



SAUDI ARABIA
CLASSIC MEAT DISH RETURNS
TO JAZAN TABLES Page 5

OPINION
US DEMOCRACY
AND A TALE
OF TWO
TRIALS

By Yossi Mekelberg
Page 9



SPOTLIGHT
ATTACK ON
HUMAN DIGNITY
IN SUDAN Page 3



& FINALLY
BIRTHDAY
TRIBUTES POUR
IN FOR AMIRA
AL-ZUHAIR' Page 16



THURSDAY, June 20, 2024
Dul Hijjah 14, 1445
www.arabnews.com

ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

SINCE 1975

MIDDLE EAST WAR

Nowhere in Israel safe, Hezbollah chief warns

Two sides swap war threats

Najla Housseini Beirut

The Israeli military and Iran-backed Hezbollah militants in Lebanon exchanged tit-for-tat threats of war on Wednesday amid soaring tensions on their border.

Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said nowhere in Israel would be spared in case of a full-blown conflict and threatened the Mediterranean island of Cyprus if it opened its airports and bases to Israel.

"The enemy knows well that we have prepared ourselves for the worst ... and that no place will be spared our rockets," Nasrallah said. Israel should expect to be attacked "on land, by sea and by air," he said.

"We have obtained new weapons," Nasrallah said. "We have developed some of our weapons ... and we are keeping others for the days that will come. Years ago we talked about 100,000 fighters ... today, we have greatly exceeded that."

Nasrallah said giving Israel access to bases on Cyprus to target Lebanon "would mean that the Cypriot government is part of the war, and the resistance will

deal with it as part of the war."

Earlier Hezbollah fired dozens of Katyusha rockets and artillery rounds toward a military barracks in Kiryat Shmona in northern Israel in retaliation for Israeli airstrikes on Tyre and the border village of Kham.

In Israel, the military said operational plans for an invasion of Lebanon had been "approved and validated," a day after Foreign Minister Israel Katz said

NUMBER

37,396

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

Hezbollah faced destruction in a "total war."

Israel and Hezbollah have been exchanging cross-border fire since Israel invaded Gaza last October. The clashes have killed at least 478 people in Lebanon, most of them fighters but including 93 civilians. At least 15 soldiers and 11 civilians have been killed in northern Israel.

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



Smoke billows during Israel's bombardment on the Kham village in south Lebanon near the border, AFP

SUMMER DELIGHT

Price of oil hits highest in 7 weeks

Arab News Riyadh

The price of oil rose to its highest in seven weeks on Wednesday amid optimism about a potential increase in demand over the summer.

Brent crude, the global benchmark, increased by 23 cents to \$85.56 a barrel, and US West Texas Intermediate crude by 18 cents to \$81.75 a barrel.

"There are green shoots that indicate a more optimistic outlook," said Tamas Varga of oil broker PVM. The Brent price being \$8 above the lows hit in early June "shows genuine optimism that the global oil balance will eventually tighten," he said.

HIGHLIGHT

Brent crude, the global benchmark, increased by 23 cents to \$85.56 a barrel, and US West Texas Intermediate crude by 18 cents to \$81.75 a barrel.

Analysts said the Gaza war and tension between Israel and Lebanon risked supply disruption in the Middle East.

"Any cooling off between both parties seems difficult in the near term, which may keep oil prices well-supported as market participants shrug off pockets of weakness on the economic front, from weaker than expected US retail sales to mixed sets of data out of China this week," said Yeap Jun Rong, a market strategist at IG in Singapore.

Data from China this week showed industrial output below expectations but retail sales showing rapid growth.

The Brief

REIN IN HOUSTIS

Urgent action must be taken in the Red Sea to stop Houthi attacks on ships, leading industry groups said. **P7**

NALANDA CAMPUS

A new campus of Nalanda University at the site of an ancient Buddhist seat of learning was inaugurated by the premier in the Indian state of Bihar. **P8**

DIGITAL PAYMENTS

Digital currencies are gaining traction in the Middle East as the focus is on improving cross-border payment system. **P11**

MASTER PLAN

Riyadh targets Expo 2030 'by the world, for the world'

Saudi organizers deliver their first progress report to event bureau chiefs in Paris

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia is on target to deliver an Expo 2030 "by the world, for the world," organizers have told event chiefs in Paris in their first progress report since Riyadh was chosen as host city.

Abdulaziz Alghannam, director general of the Riyadh Expo 2030 office at the Royal Commission for Riyadh City, led the Saudi delegation at the general assembly of the Bureau International des Expositions in the French capital.



Saudi Arabia was elected as host for the 2030 event on Nov. 28. @bioparis

Efforts were fully underway for Expo registration and preparation for creating the legal framework to enable international participation in the event, he told the bureau.

Riyadh was chosen to host the event at the bureau's last general assembly in November 2023.

The expo will take place from

Oct. 1, 2030 to March 31, 2031, when the Saudi capital will host 197 countries and 29 international organizations.

The theme — "The Era of Change: Together for a Foresighted Tomorrow" — encapsulates Saudi Arabia's commitment to using the Expo to accelerate progress toward the planned sustainable development goals. The event will focus on harnessing science and innovation for a better future.

Preparations are underway

at the highest levels, including infrastructure development, legislative and financial measures, the master plan for the Expo site, and legacy plans.

2 Riyals • Vol. XLIX
No. 197 • 16 pages



9 771319 833023

At the Global Event for Defense and Security, we discussed the sector's strategy in the Kingdom, its investment environment, and targeted localization opportunities.

Ahmad Al-Ohall
Governor, General Authority for Military Industries



Radars

KSA today



Dhahran The Missing Piece

Become a detective at Ithra Center's Energy Exhibit and solve a set of mysteries. The activity will run until March 28. Find more details on the Ithra app.



Jeddah Borderless World

Immerse yourself in borderless art at teamLab's interactive museum, where you can wander and create a new world with others. The captivating museum is located at the Culture Square in the historic district. Visit the teamlab.art website for tickets and more details.



Riyadh Archery

Meydan Siham center is offering an opportunity for sports lovers of both genders to learn archery in a competitive and fun environment. For details, visit experiences.suplift.com.



Jeddah Fishing trip

Join this fishing experience and have a relaxing time surrounded by the sound of waves. The equipment, starting from rods to lures, is included. Check the Hala Yalla app for details.

The Register

THE PICTURES THAT MARK THE DAY



Saudi Minister of Interior and Chairman of the Supreme Hajj Committee Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud met with senior officials of Hajj security forces and military commanders in Makkah on Wednesday, commending them for safeguarding

pilgrims during this year's Hajj, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

Prince Abdulaziz emphasized that a safe Hajj for pilgrims was made possible due to a combination of qualified personnel, strategic planning, and optimal use of technology.

Director of Public Security and Chairman of the Hajj Security Committee Lt. Gen. Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Bassami said that Hajj security forces would continue following the security and organizational plans until pilgrims returned to their countries.

Today's Number

4.5m

The National Water Company distributed over 4.5 million cubic meters of water to pilgrims across the holy sites. To ensure the high quality of water provided to pilgrims, the company conducted more than 75,000 laboratory tests during the Hajj season, Saudi Press Agency reported.

Who's Who



Dr. Bander Al-Sajjan

Dr. Bander Al-Sajjan was recently appointed director general of the Institute of Public Administration, which aims to build capacity and provide business development strategies to government entities to achieve their goals.

At the IPA, Al-Sajjan previously served as the director of the business administration programs sector, the deputy director general for quality and development, and director general of planning and development.

In previous roles, he served as the deputy minister for relations and international collaboration at the Ministry of Energy and was also a part-time adviser for the Ministry of Civil Service. Al-Sajjan was also a deputy assistant for strategy and international affairs at the Capital Market Authority before being promoted to deputy.

He is a member of numerous local and international organizations — he is a committee member of the Preparatory Committee for Administrative Organization; the chairman of the expert committee at the Arab Administrative Development Organization; an advisory board member of the Journal of Security Research; a board member of the Human Resources Development Fund and a member of its Internal Audit Committee; and a board member of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration in Belgium.

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



GET WELL SOON Beomgyu

Fans of South Korean singer Beomgyu of the Tomorrow X Together group were saddened to hear that the star had been injured.

"Beomgyu recently visited the hospital due to an injury during his schedule and was diagnosed with a sprained ankle ligament," his agency, BigHit Music, said in a statement, but did not reveal how he sustained this injury.

"We ask for your understanding that it will be difficult for him to participate in some official activities, such as Paris Fashion Week, due to the doctor's opinion that he needs to rest for the time being," the agency added.

'INSPIRED GENERATIONS' Willie Mays

Willie Mays, one of baseball's most beloved players, has died at age 93.

The death of Mays, nicknamed the "Say Hey Kid" and considered the greatest all-around Major League Baseball player, was announced by the league's commissioner Rob Manfred in a statement issued on Wednesday morning, Saudi time.

"All of Major League Baseball is in mourning today as we are gathered at the very ballpark where a career and a legacy like no other began.

"Willie Mays took his all-around brilliance from the Birmingham Black Barons of the Negro American League to the historic Giants franchise," Manfred said.

"From coast to coast in New York and San Francisco, Willie inspired generations of players and fans as the game grew and truly earned its place as our National Pastime," he added.

Mays was a 24-time All-Star, 12-time Gold

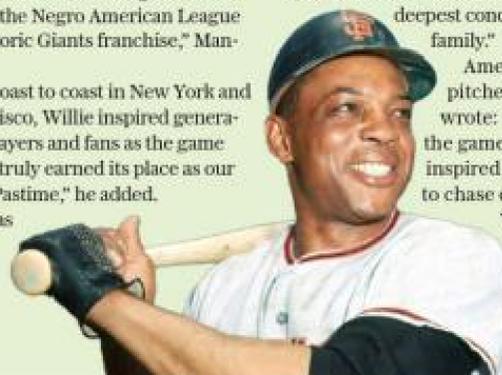
Glover, two-time MVP, World Series champion, and an MLB Hall of Famer. He was honored with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2015 by US President Barack Obama.

Tributes from colleagues and public figures poured in for Mays, with Obama writing on X, "Willie Mays wasn't just a singular athlete, blessed with an unmatched combination of grace, skill and power.

"He was also a wonderfully warm and generous person — and an inspiration to an entire generation. I'm lucky to have spent time with him over the years, and Michelle and I send our deepest condolences to his family."

American baseball pitcher CC Sabathia wrote: "You changed the game forever and inspired kids like me to chase our dream.

Thank you for everything that you did on and off the field."



TheRegion

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Jeddah

- The family-themed pop-up experience Modesh World in the UAE is one of the Gulf region's largest indoor entertainment and amusement events this summer, offering activities catering mostly to families with children. Visit dwtc.com to find more details about the experi-

ence, which will run until Aug. 18 at the Dubai World Trade Centre.

- Al-Jasra Handicraft Center is the ideal place to immerse yourself in the rich tapestry of Bahrain's cultural heritage. Visitors can participate in a range of workshops in traditional crafts, like copper shaping, and

in doing so help preserve the country's cultural legacy. The workshops run until Aug. 31.

- Ahmed Saad and the Saudi band Miami will hold a concert on June 20 at Exhibition World Bahrain, where they will sing many of their most famous hits. Visit calendar.bh for tickets and more details.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

	June 20	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghreb	Isha
Makkah	4:11	5:38	12:22	3:42	7:05	8:35	
Madinah	4:02	5:32	12:23	3:44	7:13	8:43	
Riyadh	3:33	5:04	11:55	3:16	6:45	8:15	
Abha	4:10	5:34	12:12	3:34	6:48	8:18	
Dammam	3:13	4:46	11:41	3:07	6:35	8:05	

Spotlight



The evidence seems to show credible, repeated, expanding, continuous allegations of attacks against the civilian population..

Karim Khan
ICC Prosecutor

SUDAN CRISIS

'An attack on human dignity'

ICC's appeal for evidence of atrocities turns spotlight on the fighting and worsening humanitarian crisis in Sudan

Alex Whiteman London

The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor Karim Khan has appealed for evidence of atrocities in Sudan, saying his ongoing investigation "seems to disclose an organized, systematic and a profound attack on human dignity."

However, legal experts who spoke to Arab News have accused the ICC of dragging its feet on the deteriorating situation in Sudan and of focusing too narrowly on the Darfur region while neglecting the wider conflict.

