Malaysia's Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Halal Development Corporation, and the Malaysia International Halal Showcase, played a significant

role in showcasing the country's capabilities and offerings.

During the event, the Saudi Food Excellence Awards 2024 was held to recognize outstanding and innovative brands in the industry, in which a Malaysian company, Global Brand Synergy Sdn Bhd, was honored with the Best Packaging Design and Best Beverage awards.

Health Insurance

GMS taps CoverGo for digitization

Group Medical Services, a health insurance company in Canada, and CoverGo, a global no-code insurance SaaS platform for health, life, and P&C, are joining forces to digitize GMS' entire health insurance ecosystem.

GMS is adopting CoverGo as its end-to-end modular core insurance platform for employee benefits providing comprehensive health, dental and life coverage, as well as for individual health and travel insurance across Canada. Leveraging CoverGo's patented no-code product builder and advanced policy and claims management capabilities, GMS is able to launch customized products at record.



Queen of clay Iga Swiatek captured a 3rd straight French Open crown with a crushing victory over Jasmine Paolini to claim her 5th Grand Slam title.

MOTORSPORTS

Yazeed Al-Rajhi crowned winner of Desafio Ruta 40 Rally

Saudi star's victory marks 4th round of the World Rally-Raid Championship

Arab News Cordoba, Argentina

World champion Yazeed Al-Rajhi has become the first Saudi and third non-Argentinian driver to win in Argentina since 2010 after he was crowned the 2024 Desafio Ruta 40 Rally winner on Friday.

The Saudi driver's win marks the fourth round of the World Rally-Raid Championship, said in a media statement.

Al-Rajhi and his German co-driver Timo Gottschalk finished first by just 13 seconds. They recorded a total time of 17 hours, 38 minutes, and 21 seconds over six days on rough, technical gravel tracks between June 1-7.

"Winning by just seconds is an incredible feeling. It was a long and fierce battle, and I led

Winning by just seconds is an incredible feeling, says Yazeed Al-Rajhi. Supplied.



skillfully every day. This victory is well-deserved for me and the team," said Al-Rajhi.

"I am delighted with this win. I thank God for this victory ... It's great to be back in Argentina. Last year, I finished third, and today I won the second edition of the

Desafio Ruta 40 Rally," he added.

Co-driver Gottschalk said: "It wasn't for the faint-hearted. Yazeed fired another rocket in the final kilometers, overcoming every challenge. It was truly outstanding driving. We are thrilled with this victory and

definitely deserve the upcoming summer break."

The Saudi champion secured victories in two of the five stages, finishing second in the remaining three, accumulating valuable points that placed him second in the W2RC standings after the Argentine rally.

The team's remarkable performance leaves them just 25 points behind the leader, with the competition remaining open until the final round in Morocco in October.

The rally began with a prologue in Cordoba, where Al-Rajhi secured second place. After that, he dominated the first loop stage. In the second stage, the longest at 724 km, he maintained his overall lead. The third stage, a 451-km loop, saw the team perform brilliantly, keeping their lead.

The fourth stage in La Rioja,

BACKGROUND

Yazeed Al-Rajhi and his German co-driver Timo Gottschalk finished first by just 13 seconds. They recorded a total time of 17 hours, 38 minutes, and 21 seconds over six days on rough, technical gravel tracks between June 1-7.

covering 676 km, was extremely tough, but Al-Rajhi drove cautiously to avoid any issues, finishing the stage still in the lead.

In the final stage, he faced a thrilling challenge, with only one second separating him from his closest competitor in the provisional standings. Ultimately, Al-Rajhi and Gottschalk won by 40 seconds, securing a brave victory.

MAJOR TOURNAMENT

Foden, Wirtz and Yamal among players to light up Euro 2024

AP London

EURO 2024 will take place across 10 world-class stadiums in Germany from the Olympiastadion Berlin to the Volksparkstadion in Hamburg. Here is a look at some of the players expected to light up the European Championship in Germany which kicks off on June 14.