Khan last week said he had become "particularly concerned by the ethnically motivated nature" of the conflict in Sudan after combatants reportedly attacked the main hospital in Al-Fasher, North Darfur, in what likely constituted a war crime.

Doctors from the medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres confirmed to Arab News that the attack on the South Hospital on June 8 had forced MSF and its partners in the Sudanese Ministry of Health to suspend all activities and withdraw staff from the facility.

A spokesperson said authorities had already reduced services at the hospital, with many patients having been transferred before the attack owing to the uptick in fighting around the city — the last in Darfur still under the control of the Sudanese Armed Forces.

Fighters affiliated with the Rapid Support Forces, a break-away military faction that has seized control of swathes of the country since the conflict began on April 15, 2023, were accused of mounting the attack.

"It's outrageous that the RSF opened fire inside the hospital," Michel Lacharite, head of emergencies at MSF, told Arab News. "It is not an isolated incident. Staff and patients have endured attacks on the facility for weeks from all sides, but opening fire inside a hospital crosses a line."

"Warring parties must stop attacking hospitals. One by one, hospitals are damaged and closed. Remaining facilities in Al-Fasher aren't prepared for mass casualties, we are trying to find solutions, but the responsibility lies with warring parties to spare medical facilities."

The RSF, commanded by Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemedti, has



Sudan's Darfur, left, has seen mounting ethnic violence, below, contributing to mass displacement, main and bottom. AFP



previously denied claims that its forces attack civilian infrastructure.

While details about the hospital attack remain sketchy, the MSF spokesperson said "most patients" and "all MSF staff" were able to escape.

As the main referral hospital for treating Al-Fasher's war-wounded, the only one equipped to manage mass casualty events and one of just two with surgical capacity, the loss of services will have a major impact.

The UN Security Council adopted a UK-drafted resolution on June 14 demanding an end to the siege of Al-Fasher.

The measure expressed "grave concern" over the spreading violence and reports that the RSF was carrying out "ethnically motivated violence."

During the meeting, Mohamed Abushahab, the UAE's ambassador to the UN, said: "We believe that the Sudanese people deserve justice and peace. They need a ceasefire, a credible political process and unhindered flow of humanitarian aid."

Rebutting accusations made by the representative of Sudan's SAF-backed government, he said: "Excuses and finger pointing only prolongs the suffering of civilians."

Independent investigations

using videos suggest recent SAF victories were enabled by the deployment of such Iranian-made combat drones as Mohajer-6 and Zajil-3.

According to Wim Zwijnenburg, a drone expert and head of the Humanitarian Disarmament Project at Dutch peace organization PAX, the videos are "an indication of active Iranian support" for the SAF.

"If these drones are equipped with guided munitions, it means they were supplied by Iran because those munitions are not produced in Sudan," Zwijnenburg told the BBC.

Sudan's SAF-dominated governing council has denied acquiring weapons from Iran.

Cameron Hudson, a senior fellow for the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said that although the Al-Fasher hospital assault has been a wake-up call for the ICC, attacks of this kind were "nothing new."

"The fact of the matter is that this is not the first hospital to be looted or destroyed in this conflict," Hudson told Arab News.

"It is a conflict that has been raging for 14 months and has been fought in much the same way with this attack well within the nature of the conflict."

"What is new is that Sudan's civilian population's ability to withstand the shocks of this war has depleted. But while it may feel like a game-changing moment, it is not."

Referring to the July 1995 massacre of more than 8,000 Bosniak Muslim

INNUMBERS

14k

Estimated number of people killed in Sudan since the conflict began on April 15, 2023.

10m

People displaced, including over 2 million who have crossed into neighboring countries.

men and boys during the Bosnian War, Hudson said: "Maybe if there was a Srebrenica moment, a move to extermination, that would be game-changing."

Khan's comments indicate the ICC has been paying attention to the situation in Sudan. However, Hudson voiced disappointment at the court's slow response to the conflict.

Contrasting the "alacrity" with which the ICC acted against

Russia for its war in Ukraine and Israel for its assault on Gaza, he said it

was telling of Sudan's ranking in international priorities that the court was "only now" investigating.

"Khan's comments strike me as an admission that the court has not moved at pace and should have been doing more," said Hudson. "I am not sure what restraints he is operating under but he's not prioritized Sudan, and, in Darfur, these cases build themselves."

Sudanese international lawyers have also expressed skepticism about the ICC prosecutor's intervention. One who spoke to Arab News on the condition of anonymity said they were particularly concerned by Khan's focus on the violence in Darfur when in reality, the violence has spread far beyond the troubled western region.

"The ICC was mandated to investigate crimes in Darfur in 2005, and we have not yet seen any results from that mandate, and now this conflict is happening in other areas," the lawyer said. "This violence is not all in — nor is it originating from — Darfur."

"What is happening outside Darfur is not lesser than the violence happening within it and yet the ICC, partly as a consequence of Sudan not being a party to the court's jurisdiction, is drawing attention away from this and making it all about Darfur."

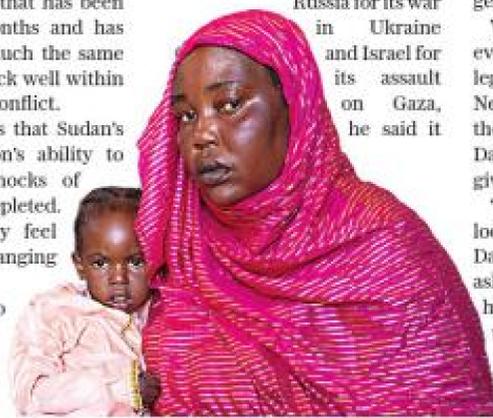
Despite lacking jurisdiction as a consequence of the Sudanese government failing to ratify the ICC treaty, otherwise known as the Rome Statute, the court had gained jurisdiction for a limited investigation into earlier crimes in Darfur through a UN Security Council referral.

That referral resulted in the ICC's 2009 decision to issue an arrest warrant for the since-ousted Sudanese President Omar Bashir for multiple charges, including for a genocide that took place in Darfur between 2003 and 2008.

Born out of Arab militias commonly known as Janjaweed, the RSF was mobilized by Bashir against non-Arab tribes in Darfur. At the time, they were accused of mass killings, rapes and other atrocities, and Darfur became synonymous with genocide.

Welcoming Khan's push for evidence, another Sudan-based legal expert, who spoke to Arab News anonymously, challenged those questioning the focus on Darfur, stressing it made sense given the region's history.

"Does it make sense to keep looking at cases within the Darfur geographic region?" they asked. "Yes, because all that is happening in Sudan from 2003 up to now can be connected back to Darfur, as that is where this conflict's root causes lie."





Saudi Arabia has been at the forefront of driving global efforts to combat land degradation and drought. SPA

SUSTAINABILITY

Desertification among 'most pressing challenges of our time'

'Healthy land is essential for our future'

Arab News Riyadh

Desertification and drought are among the most pressing environmental challenges faced by the world, Saudi Deputy Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture Osama Faqecha has said.

In a statement marking the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, the minister said land degradation affected up to 40 percent of the world's land area, resulting in the annual loss of 100 million hectares of healthy land, Saudi Press Agency reported.

Emphasizing the Kingdom's commitment to sustainable land management, Faqecha said: "Desertification, land degradation and drought are among the

most pressing environmental challenges of our time. This year's 30th anniversary of the UNCCD coincides with COP16, which is expected to be a pivotal moment for land restoration and sustainable management. Together, we can turn the tide and restore our land. Our future depends on our ability to manage our land sustainably."

He added that land degradation meant the world lost an area of healthy land equivalent to four football fields every second.

"Healthy land is essential for our future. Let's unite for sustainable land management," he said.

Saudi Arabia has been at the forefront of driving global efforts to combat land degradation

Osama Faqecha



and drought. Programs such as the Saudi Green Initiative and various land restoration projects were highlighted as models for sustainable development.

The minister said the initiatives not only contributed to environmental sustainability, but also aimed to create economic opportunities and improve the quality of life for communities. The 30th Desertification and Drought Day was hosted by Germany and concluded this week.

UNCCD Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw said: "This year, we focus on sharing the wisdom of our ancestors with future generations. More than a billion young people under the age of 25 in developing countries depend on land and natural resources. They are

key to transforming their communities and driving innovation in sustainable land management."

ENSURING PILGRIMS' COMFORT

Fluent Makkah locals break down language barriers during Hajj

Tareq Al-Thaqafi Makkah

During the Hajj season, locals in the holy city are often praised for their fluency in several languages, stemming from their interactions with people from around the world.

Their engagement in Hajj-related activities, both commercial and voluntary, across various sectors, enables them to secure seasonal jobs and gain valuable experience in volunteering. Most importantly, it provides them with the honor of serving pilgrims, meeting their needs, and ensuring their comfort.

Anas Al-Harithi, a Makkah resident, engages in seasonal work every year during the Hajj



Their engagement in Hajj-related activities provides the locals with the honor of serving pilgrims. SPA

FASTFACT

Most Makkah residents gained the skills through direct contact with pilgrims, enabling them to meet the worshippers' needs effectively.

season with agencies that offer temporary jobs.

He describes it as a great experience that has allowed him to learn Indonesian and interact with Indonesian worshippers — the largest group of pilgrims arriving in Makkah each year.

Al-Harithi said that linguistic barriers have significantly diminished, as many people in Makkah have long been fluent in several languages.

Through his years of working during Hajj, Al-Harithi has built extensive knowledge related to the pilgrimage. His ability to share languages and actively participate makes the journey easier and smoother for pilgrims.

TheSpace

Conflict in Ukraine and Saudi Arabia's diplomatic role

NASSER BIN HAMED AL-AHMAD



Vladimir Putin's recent threat to the West, in which he warned of supplying weapons to entities capable of targeting Western nations, underscores the increasingly volatile future of international security.

This coincides with a 2019 study published in the International Security Journal, which focuses on the distribution of power in the world order, the extent of cooperation among great powers, and the consequential reverberations on global security. It found that the shift from a unipolar to a multipolar world order significantly complicates great powers' efforts to control the spread of weapons of mass destruction. The study argues that ongoing and intensifying security competitions, such as those in the South China Sea, Syria, and Ukraine, heighten these risks. According to the study, in a multipolar system where great powers struggle to cooperate and uncertainty among major players surges, maintaining global stability becomes increasingly almost impossible.

As Russian troops advance in Ukraine, testing the West's resolve and commitment to defending Ukraine's sovereignty, escalating conflict in the Middle East provides a convenient distraction for Putin. This development underscores the study's argument that great powers can exploit rising

geopolitical tensions and security competition in other regions to advance their interests indirectly.

The current situation presents a stark challenge to the US, which has championed arms control, particularly of weapons of mass destruction, as a cornerstone of its grand strategy since 1945. The ongoing conflicts highlight the difficulty of upholding this commitment in an increasingly multipolar world where new threats and distractions constantly emerge. Since defeating Moscow in Ukraine is likely impossible, providing military aid — which could escalate the conflict or prove to be a futile policy — is an unwise and

potentially counterproductive strategy for the entire international community.

A political settlement, while undoubtedly complicated and requiring difficult compromises from all parties involved, is the only responsible path forward not only for Russia and the West but for the entire world. Putin's threat serves as a stark reminder of the fragility of peace in the 21st century and

the urgent need for dialogue and cooperation on the global stage. The prospect of a Donald Trump comeback seems to motivate President Joe Biden and the G7, as seen in their last meeting to ensure sustained support for Ukraine.

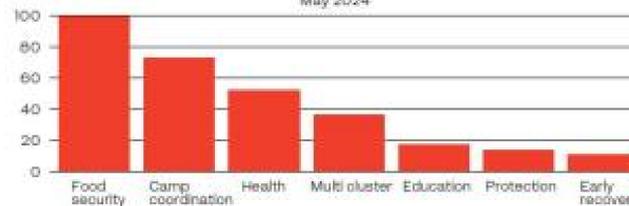
Nasser bin Hamed Al-Ahmad is a political analyst.
X: @nasseralahmad3

During his visit to the Kingdom on June 12, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated that he had held productive talks with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The Day's FIGURES

KSRELIEF PROJECTS IN SYRIA

May 2024



Source: ksrelief.org

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Hajj 2024 Ministry organizes 'Khitamuhu Misk' event in Makkah

The Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah organized a "Khitamuhu Misk" ceremony in Makkah recently.

The event included honoring outstanding individuals with the Labbaitum Award for excellence in pilgrim service.

Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah Tawfiq Al-Rabiah announced the beginning of preparations for the start of the Umrah season would be 14th of Dhu al-Hijjah 1445 AH (July 20, 2024).

He said the achievements of this year's Hajj season were the result of combined efforts by all sectors and agencies working to serve pilgrims, and that the cooperation of Hajj affairs offices played a significant role in ensuring pilgrims' safety and comfort. SPA Makkah

Support 100 sacrificed animals for Mukalla residents

The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center has distributed 100 sacrificed animals in Mukalla, Yemen, for 1,400 impoverished people.

The distribution of the animals is part of the implementation of the Sacrificial Project in Yemen.

It aims to distribute 2,330 sacrificed animals to needy families in the governorates of Aden, Hadramout, Al-Mahrah, Marib and Lahij in Yemen, benefiting 32,620 people.

The project is an extension of the relief and humanitarian efforts provided by the Kingdom through KSrelief to bring joy during Eid. Elsewhere, the agency earlier this month delivered 25 tonnes of dates to the World Food Programme's office in Guinea. SPA Hadramout

Security Attempts to smuggle drugs thwarted in KSA

Saudi Arabia's drug control authority recently arrested several people involved in smuggling, and seized large quantities of narcotics after operations across Saudi Arabia, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

Border Guard land patrols in Rabwa, Asir province, arrested 15 violators, Ethiopians and Yemenis, for smuggling 300 kg of khat.

In Jazan, security officials arrested two Yemenis and four Saudis for possessing 196kg of hashish and 7,227 amphetamine tablets.

Another raid by Border Guards in Al-Dair, Jazan province, thwarted smuggling of 450 kg of khat. The Saudi government aims to curb the smuggling of drugs at all levels. SPA Riyadh

News Saudi Arabia

BURSTING WITH FLAVORS

Classic meat dish returns to Jazan tables

In the past, locals prepared mahshoosh to preserve sacrificial meat in the absence of refrigeration

Tareq Al-Thaqafi Makkah

The arrival of Eid Al-Adha signals the return of mahshoosh, or Al-Humals — a traditional dish beloved by Jazan locals that is deeply rooted in the region's cultural heritage.

Mahshoosh has stood the test of time, maintaining its prominence among the various dishes that grace the Jazan table. Its preparation is seen as a revival of an age-old tradition dating back to a time when there was no refrigeration. Local people relied on this dish to preserve the meat from their Eid Al-Adha sacrifices.

While the dish is most associated with Eid Al-Adha, it can be savored throughout the year. Its name stems from the method of preparation, which involves finely chopping meat and fat into small pieces, a process referred to as "Al-Hash" in the local dialect.

The recipe for mahshoosh has been passed down through generations, with women in Jazan taking great pride in preparing it. Once the meat and fat are cut up, the fat is slowly melted and meat added gradually. After the addition of spices, the dish is then left to simmer for several hours with occasional stirring.

Finally, the cooked mixture is transferred to a clay container, where it solidifies and can be preserved for several months without losing its flavor.

Chef Ahmed Issa Shetifi from the Sabya governorate said mahshoosh was invented out of necessity when people had no



Mahshoosh has stood the test of time, maintaining its prominence among the various dishes that grace the Jazan table. Supplied/Visit Saudi

means of preserving their food. Cooking it with lard extended the shelf life of the meat.

Preparation methods varied from one household to another, with some families adding only onions while others would include spices such as cardamom and cinnamon.

According to Shetifi, proper preparation involves roasting the lard before the meat is added. The lard pieces should be large, as they dissolve faster.

HIGHLIGHTS

- While mahshoosh is most associated with Eid Al-Adha, it can be savored throughout the year.

- Its name stems from the method of preparation, which involves finely chopping meat and fat into small pieces, a process referred to as 'Al-Hash' in the local dialect.

He added: "This custom continued even after people had refrigerators to store meat and food. In fact, some families still store mahshoosh in rooms or under their beds, where it lasts for a week or 10 days before being consumed.

"Later generations began storing it in pots in the refrigerator while others use designated bags, each containing one meal, and keep them in the freezer."

Mahshoosh is very high in



Lard and meat are chopped up and cooked together to create the rich delicacy. SPA

calories and is typically served only during Eid Al-Adha, he said: "Some families dedicate the entire Eid sacrifice to preparing mahshoosh. While it can be enjoyed in moderation, eating it in excess poses a risk of high cholesterol due to its high-calorie content."

Mahshoosh is typically served with bread, although some people prefer to eat it with rice. It is also part of the traditional Jazan dinner.

SUMMER ESCAPE

Unwind and reconnect with nature at these Saudi reserves and resorts

Nada Alturki Riyadh

Saudi Arabia boasts a plethora of novel natural reserves and resorts that champion the nourishment of the mind, body, and soul.

From lush mountain ranges to glistening blue waters, the well-preserved environments have become must-visit spots for those looking to discover the Kingdom's hidden gems and reconnect with nature.

Nujuma, Ritz-Carlton Reserve, The Red Sea

Situated on a private island, the newly opened Nujuma, Ritz-Carlton Reserve marks the brand's debut in the Middle East, featuring coral reefs beneath the water's surface and a clear view of the night stars, inspiring its name.

Model and actress Maria Eduarda spoke to Arab News about her stay: "Everything was great! The food, the room service, and in-villa dining were amazing ... The structure inside the villa is amazing ... I loved it — one of the best stops ever."

The on-site Conservation

House is an ode to nomadic exploration, providing a space for guests to get creative, expand their knowledge, and foster a sense of community through resident sustainability, environmental, and cultural experts.

Aseel Resort, Diriyah

Aseel Resort is a family experience that merges nature, heritage, and luxury. Nestled in the birthplace of the Kingdom, Diriyah, the resort was created as an ode to Saudi history and Najd's beautiful artistry.

The resort allows anywhere from six to 75 guests, with six farms to choose from. Each one is decorated with ornate art by local creatives. Whether you

take a dip in the farm's private pool or enjoy game nights with your family at the indoor majlis, it's a space to create lifetime memories.

Al-Ahsa Oasis, Al-Ahsa

Boasting natural springs and lush greenery, Al-Ahsa Oasis is the perfect spot for a family getaway. Home to one of the biggest oases in the world and now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the limestone hills of Al-Qarah and Al-Ahsa National Park are just a few of the attractions.

Asfar Lake, or Yellow Lake, is an unforgettable site from over the sand dunes, while Souq Al-Qaisariya is one of the oldest markets in the Kingdom for memorable souvenirs.

Nofa Riyadh, Riyadh

The relaxing Nofa Riyadh features luxury villas complete with private gardens and swimming pools, surrounded by green lawns, sand dunes and mountains.

Dareen Al-Rajeh, a senior project associate, said about her stay there: "I liked how it was clean and comfortable with a generous welcome from the staff. The villa has a unique style with your own swimming pool ... Walking around the resort, you will pass by a lot of animals, which makes you feel



From top to clock-wise: Aseel Resort, Nofa Riyadh and Six Senses Southern Dunes. Supplied



connected to nature ... The resort has a spa, a children's playground, multiple restaurants, and a small lake and boats."

Guests are encouraged to experience nature on a whole new level at the resort's incredible Wildlife Park where Asian elephants, Grevy's zebras, Arabian oryx, and giraffes can be spotted.

Six Senses Southern Dunes, The Red Sea

Set against the dramatic backdrop of desert plains and the Hijaz

Mountains, Six Senses Southern Dunes pays homage to Nabataean architectural heritage and its majestic desert surroundings.

From Al-Sarab to Merkaz, Bariya, and beyond, the flavors of Saudi culinary heritage are endless, crafted with ingredients sourced from the chef's garden or local suppliers.

Guests can also immerse themselves in the gastronomic arts by enrolling in a cooking school to master healthy recipes and techniques.

Jabal Shada, Baha

For those looking to discover Saudi Arabia's regional flora and fauna, Jabal Shada is just an hour-and-a-half drive from Baha in the Jabal Shada Nature Reserve. Marked with unusual rock formations, the area is home to unique geological cave formations, reportedly dating back 763 million years and engraved with Thamudic writings and drawings that date back 3,000 years.

Tours are available to book through Akam Aljazeera's website, and modern stays nearby are equipped with kitchens, balconies, and breathtaking views.

Sharaan Nature Reserve, AlUla

Sharaan Nature Reserve spans 1,500 sq. km, showcasing stunning red-rock canyons, valleys, and desert landscapes.

Safari Sharaan's guided 4x4 adventures allow guests to explore wildlife like red-necked ostriches and Arabian ibex, and discover ancient rock carvings.

Guests can relax at Habitas AlUla, featuring Thuraya Wellness' yoga, fitness, and personalized treatment offerings with local oils and teas, or stay in wellness-focused villas like Celestial and Alcove at Habitas.



News Middle East

GRAVE RISKS

Military escalation in southern Lebanon after US envoy's visit

Najla Houseari Beirut

Hostilities flared between Hezbollah and the Israeli army in southern Lebanon on Wednesday following a visit by US envoy Amos Hochstein to Beirut and Tel Aviv.

Opinions varied on the outcome of Hochstein's visit, which aimed to reduce tensions between Hezbollah and Israel on Lebanon's southern border.

A political observer noted an "unsettling atmosphere" amid the visit — Hochstein's trip coincided with Hezbollah's release of aerial drone footage captured inside Israel, showing military bases and the Haifa Port.

The footage, released by the group on Tuesday, alarmed and



Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati receives US special envoy Amos Hochstein in Beirut on Tuesday. AFP

BACKGROUND

Wednesday's clash came a day after the Israeli military said it had approved operational plans for an offensive in Lebanon.

angered Israeli military observers.

Media reports on Wednesday from Beirut said that Hochstein reassured caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati that the atmosphere was "positive" regarding US President Joe Biden's initiative for a ceasefire in Gaza.

Hochstein said that the situation was "under control."

Hezbollah has said that any ceasefire on Lebanon's southern border will only be reached following a truce in the Gaza Strip.

A Paris meeting earlier this month between President Biden and French President Emmanuel Macron focused on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

Several Hezbollah members and civilians were killed and injured in fresh violence as Hochstein left the region.

Hezbollah said on Wednesday it fired dozens of Katyusha rockets and artillery rounds at a barracks in Kiryat Shmona in northern Israel, in retaliation for the Israeli attacks on Yarun and Khiam.

The group said it targeted

the headquarters of the 769th Eastern Brigade — affiliated with the 91st Division — at the Kiryat Shmona barracks with rockets and artillery shells.

Israeli media reported that about 20 rockets were launched from Lebanon toward Kiryat Shmona.

Haaretz quoted the Israeli army as saying that about 10 rockets were fired toward the town, causing damage to infrastructure and property.

Sirens and Israel's Iron Dome air defense was activated in Israeli settlements near the Lebanese border.

Since Wednesday morning, southern Lebanon has faced Israeli attacks, injuring civilians residing near targeted sites.

Army artillery shelled the outskirts of the border towns of Taybeh and Hula.

The city of Khiam was targeted with heavy shells, causing significant damage to a healthcare center belonging to the Amel Association International.

Israeli aerial and artillery attacks targeted the outskirts of the towns of Aita Al-Shaab, Shebaa, Odaisseh, Rachaya Al-Foukhar, Tallouseh, Bani Haliyyan and Mays Al-Jabal.

The head of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee, MP Fadi Alame, counted "more than 5,000 Israeli attacks on Lebanon since the southern front opened over eight months ago, resulting in the death of more than 400 people and over 15,000 injuries."

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Europe must host Gaza children, Greek foreign minister says

The psychological impact of the war on the youngsters is 'tremendous,' Gerapetritis says

Reuters Athens

Europe has a duty to host children hurt and traumatized by war in Gaza for as long as the conflict continues, Greek Foreign Minister George Gerapetritis said.

Gerapetritis is seeking partners in what he hopes would be a project to temporarily bring the children to the EU. He said he discussed the idea with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Mustafa this week.

"We need to face this tragedy very clearly," Gerapetritis said.

"Europe should be open to injured people from (Gaza) but also to children who are now facing famine or other sorts of dangers."

Greece was elected as a member of the UN Security Council for 2025-2026 earlier this month. Gerapetritis believes Greece's historical ties with the Arab world give it credibility to act as a peace broker.

The 56-year old, who has held the post for a year, did not say how many people could be hosted by Greece or the EU but said the issue was under discussion with Palestinian authorities.