Phil Foden (England)

Nurtured with care by Pep Guardiola, Foden has taken some time to break through to world-class level. He's there now — and the Manchester City forward is heading into a major international tournament as a certain starter for England for the first time and as the Premier League's best player this season. While defenses occupy themselves with Harry Kane and Jude Bellingham, it might be Foden who benefits the most with his quick feet and eye for goal. Where he starts — as an attacking central midfielder or on one of the wings — will be interesting to see. But he will start, and that's exciting for England fans who have been waiting for Foden to blossom.

Florian Wirtz (Germany)

A player in the mold of Foden — and maybe another Man City player in Jack Grealish because of his low-slung socks — is Wirtz, who has established himself as a standout in the German league at newly crowned champion Bayer Leverkusen. At age 21, Wirtz is

a No. 10 with amazing balance, technical ability and creativity who dovetails that with a relentless pressing game — something demanded of attacking players in the modern era. Once the youngest scorer in Bundesliga history (at age 17), he was one of the youngest ever players for Germany and scored against France after seven seconds in March. It was thought to be the fastest international goal ever before that record was broken later that day. This is his first major international tournament — a knee injury ruled him out of the 2022 World Cup — and surely won't be his last.

Lamine Yamal (Spain)

The old saying "if you're good enough, you're old enough" certainly applies to Yamal, the Spain winger who was 15 years, 9 months and 16 days when he made his debut for Barcelona and will still be 16 when Euro 2024 begins. Yamal, born near Barcelona to a mother from Equatorial Guinea and a father from Morocco, is the latest prodigy to come out of Barcelona's famed La Masia academy and he hasn't stopped breaking records. The youngest player to debut — and score — in the Spanish league, the youngest to start in the Champions League, the youngest to score for Spain's national team and the youngest to score in a European Championship qualifier. Fast and direct, Yamal



Nurtured with care by Pep Guardiola, Phil Foden has taken some time to break through to world-class level. Reuters

already has quite a presence despite his age.

Rafael Leao (Portugal)

Portugal will one day arrive at the post-Cristiano Ronaldo era and the team will need an attacking star to build around. Leao has the

ability to be that player, even if his standout performances have been rarer than many at AC Milan would have wanted this season. Leao's talent is clear — he is one of the world's most exciting wingers and few are able to run with the ball with such pace, power and

athleticism. A reported release clause of €175 million (\$190 million) is testament to that but there's certainly room for improvement with Leao, particularly when he hasn't got space to run into and he is tasked with breaking down packed defenses.

Sport Briefs

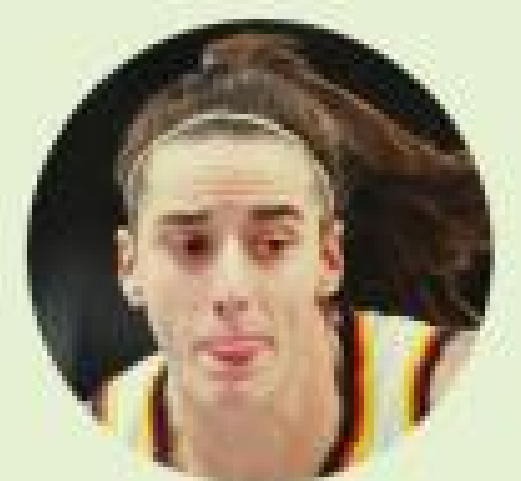
THE BEST OF THE REST

Tennis

Iga Swiatek wins French Open title

Iga Swiatek strengthened her reputation as the queen of clay by capturing a third straight French Open crown with a crushing 6-2 6-1 victory over 12th seed Jasmine Paolini on Saturday to claim her fifth Grand Slam title.