Gerapetritis stressed that the initiative was not linked to regular migration, which has become politically sensitive in Europe and strongly opposed by



FAST FACT

Foreign Minister George Gerapetritis believes Greece's historical ties with the Arab world give it credibility to act as a peace broker.

Palestinians gather on Wednesday to receive food cooked by a charity kitchen in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip. Reuters

a resurgent right.

"This is an obvious call for humanitarian assistance. We're not talking here about economic migrants or other types of

irregular migration," he said, days after far-right parties surged in European parliamentary elections.

Greece condemned the Oct. 7

attack by Hamas against Israel but has called for a halt to Israel's ground and air assault on Gaza that Palestinian authorities say has killed more than 35,000 people

and flattened whole cities.

The World Health Organization says many in Gaza face famine-like conditions, and more than 8,000 children under

five years old are suffering from acute malnutrition.

In addition, the psychological impact of the war on children is "tremendous," said Gerapetritis.

SUFFERING

Palestinian girl with burns from Israeli shelling hopes for treatment

Reuters Deir Al-Balah

The disfiguring facial burns of 10-year-old Hanan Akel show how Israel's military campaign in Gaza is not only causing thousands of deaths but terrible injuries afflicting both old and young.

Hanan lay in a hospital cot in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza

Strip, struggling to move her mouth as she spoke and with her eyes partly shut, patches of her forehead still raw and stitched scars across her nose and lips.

She wailed when her mother, Walaa Akel, tried to clean her.

Hanan was out walking in the Al-Bureij refugee camp where the family had taken shelter after leaving their home when she

was caught in Israeli shellfire, her mother Walaa said.

Instead of spending the Eid Al-Adha festival playing with friends, she has spent it in the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital being treated for second and third-degree burns on her face and limbs.

"I used to go with my friends. Play, buy things, eat, and

celebrate Eid. We were happy. We used to play on the swings, and we used to wear our Eid clothes. We used to wear nice new shoes," she said.

Now, she hopes for treatment and for her face to heal.

"I want to return to what I was like before," she said.

Since Israel expanded its offensive last month to include the

southern city of Rafah, where the border post to Egypt is located, the frontier has been closed, and Gaza residents have been unable to go abroad for medical help.

Doctor Mahmoud Mahani, the plastic surgeon treating Hanan at the hospital, said she needs urgent treatment somewhere with more advanced equipment.

News Middle East

SECURITY

Shipping industry urges Red Sea action as Houthis sink second vessel

Trauma from militia attacks adds to seafarer shortage, crew members and officials say

Reuters London

Urgent action must be taken in the Red Sea to stop attacks on merchant shipping by Houthis, leading industry groups said on Wednesday after the sinking of a second ship.

Houthis first launched drone and missile strikes on the important trade route in November.

In more than 70 attacks, they have also seized one vessel and its crew and killed at least three seafarers.

"It is deplorable that innocent

seafarers are being attacked while simply performing their jobs, vital jobs which keep the world warm, fed, and clothed," the world's top shipping associations said in a joint statement.

"These attacks must stop now. We call for states with influence in the region to safeguard our innocent seafarers and for the swift de-escalation of the situation in the Red Sea."

As Houthi attacks persist, traumatized seafarers are refusing to sail through the Red Sea, according to interviews with more than 15 crew members and shipping industry officials.

That's another staffing headache for an industry already facing a shortage of seafarers worldwide, with ranks having shrunk after COVID kept seafarers on board for months and the war in Ukraine posed dangers in the Black Sea.

"Seafarers are less and less keen to sail through that region willingly, and it is becoming a bigger challenge now," an industry source with knowledge of the crisis said.

The Greek-owned Tutor coal carrier attacked by militants in the Red Sea last week has sunk, salvagers confirmed on Wednesday. The vessel was struck with missiles and an explosive-laden



Sailors from the Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group assist distressed mariners rescued from the Liberian-flagged, Greek-owned bulk carrier M/V Tutor that was attacked by Houthis in the Red Sea. Reuters

remote-controlled boat, according to sources.

International naval forces have been deployed to provide mainly defensive support for ships still sailing through the Red Sea, but the attacks have increased significantly.

Insurance industry sources said on Wednesday there was also mounting concern over the use of attack drone boats by the Houthis.

"They are harder to defend against and potentially more lethal as they strike the waterline," one industry source said.

"Missiles have — to date — mainly caused deck and superstructure damage (to ships)."

There have been 10 Houthi strikes so far in June compared with five in May, said Munro Anderson, head of operations at marine war risk and insurance specialist Vessel Protect, part of Pen Underwriting.

"The first successful use of an unmanned surface vessel represents a new challenge for commercial shipping within an already complex environment," he added.

Insurance industry sources said that additional war risk premiums, paid when vessels sail through the Red Sea, had hovered close to 0.7 percent of the value of a ship in recent days from around 1 percent earlier this year.

They added that with a second ship sinking and the losses likely to emerge, rates will likely firm up, adding hundreds of thousands of dollars of extra costs to every voyage.

Ships must divert around southern Africa, which is the best way to protect seafarers, said Stephen Cotton, general secretary of the International Transport Workers' Federation, the leading seafarer's union.

"We would also welcome proper escorts and the shielding of ships by naval forces, which would reduce the risks of ships being hit," he added.

تقرير
واشنطن
WASHINGTON REPORT
مع رنا أبتير

بايدن وترمب والصراع على أصوات الأميركيين السود

يوم السبت | 8:00pm
KSA

نضع النقاط

asharq.com

الشرق
Rsharq News

Kim fetes Putin

Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un attend a gala concert in Pyongyang on Wednesday.

AFP



Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Natural disaster

Landslides kill 9 in Bangladesh Rohingya camps

At least nine people, including eight Rohingya Muslims, were killed and several others injured on Wednesday after heavy monsoon rains triggered landslides in refugee camps in southern Bangladesh, officials said.

People died in landslides at three separate places in the early hours of Wednesday, Mohammad Shamsud Douza, a senior Bangladesh government official in charge of refugees, said after days of heavy rain as the monsoon season began.

More than 1 million Rohingya live in crowded camps in the border district of Cox's Bazar after fleeing a military crackdown in Myanmar in 2017. **Reuters**

Weather moods

11 dead in India heat waves, floods

India on Wednesday was battling extreme weather that caused severe heat waves, landslides and floods, killing at least 11 people this week, among them a woman and her three daughters buried alive in a northeastern state, officials and media said.

The capital, New Delhi, sweltered through its hottest night in six years on Tuesday, with hospitals in the city of 20 million reporting at least five deaths from heatstroke this week. Floods and landslides triggered by incessant rain in the northeastern state of Assam killed at least six people. **Reuters**

NEW STUDY

Indonesians top global intake of microplastics

SE Asia's largest economy is second-largest ocean plastic polluter after China

Sheany Yasuko Lai Jakarta

Indonesians are the top global consumers of microplastics, a recent Cornell University study shows, estimating that they ingest about 15 grams of plastic particles per month.

The study, published in the Environmental Science & Technology journal, mapped microplastic uptake in 109 countries and found that people in Southeast Asian countries, including Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam, are the top consumers of microplastics worldwide.

Indonesians topped the list as they consume the equivalent of three credit cards in microplastics every month, the majority

from fish and seafood. Using existing data models, Cornell researchers said that Indonesians' daily consumption of plastic particles increased by 59 times from 1990 to 2018.

"This latest finding adds to the long list of the alarming dangers of plastic pollution in Indonesia ... the existence of microplastics cannot be separated from the massive production of plastics," Afifah Rahmi Andini, plastic lead researcher at Greenpeace Indonesia, told Arab News.

Indonesia, an archipelago of more than 270 million people, is the second-largest ocean plastic polluter, just behind China, according to a 2015 study published in the journal Science.

Despite being a major producer and consumer of

HIGHLIGHT

Indonesians topped the list as they consume the equivalent of three credit cards in microplastics every month, the majority from fish and seafood.

plastics, Southeast Asia's largest economy still lags behind when it comes to waste management.

"Our waste management capacity is still far from ideal. Our recycling capacity alone is less than 10 percent of the total plastic waste we produce. So, it's not that surprising if right now we have to face the bitter truth that Indonesians are at the highest risk of being exposed to microplastics," Andini said.

Over the years, the Indonesian

government has designed various regulations to address the issue of plastic pollution, including a national action plan that aims to reduce marine plastic debris by 70 percent by 2025, which covers strategies for waste reduction, improving waste management infrastructure and public education campaigns.

Major regions, including the capital Jakarta and the popular holiday destination Bali, have also introduced bans on single-use plastics.

"But the existing regulations are not ideal enough to address the issue of microplastic contamination ... we must adapt, because it's now a fact that microplastics are part of our environment and our bodies that we can no longer avoid," Andini said.

DATE WITH HISTORY

India launches new campus at site of Nalanda University

Sanjay Kumar New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated on Monday a new campus of Nalanda University, an institution located at the site of a 5th-century learning center considered the world's first residential university.

The ancient Nalanda university in the state of Bihar was founded in 427 CE during the Gupta empire and flourished for more than seven centuries. Its archaeological remains became a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2016.

The present-day Nalanda University was established in Nalanda district as a public research university by an act of the Indian parliament in 2010. A flagship project of the Ministry of External Affairs of



India's Premier Narendra Modi at the inauguration of Nalanda University's new campus in Bihar on Wednesday. Supplied

the government of India, it was proposed by India's former president A.P. J. Abdul Kalam and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, who served as its first chancellor.

Supported by 18 member countries of the East Asia Summit, Nalanda University's first batch comprised a dozen

students enrolled in graduate and postgraduate courses in 2014. The construction of its new campus started in 2017. It was announced as a "net-zero green campus," with solar panels and water treatment and recycling plants.

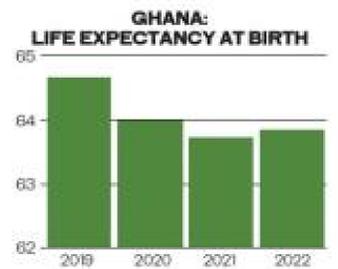
"It's a very special day for

our education sector," Modi said during the inauguration ceremony attended by Bihar Governor Rajendra Arlekar, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar, and foreign ambassadors.

"Nalanda has a strong connect with our glorious past. This university will surely go a long way in catering to the educational needs of the youth."

The ancient Nalanda, whose complex spread over an area of 23 hectares, attracted thousands of students arriving from China, Indonesia, Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Sri Lanka and Tibet to learn medicine, logic, mathematics and Buddhist teachings. It also sent some of its best professors to propagate Buddhist philosophy in learning centers across Asia.

The Day's FIGURES



Source: Statista

What We're Reading Today

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

Slow Burn

ROBERT JISUNG PARK

It's hard not to feel anxious about the problem of climate change, especially if we think of it as an impending planetary catastrophe. In "Slow Burn," R. Jisung Park encourages us to view climate change through a different lens: one that focuses less on the

possibility of mass climate extinction in a theoretical future, and more on the everyday implications of climate change here and now. Park shows how climate change headlines often miss some of the most important costs.



Relieved Sri Lanka court clears comedian of blasphemy

Sri Lanka's state prosecutor on Wednesday withdrew charges against a stand-up comedian for a joke which police said insulted the country's Buddhist majority.

Natasha Edirisooriya, who had been jailed for more than a month before securing bail, said she felt vindicated after the Colombo Fort magistrate cleared her of blasphemy.

"I am greatly relieved that this ordeal is over," 33-year-old Edirisooriya said, soon after the case was dismissed. Her producer, Bruno Divakara, was also cleared. Edirisooriya was arrested in April 2023 and imprisoned for 39 days. **AFP**

Massive damage Chad ammo depot blast takes nine lives

At least nine people were killed and more than 46 injured in blasts caused by a fire at a military ammunition depot in Chad's capital, authorities said.

The death toll could rise as many people suffered serious injuries.

The explosions lit up the night sky over the military base near the central African nation's main international airport and sent spent shells flying into nearby homes where terrified residents struggled to find cover.

On Wednesday President Mahamat Idriss Deby visited the site where wrecked cars and twisted metal littered the ground. **Reuters**

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB
Infatuation would most delightfully be described as an affliction I deliberately seek.
Zainab Jabbar
(Contemporary Iraqi poet and engineer)

Opinion

US democracy and a tale of two trials

YOSSI MEKELBERG

In recent years, the world has faced many events to which the adjective “unprecedented” has been frequently and correctly attached: from a global pandemic to a member of the UN Security Council illegally invading a neighbor and global warming reaching a new height. However, in the next few months, much of our attention will turn to the US presidential election — and there too the unprecedented nature of events rules supreme.

For the first time, both candidates are looking to be elected for a second term; their combined age is the highest of any previous pair of candidates; and, in addition, criminal trials are dominating much of the political debate, despite the enormous challenges confronting the country domestically and internationally. And if Donald Trump wins, he will become the first American president to be a convict. For now, he holds the unenviable record of being the first former president to be convicted of felony crimes and he might even have to

run the country from behind bars.

As far as the two court cases are concerned, there is a marked difference between them. In the case of President Joe Biden, he has not been suspected, let alone charged with any offence, but his son Hunter was convicted last week in a federal court on three felony counts relating to buying a handgun while being a crack cocaine user and lying about that. The president’s support of his son, especially considering the tragic history of their family, is an understandable fatherly act that should be held in his favor and not used against him.

In contrast, Trump’s recent conviction on 34 counts of falsification of business records in the first degree, in a scheme to illegally influence the 2016 election through a hush money payment to an adult film actress, is a legal stain on his reputation that should have excluded him from running for the highest office in the country. This is only one of four criminal cases against him, with the remaining three trials yet to commence.

During this unusual presidential race,



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

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

these trials are an unfortunate distraction from the real issues that are going to determine the lives of Americans over the next four years, as well as the lives of many others across the globe. Nevertheless, they are also a symptom of America’s malaise and the profound rupture in its society.

Trump is a product of our times, whereby reality is in the eye of the beholder. Research shows that polarization is ingrained in American society, creating a perfect environment for the former president to thrive on. Moreover, supporters of both Democrats and Republicans perceive their rival supporters in an extremely negative light, as such as they do the party leaders. This split society translates to a rigid, tribal voting pattern, with little switching of support from one party to another. Instead of judging candidates by their policies and personalities, they support them according to what side of the political map they are on, while developing hostile emotions toward the rival party.

Ironically, when voters are polled on the

issues that concern them most, one of their top answers is that Democrats and Republicans should work together, yet by supporting Trump and some of his loyalists in Congress, they are bound to achieve only partisanship and discord: the exact opposite. To explain the rise of Trumpian populism, much can be attributed to the increasing number of Americans who feel left behind and disenfranchised. It is a very wealthy country, yet there are far too many people who find it difficult to make ends meet. In Trump, who manages to fashion himself as their champion, they look for salvation, while his record belies this and shows that he is clearly more concerned with the super-rich, not those who face daily economic struggle.

Few believed that Trump would win the election back in 2016 and, considering his first term, it is almost inconceivable that the great American people will renew his mandate. This might indeed appear to be a logical conclusion, but logic is something that is threatening to desert America’s current social and political environment.

During this unusual presidential race, these trials are an unfortunate distraction from the real issues



COURTESY: AHMAD RASHID/SHARQ AL-AWHAD

Macron’s kamikaze decision could still be vindicated if the electorate manages to see clearly what is at stake

Will France choose fantasy politics or reality?

MOHAMED CHEBARO

Most people in Europe are still digesting the results of this month’s European Parliament elections, which rang alarm bells nationally and within the bloc’s institutions. They are now bracing for the impact of the extreme right and populist parties, which won almost a quarter of the parliament’s seats, on the future working of the union.

French President Emmanuel Macron decided to surprise everyone and call for a general election, which will be sandwiched by the Euro 2024 football championship, which kicked off in Germany last week, and the Paris Olympics, which is due to start at the end of July. This amounts to a less than perfect setting to ensure a large turnout.

Macron’s gamble, though a simple one, could backfire on his presidency — and the nation — as France could be ruled by a far-right government come July 8. The president is presenting people with a simple choice: either back his centrist,

pro-business, pro-European, pro-Ukraine status quo politics or vote for the National Rally, led by Marine Le Pen, who tables an ultranationalist, populist, anti-EU, Moscow-friendly agenda.

Early polls suggest the party of Le Pen could win up to 265 of the 577 seats in the National Assembly, nearly treble its current tally. And the story could get even grimmer, since the election is likely to be fought three ways: between the National Rally and its allies on the extreme right, the quickly-formed alliance of the forces of the left, and Macron’s centrist Renaissance party.

Macron’s kamikaze decision could still be vindicated if the electorate manages to see clearly what is at stake socially, politically and economically as a result of the far-right’s fantastical, uncostered reforms. But in an electoral space — in France and elsewhere — that is dominated by Tik-Tok, fake news, trolls and alternate realities catering to every voter’s whim, Macron’s gamble could end up pushing voters into the arms of the political populists, as they



Mohamed Chebaro is a British-Lebanese journalist with more than 25 years of experience covering war, terrorism, defense, current affairs and diplomacy. He is also a media consultant and trainer.

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

seek to escape the often more complex and less appealing hard realities.

Many have routinely picked holes in the uncostered plans of Le Pen’s party. And some consider certain policies to be unconstitutional, such as the annulling of taxation for those under 30, while others believe that most of her proposals are incompatible with competitiveness.

As France this week starts a fortnight of frenetic election campaigning, early indications point to a lack of urgency to mount a united front to deny Le Pen and National Rally a majority in the next French parliament, as the left has opted to quickly form its own alliance.

The fear for France is that the far right will not succeed at governing like it does with campaigning, which is maybe plausible. But anyone watching Jordan Bardella, the 28-year-old face of the National Rally and likely leader of its government, addressing his party’s supporters after its European Parliament elections success could not have failed to

notice his composure and confidence as he spoke to a sea of cheering youths, who celebrated as he underscored his party’s commitment to close French borders.

The new poster boy of the French far right seems to have captured the hearts and minds of not only the old xenophobes, but also the new generation — and that is the danger for France and Europe. Bardella’s attributes as a young white politician calling for a “France first” vision clearly echoes with a younger population that feels disillusioned and underserved.

Whether his party will collapse the economy or fail in its endeavor to rule France is secondary. For the time being, a section of French people of all ages, like their counterparts in many other countries, are gripped by leaders like Bardella, who project a modern image, turbocharged by the communication of messages with skillfully curated content that appeals to them. And in an age where the digital realm is king, who cares whether what Bardella says is realistic and can be translated into sound policies?

Opinion

Saudi Arabia's semiconductor revolution

ZAID M. BELBAGI



Zaid M. Belbagi is a political commentator and an advisor to private clients between London and the Gulf Cooperation Council region.
X: @Moulay_Zaid

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

At a time of rapid technological innovation and data-driven economies, semiconductors have emerged as the so-called new oil. These tiny chips that will court an estimated global investment of \$1 trillion by 2030 are the cornerstone of modern societies. From computing to consumer electronics to solar panels, various everyday devices are dependent on semiconductors.

The global rise of semiconductors has aligned with the ongoing transformation in Saudi Arabia, whereby the Kingdom is more interested than ever in creating digital economies and investing in the latest technologies. Building on its stated plan, announced in March, to

provide a \$40 billion push for artificial intelligence in the country, Saudi Arabia this month announced the creation of a National Semiconductor Hub during the Future of Semiconductors Forum in Riyadh.

The government aims to use various financial incentives to attract 50 semiconductor companies to set up bases in Saudi Arabia and develop simple, fabless chips. The chips will initially be manufactured

internationally, with the Kingdom planning to then use its strategic location, abundant natural resources, research infrastructure and local talent to build a semiconductor ecosystem worth more than \$13 billion.

This comes amid increasing Saudi interest in investing in emerging technologies locally and internationally. In doing so, the Kingdom has partnered with leading international semiconductor companies like Nvidia, Qualcomm and Intel to combine their industry expertise with its financial and natural resources. However, while these American companies provide the most sophisticated semiconductor technology at present, growing geopolitical tensions between the US and China have complicated any third-party usage of this technology.

In this context, Saudi Arabia's commitment to developing a domestic semiconductor industry is also an exercise in shaping an increasingly independent and influential foreign policy. The Kingdom's efforts toward balancing the US-China technological competition is seen in two contrasting recent statements. In early May, the Saudi

AI investment fund Alat stated that it was willing to divest from Chinese companies should the US ask it to. By the end of the month, reports emerged of Saudi Aramco's participation in a \$400 million funding round for Chinese generative AI company Zhipu AI through the former's venture capital fund Prosperity7 Ventures. While critics have questioned the feasibility of balancing both partners, it is necessary for the Kingdom to ensure uninterrupted access to the latest and most cost-effective technologies in the semiconductors and AI space.

Seeking to avoid technology transfer sanctions while preserving relations with both technological giants, Saudi Arabia has decided to look inwards to develop its own capabilities and local talent in the semiconductor sector. An initial investment of \$266 million in the National Semiconductor Hub, amid ambitious multibillion dollar plans to invest in AI and technological advancement, is a sign of the ongoing technological revolution in Saudi Arabia.

The Kingdom is not only seeking to attenuate great power rivalry in the field but also use this opportunity to upskill and employ its youth, strengthen international

partnerships and reduce dependency for a technology that is key to Saudi progress toward a diversified post-oil economy. Greater localization in chip manufacturing also allows Saudi Arabia to mitigate the challenges posed by natural calamities, conflicts and intellectual property rights to the globally dispersed semiconductor supply chain.

The National Semiconductor Hub's recent statement that it does not intend to "replace Nvidia or challenge Intel" is notable, as it highlights the Kingdom's pragmatic assessment of its capabilities and targets. Naveed Sherwani, who will head the new hub, highlighted Saudi Arabia's focus on uncomplicated chips that are not politically sensitive.

The Kingdom's development of low-cost and fabless chips will also be beneficial for its partners in the Global South. Saudi Arabia can offer these emerging economies a crucial technology at affordable prices to provide an initial impetus to their digitalization. These efforts are putting Saudi Arabia at the forefront of the technological revolution, not only in the region but globally as well.

The Kingdom is more interested than ever in creating digital economies and investing in the latest technologies

Saudi Arabia has decided to look inwards to develop its own capabilities and local talent in the semiconductor sector

Israel should be banned from Olympics just like Russia

RAY HANANIA



Ray Hanania is an award-winning former Chicago City Hall political reporter and columnist. He can be reached on his personal website at www.hanania.com.
X: @RayHanania

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

Russia and Belarus have both been banned from participating in the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics because of their involvement in the war on Ukraine. So why is Israel not being banned as well?

Israel's military is engaged in one of the worst attacks on a civilian population since the Second World War, with more than 37,000 Palestinians killed in the Gaza Strip. And we only have Israel's word that many of those killed were members of Hamas, the militant group that launched a violent attack against Israel, killing about 1,200 people, on Oct. 7, 2023.

In the first two years following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, more than 30,000 Ukrainians were killed or wounded.

In Gaza, nearly 85 percent of the population of 2.3 million have been forced from their homes and are constantly seeking shelter. Israel not only fires missiles into the imprisoned land mass, but it has also sent tanks, troops and snipers into the area, killing targets as they move from Beit Lahia in the north to Rafah in the south.

The host of this year's Olympics, France, is divided on the Israeli invasion and the government has taken action to oppose

a rise in antisemitism. French President Emmanuel Macron has also offered consoling words to Muslims.

Why has the International Olympic Committee not taken action to curtail or prohibit Israel's participation in the Olympics? If the international rule of law and the West's supposed opposition to the killing of civilians had any meaning, Israel would be banned.

The problem is that, when it comes to the Middle East, the West has always cared less about the suffering of Arabs and Muslims than the suffering of non-Arabs and non-Muslims. It is that racist and Islamophobic attitude, which is driven by ugly historical stereotypes that date back to the Crusades of almost 1,000 years ago, that allows the West to be concerned for Ukraine and angry with Russia, while being unconcerned about Arabs in Gaza and throughout the Middle East and accepting of Israel.

Israel largely controls the media narrative of the war, falsely asserting that the violence began on Oct. 7. The Western news media has generally championed that narrative, carrying water for Israel.

Meanwhile, Israel has engaged in a war not only against Hamas, but also against independent, mainly Arab journalists, killing more than 100 of those who have

been reporting on the war from Gaza and who have not been embedded with Israel's military, which censors and controls content.