Swiatek's 21st straight victory at her happiest hunting ground put her in fourth place in the list of longest winning streaks at Roland Garros in the Open era behind only Chris Evert (29), Monica Seles (25) and Justine Henin (24). The 23-year-old, who arrived in Paris in the form of her life having lifted titles in Madrid and Rome, extended her run of victories on clay this year to a career-best 19 matches. **Reuters**



Basketball

Caitlin Clark faces US Olympic snub

Women's basketball phenomenon Caitlin Clark will not be selected for the United States Paris Olympics team, multiple US media reports said Saturday.

The Athletic reported that Clark was expected to be snubbed for an Olympic ticket.

Clark entered the WNBA this season after a record-shattering college career that has sent interest in women's basketball skyrocketing. **AFP**

T20 World Cup

Bangladesh defeat Sri Lanka by 2 wickets

Bangladesh beat Sri Lanka by two wickets with six balls remaining in a tense match in New York, consigning Sri Lanka to its second consecutive loss in Group D.

Gurbaz and Ibrahim are only the third pair and first openers to post back-to-back century partnerships at a Twenty20 World Cup. They stayed together until the 15th over when Ibrahim was out for 44 from 41 balls.

Gurbaz finally was out in the 20th over, having made 80 from 56 balls with five fours and five sixes. The Afghanistan innings contained nine sixes and 10 fours. **AP**

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'The Kelly Clarkson Show' won the Outstanding Daytime Talk Series for the fourth consecutive year at the 2024 Daytime Emmys this week, bringing Kelly Clarkson's total to eight awards over the first five seasons of her popular talk show.



Finally

The Six

Riyadh's gems

Here are six spots in Riyadh to satisfy your iced coffee cravings.



Medd Coffee & Roastery

Medd offers artisanal blends and a welcoming ambiance, perfect for savoring a variety of iced coffee options in a laid-back atmosphere.



Elixir Bunn Coffee Roasters

Elixir Bunn is celebrated for its meticulously sourced beans and inviting atmosphere. Do not miss their signature iced Bunn Bliss.



Brew92

Brew92 offers a wide range of coffee options, including iced coffee made from single-origin beans and signature blends freshly roasted in-house.



RAW Coffee Company

RAW is known for its specialty brews, and if you find yourself in the vicinity, don't miss their signature iced RAW Refresh or Chill Out Cold Brew.



IDMI

Celebrated for its sleek modern design and warm ambiance, the cafe offers a diverse menu of premium coffee from Ethiopia, Uganda, Colombia and elsewhere.



Ashjar Cafe

The picturesque cafe, Ashjar, characterized by its abundant plants and greenery, in the King Abdullah Financial District is a calm spot to grab an iced coffee.

CLOSE UP

Mideast models celebrate Vittoria Ceretti's birthday



Arab News Dubai

Part-Middle Eastern models Loli Bahia, Nora Attal and Mona Tougaard paid tribute to their fellow Italian supermodel Vittoria Ceretti for her birthday this week.

The three models took to Instagram Stories to share moments with the birthday girl.

Tougaard — who has Danish, Turkish, Somali and Ethiopian ancestry — wrote, "Happy bday to my other half," and in the following picture added, "my Italian queen." Among the pictures she shared were two of Ceretti with US Dutch Palestinian model Gigi Hadid on set.

French Algerian model Bahia shared a picture that appeared to be on set for a brand shoot, while the British Moroccan Attal posted a throwback picture of her and Ceretti from when they were younger, captioning it, "Baby V-N." This week, Ceretti was on a birthday getaway and shared pictures from her celebration with her 1.6 million Instagram followers.

In one shot, she posed in the desert wearing a hot red, form-fitting dress with three-dimensional floral designs on the midsection and a plunging neckline. She also shared photos of the flowers she received for her birthday, a sunset dinner, a horseback riding experience and a cozy evening by the fire.

"Happy, grateful, in heaven and a year older," she captioned her post.



Ceretti, who grew up in Brescia, a small town outside Milan, began her modeling career at the age of 14 at Elite Model Look, one of the world's most prestigious international modeling competitions. She was chosen as a finalist and signed with the agency.