The violence by Israel before the Oct. 7 Hamas attack was excessive but under-reported by the Western news media. The truth is that the Israeli carnage against Palestinians began long before the foundation of Hamas, which has its roots in an Israeli effort to undermine the rise of secular Palestinian nationalism in the 1970s. Israeli military censorship in both Gaza and the West Bank since the start of the occupation in 1967 means it is tough to know the exact number of Palestinians who have been killed, as well as the extent of the land theft that continues to take place in order to build and expand Jewish-only settlements.

Estimates of the number of Palestinians killed in 2023 before Oct. 7 range from 175 to 230, while in 2022 it was between 250 and 400. B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights organization, tries to maintain its own list but, several years ago, Israel's government cracked down on such humanitarian and human rights groups.

In 2021, B'Tselem carried out exhaustive research and detailed its findings in a document that concluded that Israel was carrying out apartheid policies that discriminated against non-Jews.

Months later, Israel's government declared six prominent Palestinian human rights groups to be "terrorist organizations," curbing their ability to document Israel's human rights abuses and its military and police violence against non-Jews.

However, following the Hamas attack, with Palestinian organizations silenced by Israel's restrictive policies and threats, B'Tselem documented how Israel's

invasion of Gaza was emphasizing violence against civilians.

Despite Israel's efforts to cloak its violence and focus on Hamas' violence, along with its efforts to censor any media outlet that does not embrace its propaganda, including by targeting and killing independent journalists, there is more than enough

evidence to show that Israel is a greater threat to civilians in Gaza than Russia is to civilians in Ukraine.

If the International Olympic Committee had a conscience, it would immediately block Israel from participating in Paris, along with all nations that engage in excessive and unrestricted violence against civilians. On the other hand, if Israel is allowed to compete in the 2024 Olympics, Russia and Belarus should be allowed to compete as well.

If the West's supposed opposition to the killing of civilians had any meaning, Israel would be banned

There is more than enough evidence to show that Israel is a greater threat to civilians in Gaza than Russia is to civilians in Ukraine

srmq
Saudi Research & Media Group

Established in 1987 by
Prince Ahmad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz

CEO
Jomana Raahid Alraahid

ARAB NEWS
is a daily international newspaper published by the
SAUDI RESEARCH & PUBLISHING COMPANY

Founded in 1979 by
Hisham & Muhammad Ali Hafiz

Editor-in-Chief
Faisal J. Abbas

Deputy Editor-in-Chief
Noor Osama Nugall

ARAB NEWS WELCOMES
FEEDBACK FROM READERS

Letters sent from within the Kingdom should include the writer's name, address, phone and ID numbers. E-mails from readers abroad should include a name and city. Letters should be mailed to P.O. Box 478, Riyadh 11411, Saudi Arabia. Tel: +966112128000 • Fax: +966114418071 • E-mail: general@arabnews.com

EDITORIAL: general@arabnews.com
MARKETING: marketing@arabnews.com

TOLL FREE NUMBER: 8002440076

PRINTED AT: HALA PRINTING CO., RIYADH

Bahrain 200 Fils; Iran 200 R; Egypt LE 3;
India 12 Rs; Indonesia 2000 R; Japan 280 Y;
Jordan 250 Fils; Kuwait 200 Fils; Lebanon 1000

L: Morocco 2 D; Oman 200 P; Pakistan 10 Rs;
Philippines 25 P; Qatar 2 QR; Singapore \$3; Syria
20 L; Thailand 40 BHT; UAE 2 AED; UK 50 P; US
\$1.50; Republic of Yemen R 50; Sudan 25 P.

SRPC AND AFFILIATED AGENCIES

JEDDAH: Tel: (966-12)283-0200, Fax: (966-12)283-6228. RIYADH: Tel: (966-11)212-8000, Fax: (966-11)442-8094. DAMMAM: Tel: (966-13)835-3838, Fax: (966-13)834-0489. ABU DHABI: Tel: (971-2)681-5999, Fax: (971-2)681-7595. CAIRO: Tel: (202-3)749-2775, (202-3)749-2996, (202-3)338-8654, Fax: (202-3)749-2884, (202-3)749-2855. MOROCCO: Tel: (212-537)262-816, Fax: (212-537)883-919. JORDAN: Tel: (962-6)553-7101, (962-6)551-7102, (962-6)553-9409, Fax: (962-6)553-7103. LONDON: Tel: (44-20)7631-8181, Fax: (44-20)7631-2310.

ADVERTISING:
SAUDI RESEARCH AND MEDIA GROUP
KSA: +966-11-294-0500
UAE: +971 4 3916500
E-mail: revenue@srmq.com
Website: www.srmq.com

DISTRIBUTION AGENT
TOLL FREE: (866)800-244-0076
Head Office: (Riyadh): P.O. Box 6216, Riyadh 11588
Tel: (966-11)4419933, Fax: (966-11)2121774
E-mail: info@saudi-distribution.com
Western Region: Tel: (866-12)653-0909
Eastern Region: Tel: (866-13)847-3588
Southern Region: Tel: (866-17)221-8693
Northern Region: Tel: (966-16)324-3070
Dubai: Tel: (971-4)381-6503, Fax: (971-4)381-6354
Abu Dhabi: Tel: (971-2)673-3555, Fax: (971-2)673-3384
Kuwait: Tel: (965)483-4822, Fax: (965)483-4778
Manama: Tel: (973-17)61770

SUBSCRIPTION
Head Office: (Riyadh):
P.O. Box 22304, Riyadh 11495
Tel: (966-11)4419933 Fax: (966-11)4429555
TOLL FREE: +866-800-244-0076
Email: info@arabmediaco.com
Web: www.arabmediaco.com

PRINTING CENTER
Riyadh: P.O. Box 212
Riyadh 11383, Tel: (966-11)2657000
Fax: (966-11)2658000
Sales: Tel: (966-10)4708807
Fax: (966-11)4708526
www.halaprintpack.com

DISCLAIMER
Views expressed by writers
in this section are their
own and do not necessarily
reflect Arab News' point of view.

Business



I am in no doubt that World Defense Show 2026, will be an essential event for global companies across the defense supply chain.
Andrew Pearcoy
 CEO of the World Defense Show

CENTRAL BANK DIGITAL CURRENCIES

Digital currencies set to boost Middle East's financial inclusion

19 countries are currently in the research stage of developing nationally-issued digital currencies

Nirmal Narayanan Riyadh

Digital currencies are gaining traction in the Middle East and Central Asia, with countries increasingly considering central bank-issued options to enhance financial inclusion, an analysis said.

In a blog, the International Monetary Fund noted that economies in these regions are also moving toward digital currencies to improve the efficiency of cross-border payments.

CBDCs are a form of digital money issued by a central bank, distinct from cryptocurrencies.

The analysis showed that 19 countries in the Middle East and Central Asia are currently in the research stage of developing nationally issued digital currencies.

"Bahrain, Georgia, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE have moved to the more advanced 'proof-of-concept' stage. Kazakhstan is the most advanced after two pilot programs for the digital tenge," said IMF.

Earlier in June, Saudi Arabia joined a China-dominated Central Bank Digital Currency cross-border trial, according to the Bank for International Settlements.

The trial will see the Saudi Central Bank becoming a "full participant" in Project mBridge, a collaboration launched in 2021 between the central banks of China, Hong Kong, Thailand, and the UAE.

Project mBridge, overseen by BIS, is a multi-CBDC platform developed to support real-time, cross-border payments and foreign exchange transactions.

On June 2, the Qatar Central Bank announced the completion of the infrastructure development for its CBDC project.

In a press statement, QCB said that the move aligns with global advancements in digital currency, aiming to enhance Qatar's financial sector.

The apex bank noted that it will start testing and developing selected applications of the CBDC for settling large payments with local and international banks.

As of March, central banks in 134 countries, accounting for 98 percent of the world's gross domestic product, were in various stages of evaluating the launch of a national digital currency, according to the Atlantic Council.

The US think tank also revealed that the Bahamas, Jamaica, and Nigeria have already fully



CBDCs can promote financial inclusion by fostering competition in the payments market and enabling more direct transactions with less intermediation. SPA

launched a CBDC.

IMF said that adopting a CBDC, however, requires careful consideration. "Countries across these regions, spanning a diverse group of economies stretching from Morocco and Egypt to Pakistan and Kazakhstan, each must weigh their own unique set of circumstances."

Cross-border payments

According to the IMF, CBDCs can potentially enhance the efficiency of cross-border payment services, which is crucial for oil-exporting countries in the Gulf

Cooperation Council region, including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar, as well as Bahrain, and Kuwait.

"That's because cross-border payments tend to have frictions like varying data formats and operating rules across regions and complex compliance checks. CBDCs that address these inefficiencies could significantly cut transaction costs," said the international financial institution.

The report added that CBDCs can also promote financial inclusion by fostering competition in the payments market and enabling more

this potential benefit.

The IMF further pointed out that designing CBDCs to work offline could promote financial inclusion in areas with unreliable mobile services, such as low-income and conflict-affected regions.

Additionally, using national digital currencies for cross-border transfers could reduce remittance costs and speed up transfer times.

Impacts on commercial banks

The analysis indicated that deposits constitute a significant portion of bank funding in the region, around 83 percent. A CBDC could compete with bank deposits, potentially impacting bank profits and lending, and posing implications for financial stability, the IMF noted.

However, the report added that financial institutions in the region generally possess adequate capital levels, profit margins, and liquidity buffers, which could mitigate strains on deposits.

CBDCs could enhance the pass-through into deposit rates by increasing competition among financial institutions, and they could also strengthen the bank lending channel of monetary policy. "However, the impact would likely be country-specific and is difficult to estimate due to limited CBDC uptake so far," the IMF stated.

The report emphasized that policymakers play a crucial role in addressing potential risks posed by national digital currencies. It added, "While there are no clear prerequisites for adopting CBDCs, a healthy banking system, a sound legal system, and strong supervisory and regulatory capacity are essential for reducing risks."

The IMF suggested that national digital currencies should be carefully calibrated to avoid competition with commercial bank deposits. "Design features are a crucial consideration. Our survey shows that selecting appropriate features for CBDC implementation is a key challenge for regional policymakers," the report highlighted.

Introducing national digital currencies will be a long and complex process, and central banks should approach it with care.

The IMF also urged policymakers to determine if a CBDC serves their country's objectives and whether the expected benefits outweigh the potential costs and risks to the financial system.

HIGHLIGHTS

● In a blog, the International Monetary Fund noted that economies in these regions are also moving toward digital currencies to improve the efficiency of cross-border payments.

● Earlier in June, Saudi Arabia joined a China-dominated Central Bank Digital Currency cross-border trial, according to the Bank for International Settlements.

direct transactions with less intermediation.

Moreover, central banks can help keep costs lower as they are not profit-driven like commercial banks.

"Increased competition in the payments market from a CBDC could also encourage upgrading technology platforms and the efficiency of payment services, helping financial services reach more people," said IMF.

Countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia, Middle East and North Africa oil importers, and low-income countries are particularly interested in



According to Fitch Ratings, the Kingdom benefits from considerable fiscal buffers and boasts one of the highest reserve coverage ratios among rated sovereigns, at 16.5 months of current external payments. SPA

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Saudi Arabia's international reserves highest in 18 months at \$467.5bn

Holdings encompass monetary gold, special drawing rights, IMF's reserve position, and foreign reserves

Dayan Abou Tine Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's international reserve assets reached SR1.75 trillion (\$467.5 billion) in May, the highest in 18 months and an annual 6 percent increase, according to new data.

Figures released by the Saudi Central Bank, also known as SAMA, reveal that these holdings encompass monetary gold, special drawing rights, the International Monetary Fund's reserve position, and foreign reserves.

According to May's figures, international currency holdings – including currency and deposits

abroad and investments in foreign securities – constituted 95 percent of the total, amounting to SR1.66 trillion. This category also registered a 6 percent increase during this period.

SDRs comprised 4 percent of the total, amounting to SR77.68 billion, and increased by 0.3 percent during this period.

Created by the IMF to supplement member countries' official reserves, SDRs derive their value from a basket of major currencies: the US dollar, euro and Chinese yuan as well as the Japanese yen, and British pound. They can be exchanged among governments for freely usable currencies when needed.

SDRs provide additional

liquidity, stabilize exchange rates, act as a unit of account, and facilitate international trade and financial stability.

The IMF reserve position totaled SR12.72 billion, however decreased by 14 percent during this period. This category essentially represents the amount a country can draw from the IMF without conditions.

Fitch Ratings announced in March that it had affirmed Saudi Arabia's long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating at "A+" with a stable outlook.