A pivotal moment in her career was securing her first beauty contract with Chanel, which appointed her as the face of its beauty line in 2018.

Mona Tougaard, Vittoria Ceretti, and Loli Bahia have worked together with fashion brands like Courreges. Getty Images

Inset: Loli Bahia, right, posted a picture with Vittoria Ceretti for her birthday. Instagram

Since then, Ceretti's career has been marked by continuous success.

She has walked for Versace, Dior, Celine and Louis Vuitton

and has fronted beauty and fashion ad campaigns for brands like Tory Burch, Dolce & Gabbana, Bulgari and Prada.

Her latest campaigns, unveiled in May, were for Calvin Klein and Marc Jacobs. For Calvin Klein's summer collection, she wore monochromatic white pieces, while for Marc Jacobs, she donned a colorful pink knit sweater paired with the brand's white "Sack Bag."



Amira Al-Zuhair shared a picture with Francesca Amfitheatrof and her fellow models. Instagram

HIGH JEWELRY

Amira Al-Zuhair models for Louis Vuitton in Saint-Tropez

Arab News Dubai

Saudi model Amira Al-Zuhair this week walked in Louis Vuitton's high jewelry show in Saint-Tropez, attended by celebrities such as British actress Phoebe Dynevor and Thai actress Urassaya Sperbund.

The collection, the label's sixth high jewelry collection, was designed by the house's artistic director of jewelry and watches, Francesca Amfitheatrof.

Al-Zuhair, born to a French mother and Saudi father in Paris, wore an intricate chunky choker that features a wide, structured design with a lattice-like pattern in gold, adorned with numerous diamonds. The focal point of the necklace is a large yellow gemstone, which adds a contrast to the overall design.

Al-Zuhair shared a picture on her Instagram stories with Amfitheatrof and her fellow models, where she was seen wearing a cut-out black top paired with oversized black salwar pants.

The models' outfits were made by creative director Nicolas Ghesquiere's studio, with styling by Ghesquiere's long-time collaborator Marie-Amelie Sauve.

After the show, guests enjoyed a gala dinner prepared by star chef Jean Imbert.

Al-Zuhair has made her mark on the fashion world by walking for an array of esteemed brands beyond Missoni.

Her runway presence has been felt in shows for renowned fashion houses such as Maison Alaia, Brunello Cucinelli, Balmain, Dolce & Gabbana, Giambattista Valli, Giorgio Armani, Elie Saab, and many more.

INTERVIEW

Winners of ADMAF x Dolce & Gabbana Design Award head to Milan

Hams Saleh Dubai

After winning the ADMAF x Dolce & Gabbana Design Award 2024, Emirati designers Sarah Al-Mansoori and Azza Al-Tawila are set to embark on a six-month internship program at the Italian luxury label's headquarters in Milan before they showcase their final products at the Abu Dhabi Festival in 2025.

Sarah Al-Mansoori claimed the inaugural prize in the

jewelry creations category, while Azza Al-Tawila secured the top spot in the fashion category. The award is a partnership between the Abu Dhabi Music and Art Foundation and the luxury fashion brand.

"I'm excited to be in the heart of the fashion world, where creativity and innovation are everywhere," Al-Mansoori told Arab News. "I see myself not only improving my technical



Azza Al-Tawila secured the top spot in the fashion category. Supplied

abilities but also making valuable connections in the fashion and jewelry production industry."

Al-Tawila is looking forward to experiencing the fashion house's work culture and learning new techniques.

"Exploring and expanding my creativity in a unique environment that is culturally and artistically varied to my own, it fuels my curiosity toward innovative garment production," she explained.

During her time in Milan, Al-Mansoori hopes to learn about micro-mosaics, a technique that uses unusually small glass mosaic pieces to create intricate images, and filigree work.

Meanwhile, Al-Tawila said integrating Emirati heritage has always been a focal point for her.

"Emirati garments have always inspired ... me to develop a unique sense of fashion aesthetics," she said.