The agency highlighted that the Kingdom's position reflects its robust fiscal and external balance sheets. It also noted improvements in governance driven by

HIGHLIGHT

Non-oil growth is expected to reach 3.5 percent in 2024 before further increasing from 2025 onwards. Despite a projected decline in oil output in 2024 due to production cuts, there is anticipation for a recovery in 2025.

social and economic reforms, as well as efforts to enhance government institution effectiveness.

Saudi Arabia's ratings are bolstered by its strong fiscal and external balance sheets, with government debt to gross domestic product and sovereign net foreign assets significantly

stronger than the "A" and "AA" medians and substantial fiscal buffers in the form of deposits and other public-sector assets.

According to the agency, the Kingdom benefits from considerable fiscal buffers and boasts one of the highest reserve coverage ratios among rated sovereigns, at 16.5 months of current external payments.

Fitch anticipates reserves to decrease to an average of \$420 billion by 2024 to 2025 due to a narrowing current account surplus offset by investments from entities like the Public Investment Fund.

Sovereign net foreign assets are also projected to remain above 50 percent of GDP during this

period, surpassing the "A" median of 6 percent.

The IMF praised Saudi Arabia's "unprecedented economic transformation" in a June report, attributing its success to prudent government policies and effective diversification efforts.

Following its official visit to the country, the IMF projected Saudi Arabia's GDP growth to accelerate to approximately 4.5 percent by 2025, stabilizing at 3.5 percent annually over the medium term.

Non-oil growth is expected to reach 3.5 percent in 2024 before further increasing from 2025 onwards. Despite a projected decline in oil output in 2024 due to production cuts, there is anticipation for a recovery in 2025.

EXHIBITIONS

Half of Saudi Arabia's World Defense Show 2026 floorspace already snapped up by exhibitors

Arab News Riyadh

International exhibitors have already secured half the space at the World Defense Show set to be held in Riyadh in 2026, demonstrating strong early interest in the biennial event.

The defense and security exhibition, scheduled for Feb 8-12 and covering an area of 800,000 sq. m., follows the

successful conclusion of its second edition in February.

The event attracted a record number of 773 exhibitors, all aiming to capitalize on the Kingdom's status as one of the largest defense spenders worldwide.

In the state budget announced in December 2023, Saudi Arabia allocated SR269 billion (\$71.70 billion) for the military sector

this year, reflecting an 8.5 percent increase from the 2023 estimates.

Andrew Pearcey, CEO of the World Defense Show, said: "The demand has been phenomenal. Just four months after the second edition of the show closed, to global industry approval, we have already sold 50 percent of the floorspace for the third edition."

He added: "Many of the industry's leading multi-domain businesses booked their stands for 2026 during the 2024 event. I am in no doubt that World Defense Show 2026, will be an essential event for global companies across the defense supply chain."

The CEO highlighted that the third edition of the event further solidifies the entity's position as

the emerging global hub for the defense industry.

The early bookings for the event are in line with the show's vision to serve as a platform where the global defense industry can convene, connect, and gain valuable insights into the latest innovation-driven defense and security solutions.

The event also aims to foster

integration across air, land, sea, space, and security domains to accelerate advancements in defense technologies.

"We have grown each year, in the size of our event, in the number of exhibitors and visitors, but also in the depth and breadth of expertise and influence of those taking part in our panels, presentations and discussions," Pearcey said.

Business News



The development is part of ongoing efforts to strengthen King Abdulaziz Port's position as a competitive and sustainable global hub. Supplied

EXPANSION

King Abdulaziz Port boosts crane capacity

Dammam port enhances workflow with addition of automated cranes

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's King Abdulaziz Port's crane capacity has been boosted by 9.7 percent as part of an SR7 billion (\$1.86 billion) investment deal.

The facility, operated by Saudi Global Ports Co., has received three automated quay and three rubber-tired gantry cranes, increasing its handling infrastructure.

According to a press release from Saudi Ports Authority, also known as Mawani, this addition brings the total number of quay cranes to 18 and gantry cranes to 50, enhancing the Dammam port's workflow and enabling it to handle large ships efficiently.

These enhancements are made under commercial contracts between Mawani and Saudi Global Ports Co.

This development is part of ongoing efforts to strengthen King Abdulaziz Port's position as a competitive and sustainable global hub.

The new cranes can reach a minimum of 25 rows, which facilitates the efficient handling of advanced and large ships.

Additionally, the use of modern cranes contributes to improving the skills of the workforce, supporting the Saudi ports system and solidifying the Kingdom's growing role in the global logistics chain.

This upgrade aligns with the goals of the National Transport and Logistics Strategy, which aims to establish the nation as a global logistics center and a key link between continents.

Saudi ports are experiencing a constant surge in handling shipments. In March, terminals in the Kingdom recorded a 12.48 percent increase in the

number of received containers compared to the same period last year, according to official data from Mawani.

The authority disclosed that terminals in Saudi Arabia received 265,148 standard containers in the third month of 2024, marking an annual increase from 235,738.

Furthermore, the maritime facilities experienced a 3.77 percent uptick in the volume of handled tonnage, reaching 19.64 million tonnes, in contrast to 18.93 million tonnes recorded in March 2023.

"This reflects the scale of efforts made to develop port infrastructure and provide the highest levels of logistics services," Mawani stated in a statement.

The Kingdom's general shipment volumes reached 804,837 tonnes, solid bulk cargo reached 3.94 million tonnes, and

liquid bulk freight reached 14.74 million tonnes.

A report from the UN Conference on Trade and Development revealed that Mawani climbed from 76.16 points in the second quarter of 2023 to 77.66 points in the third quarter of last year, affirming Saudi Arabia's progress in the maritime sector.

Moreover, the Kingdom has consistently pursued global collaborations in the maritime sector, the latest of which occurred at the second edition of Vision Golfe 2024, held in Paris on June 4.

At the event, Mawani signed an agreement with the French Ministry of Economy, Finance, and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty and its Marseille counterpart as part of France and Saudi Arabia's commitment to excellence in trade and maritime transport.

COMMODITIES

Egypt's exports surge 9.8% to \$16.55bn amid global trade expansion

Arab News Riyadh

Egypt's merchandise exports soared by 9.8 percent year on year in the first five months of 2024 to reach \$16.55 billion, according to a top official.

Exports increased every month over the period, underscoring Egypt's ongoing expansion in global trade, according to the country's Minister of Trade and Industry Ahmed Samir.

Notable items that contributed to the growth included fresh and dried citrus fruits valued at \$721 million, wires at \$353 million, and manufactured petroleum oils at \$186 million.

Key export sectors also included building materials,



Exports over the period included fresh and dried citrus fruits valued at \$721 million. Shutterstock

valued at \$3.86 billion, the food industry at \$2.64 billion, and chemical products and fertilizers estimated at \$2.49 billion.

Agricultural crops were worth \$2.26 billion, according to a statement.

The ministry aims to bolster

exports across all sectors to diverse global markets in the coming phase, emphasizing collaboration between government entities, business communities, and Egyptian exporters to enhance product quality and competitiveness. This effort

supports Egypt's target of achieving \$100 billion in annual merchandise exports.

Moreover, the statement revealed that Saudi Arabia emerged as the top market for Egyptian merchandise exports during this period, totaling \$1.39 billion. Following Saudi Arabia, Turkey accounted for \$1.31 billion, the UAE at \$1.13 billion, Italy with \$974 million, and the US at \$904 million.

In May, the International Monetary Fund projected that Egypt's foreign cash inflows would come from five sources, including commodity exports, tourism and Suez Canal revenues, as well as private transfers and net foreign direct investment.

BizBriefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Retaliatory measures

Beijing urged to hike tariff on EU cars

Chinese automakers have urged Beijing to hike tariffs on imported European gasoline-powered cars in retaliation for Brussels' curbs on exports of Chinese-made EVs, the state-backed Global Times newspaper said on Wednesday.

In a meeting on Tuesday attended by European car companies, China's auto industry "called on the government to adopt firm countermeasures (and) suggested that consideration be given to raising the tariff on gasoline cars with large-displacement engines," according to the report. **Reuters**

Record pace

Japan visitors exceed 3m in May

Japan welcomed more than 3 million visitors for a third straight month in May, official data showed on Wednesday.

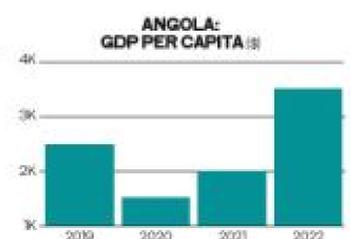
The number of foreign visitors for business and leisure was 3.04 million last month, steady from the level seen in April, and down slightly from the all-time monthly record in March, data from the Japan National Tourism Organization showed.

Arrivals last month were up 60 percent from the same period last year and 9.6 percent higher than in May 2019. **Reuters**

Chart of THE DAY

The indicator describes GDP per capita at current prices.

Source: Statista



What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

Black Smoke

ADRIAN MILLER

Adrian Miller's "Black Smoke" chronicles how Black barbecuers, pitmasters, and restaurateurs helped develop this cornerstone of American foodways and how they are coming into their own today.



Though often pushed to the margins, African Americans have enriched a barbecue culture that has come to be embraced by all. Miller celebrates and restores the faces and stories of the men and women who have influenced this American cuisine.

Poll boost

UK inflation slows to central bank's 2% target

British inflation slowed in May to the central bank's two-percent target, official data showed Wednesday.

The Consumer Prices Index fell as expected from 2.3 percent in April, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement citing easing growth in food prices.

That follows almost three years Britain's above-target inflation, which last stood at two percent in July 2021.

The news sets the scene for the July 4 general election where Conservatives are tipped to lose badly to the opposition Labour Party, according to opinion polls. **Reuters**

Lavish spending

EU rebukes France for breaking budget

The European Commission on Wednesday reprimanded France for breaching the EU's budget rules under President Emmanuel Macron.

The news will be a blow to Macron as it is the first time France returns to the EU's public spending sin bin since he came to power in 2017.

And it sets the stage for a potential clash between Paris and Brussels following elections on June 30 and July 7 — in which the far right and left, ahead in the polls, are pledging to spend more at a time when France will need to make cuts. **Reuters**

At Thakher Company, we emphasize the importance of cooperation and participation in volunteer activities within the Kingdom.

Abdulaziz bin Saleh Al-Aboudi
CEO of Thakher Development Company



Corporate

PRESS RELEASES FROM THE WORLD OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE

HAJJ 2024

Thakher Company employees volunteer to serve pilgrims

Employees of Thakher Development Company, the master developer of the master plan and infrastructure for the Thakher Makkah project, participated in the "And Purify My House" initiative under the patronage of the Mayor of Makkah Musaed bin Abdulaziz Al-Daoud. Additionally, the company organized a campaign to raise health and food safety awareness and distribute umbrellas to pilgrims within the Thakher Makkah project, in partnership with the Municipal Volunteer Department in the Holy Makkah Municipality.

The "And Purify My House" initiative was held over three days, where volunteers prepared and cleaned the holy sites, such as Mount Arafat, Mina and Muzdalifah, for the arrival of the pilgrims. Efforts also involved restoring visual distortions and maintaining public facilities, including painting and other tasks.

These efforts are part of the company's comprehensive program to promote healthcare during the Hajj season, with a focus on the importance of hygiene and nutrition. The initiative ensures proper facilities are available for pilgrims to guarantee a safe and healthy Hajj experience.

Abdulaziz bin Saleh Al-Aboudi, CEO of Thakher Development Company, said: "At Thakher Company, we emphasize the importance of cooperation and participation in volunteer activities within the Kingdom that aim to foster the values of generosity and social solidarity, and



Employees of Thakher Development Company take part in the 'And Purify My House' campaign, aimed at preparing and equipping the holy sites for the arrival of pilgrims.

to enhance the esteemed image of the holy capital in the eyes of pilgrims. I would also like to extend my gratitude to everyone who participated in organizing this initiative, and to our employees for their humanitarian and volunteer efforts in serving the pilgrims and strengthening

the spirit of cooperation and social responsibility."

Thakher Makkah is located approximately 1 km from the Grand Mosque and a few kilometers away from the holy sites of Muzdalifah, Mina and Arafat. The project contributes to the Kingdom's ambitious vision, which aims to host 30 million Umrah performers and six million pilgrims by 2030.

Upon completion, the project, spanning over an area of 320,000 square meters, will include

HIGHLIGHT

The company also organized an initiative to raise health and food safety awareness and distribute umbrellas to pilgrims within the Thakher Makkah project.

100 land plots for hospitality, residential and commercial uses. Residential and hotel apartment units will be available in various categories, and the units will also be available for ownership.

Thakher Makkah will be home to some of the biggest names in global hospitality including The Radisson Hotel, Park Inn by Radisson, and Novotel Hotel, which will be the largest in the world in terms of the number of rooms.

The company is also involved in developing the old neighborhoods of Makkah in coordination with the Royal Commission for Makkah City and Holy Sites, in order to provide distinguished services to pilgrims.

GLOBAL HEALTHCARE

Johnson & Johnson marks new era with updated visual identity

Johnson and Johnson is updating its brand and uniting its two business segments under the Johnson and Johnson brand name in Saudi Arabia.

The announcement marks the next era for the company in the Kingdom, which is leveraging its expertise in innovative medicine and medical technology to prevent and treat complex diseases and introduce solutions that are smarter, less invasive and more personalized.

Moving forward, the company's two segments will be more connected to the Johnson and Johnson brand. Janssen, the company's pharmaceutical segment, will be known as Johnson and Johnson Innovative Medicine, and the medical technology segment will continue to be known as Johnson and Johnson Medtech. The changes are part of a global roll out of the new Johnson and Johnson brand, announced in September 2023.

Mohammed Alquwaizani, managing director of Johnson and Johnson Innovative Medicine in Saudi Arabia, said: "This is an exciting milestone for us and will position us as one company under a single, modernized brand identity. Our pharmaceuticals segment is leading where medicine is going, developing breakthrough treatments to transform the future of health. We have been serving the Saudi market for more than four decades and are fully committed to understanding our patients' disease burden, needs and treatment experiences."

He added: "Although our name may have changed, our goals remain the same. We are committed to promoting health in the Kingdom and are inspired by our patients and our legacy. We take health personally because health is personal. We look forward to many more successful years shaping the future of health."



The awards ceremony was held in Beijing, China.

AUTOMOTIVE EXCELLENCE

Altawkilat Premium dominates global Hongqi awards

The Universal Premium Motors Agencies, known as Altawkilat Premium, the authorized dealer for Hongqi in Saudi Arabia, won four prestigious international awards at the Shaping the Future conference for Hongqi global partners. The event was held in Beijing, China, concurrently with the 2024 Beijing International Automotive Exhibition. These awards recognize excellence in sales, after-sales services, and marketing.

Additionally, Tarek Al-Saeedi, general manager of after-sales services at Altawkilat Premium, was appointed as a member of the Hongqi Overseas After-Sales

Services Advisory Committee in China.

Jason Blanc, general manager of Hongqi in Saudi Arabia, said: "Altawkilat Premium received these prestigious global awards, reflecting the successful strategic collaboration between FAW Group Corporation and Altawkilat Premium. The honors are a continuation of the company's strategy to offer top-tier luxury vehicles."

He added: "The Universal Premium Motors Agencies has a long history spanning over 70 years in the automotive sales and service sector, with an extensive network of branches across various cities in

the Kingdom. This partnership with Hongqi strengthens the presence of luxury Chinese vehicles in Saudi Arabia."

Hongqi is continuously striving to enhance its vehicles with the latest global technologies to keep pace with rapid developments in the automotive industry. The company has established global research centers in Nanjing, China, to attract local talent in artificial intelligence and future networking technologies. Additionally, Altawkilat Premium has launched programs and initiatives to enhance customer awareness and engagement, providing superior and impactful customer service.

Corporate Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

New Route

Fly Jinnah launches at Bahrain airport

Fly Jinnah, Pakistan's low-cost carrier, has started operations from Bahrain International Airport, with two weekly flights to Islamabad International Airport.

In celebration of the launch on June 13, a welcome ceremony was held at the airport for passengers on the inaugural flight to Islamabad. The event was attended by representatives from Bahrain Airport Company, the operator and managing body of the BIA, and officials from Fly Jinnah. This move is set to boost connectivity between Bahrain and Pakistan, providing passengers with more travel options, and increasing the number of flights from BIA to Pakistan to 37 weekly flights.

Banking Leadership

Emirates NBD awarded top honors

Emirates NBD, a leading banking group in the Middle East, North Africa and Türkiye region, has won the "Financial Institutions Bond Deal of the Year" at the Bonds, Loans and Sukuk Middle East Awards 2024, while its investment banking arm, Emirates NBD Capital, secured notable house award wins for "Sukuk House of the Year" and "High Yield Debt House of the Year."

Emirates NBD received the "Financial Institutions Bond Deal of the Year" award for its \$750 million debut green bond in 2023, the largest ever issued by a bank in the MENAT region and Emirates NBD's first green offering on Nasdaq Dubai.

Talent Development

ADGM Academy and Ethara sign MoU

Abu Dhabi Global Market Academy, the knowledge arm of the international financial center of Abu Dhabi, has signed an MoU with Ethara, a regional live event management company and venue operator.

The strategic collaboration between the two parties will explore training and developing the next generation of Emirati talent within different job roles.

Working together, ADGMA and Ethara will establish an educational hub that will develop training programs to meet the skill requirements for maintaining a highly effective workforce, as well as launch National Development Programs.



Backstroke is hard for me sometimes, but to fight back like this and get that back means a lot.

Regan Smith US swimmer

Liberty Global is set to acquire a controlling stake in Formula E before the end of the year. Formula E



ELECTRIC CAR RACING

Liberty Global to acquire Formula E from Warner Bros. Discovery

The deal will give the company a controlling interest in the world's leading electric motorsport series

Arab News London

Formula E has announced that Liberty Global is to acquire shares currently held by Warner Bros. Discovery in the all-electric racing series.

The acquisition will bring Liberty Global's total share ownership in the series to 65 percent, giving the company a controlling interest in the world's fastest-growing motorsport.

Formula E is the only FIA-sanctioned all-electric world motor racing championship, the world's No.1

environmental, social and governance sport, and the first net-zero carbon sport from inception.

"First of all I'd like to offer my thanks to Warner Bros. Discovery for the support and guidance they've provided Formula E over the past nine years," Jeff Dodds, Formula E CEO said.

"Liberty Global have a proven track record of building and growing businesses and their investment in us comes at the perfect time as we plan for a period of exponential growth. Having personally known and worked alongside the Liberty leadership team for over a

HIGHLIGHT

Announcement follows unveiling of the Season 11 race calendar which features races in Miami, Jakarta and double-headers in Monaco and Shanghai.

decade, I'm thrilled to be able to further benefit from their expertise and their resources. This is a powerful vindication of the huge potential of our sport."

In its 10th season of all-electric city racing, Formula E boasts one of the best and most diverse sporting calendars in the world,

with 16 races in iconic city locations across four continents.

Now, with almost 400 million fans around the world, 11 teams and 22 world-class drivers on the grid, Formula E has become a destination for the best motorsport talent on the planet, including racing teams Jaguar TCS Racing, TAG Heuer Porsche Formula E Team and NEOM McLaren Formula E Team.

At the recent Monaco E-Prix, Formula E revealed its new car for Season 11, the GEN3 EVO, capable of accelerating to 60mph in an incredible 1.82 seconds — around 30 percent faster than a current Formula 1 car.

Mike Fries, CEO of Liberty Global, said: "We're excited to take a controlling interest in Formula E, a business we first invested in nearly 10 years ago. Formula E has massive potential for further growth while integrating the most advanced sustainability standards in sports. The investment continues our approach of disciplined capital rotation across our Ventures portfolio and our strategy of making long-term investments in highly attractive businesses."

The transaction is subject to regulatory approval, with closing expected before year end.

MMA

Bellator Champions Series returns with two title fights in September

Arab News New York

Bellator Champions Series will return in September with two straight weeks of global action, headlined by two Bellator World Championship bouts.

First up, on Saturday, Sept. 7, Bellator Champions Series San Diego will feature a Lightweight World Championship main event. Usman Nurmagomedov (17-0, 1 NC) will attempt to retain both his undefeated run and his 155-pound title when he locks horns with Alexander Shabliy (23-3), a man who has not been beaten in eight years.

One week later on Saturday, Sept. 14, the Bellator



Middleweight World Championship is on the line in the main event of Bellator Champions Series London, when undefeated Johnny Eblen (15-0) will once again face off against England's Fabian Edwards (13-3).

Last year, Bellator was bought by the PIF-backed Professional Fighters League.

"September is set to be a huge month for Bellator Champions Series, and we're continuing to step up our game to deliver

incredible cards that we know the MMA community across the globe will love," said Peter Murray, PFL CEO.

"Both San Diego and London are massive markets for us, and we're confident we'll put on a show that the fans in attendance, and those watching around the world on Max and DAZN, deserve.

"Our world-class roster has allowed us to hold two cards in two weeks, and you're going to see that, as we announce more fights and events, the future is incredibly bright for PFL and Bellator. It's going to be a September to remember, see you there."

Additional contests for both cards will be announced shortly.

Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Swimming

Smith clinches Paris berth with a world record

Regan Smith clocked a world record 57.13sec to win the 100m backstroke at the US Olympic swimming trials on Tuesday, throwing down a challenge to Aussie Kaylee McKeown six weeks before the Paris Games.

Smith eclipsed the world record of 57.33 set by McKeown in Budapest in October 2023.

"It was part of the plan," Smith said of regaining the record she held back in 2019. She'd signaled her intentions by lowering her American record to 57.47 in the semifinals and with Katharine Berkoff pushing her all the way she came up with a late push to slice two-tenths of a second off McKeown's mark. **AFP**



Bundesliga

Leipzig extend Rose contract through 2026

Leipzig has extended coach Marco Rose's contract by one year in another sign of continuity after earlier signing a new agreement with star forward Benjamin Sesko. Rose has been at Leipzig for two years and his contract had been due to expire at the end of next season.

Leipzig finished the last Bundesliga season in fourth, one place lower than in Rose's first campaign, but he won praise for integrating young players like Sesko and for Leipzig's close 2-1 aggregate loss in the Champions League to eventual winner Real Madrid. **AP**

Golf

Korda unfazed by dip ahead of Women's PGA tilt

World number one Nelly Korda has shrugged off her recent dip in form as she chases the third major title of her career at this week's Women's PGA Championship in Washington state.

Korda arrived in the Pacific Northwest after back-to-back missed cuts at the US Women's Open and last week's LPGA Meijer Classic, a sharp contrast to her blistering early season run of six tournament wins in seven starts. **AFP**

Follow Arab News Briefs all through the day @ArabNews

Princess Charlene of Monaco wore a one-shoulder lace-detailed jumpsuit by Lebanese designer Elie Saab at the 63rd Monte Carlo Television Festival this week.



Finally

The Six

Yoga studios

Tone up and relax your mind by visiting these six yoga studios in Saudi Arabia.



Exhale Yoga

Want to explore different types of yoga classes? Visit Exhale Yoga in Riyadh. They offer vinyasa, ashtanga, yin, meditation, sound healing, pilates, barre, aerial, dance, and more, classes.



YAS Studio

Yasmeeen Al-Dossary, a yogi, entrepreneur and wellness expert, brought the fundamentals of yoga from India to Alkhobar.



The Yoga House

If you want to host a corporate wellness event, take your team to The Yoga House in Riyadh. They offer a variety of classes and provide tailor-made experiences for employees.



Karama Yoga

Karama Yoga in Jeddah offers diverse classes for all levels, including yin, hatha, and karama flow, with options for group or private lessons.



Studio 55

Not exactly a yoga studio per se, Studio 55 in Alkhobar is a boutique fitness location that boasts a selection of yoga classes that help to boost flexibility, balance and mindfulness.



NuYu

Located in Riyadh and Al-Khobar, NuYu Yoga Studio features yoga, pilates, dance and spin classes. The studio is known for its state-of-the-art facilities and expert instructors.

CLOSE UP

Birthday tributes pour in for Amira Al-Zuhair

Arab News Dubai

Birthday tributes poured in this week for part-Saudi model Amira Al-Zuhair, who has celebrated her 23rd birthday.

Among those sending warm wishes on Instagram were friends including Stella Ferro, the model manager at Elite Model World which represents Al-Zuhair, Saudi entrepreneur Aisha Almamy, Egyptian actress Ghada Abdel Razek and French Algerian designer Xavier Belmahdi-More, founder of Eddine Belmahdi.

"Happy birthday, my love," wrote Ferro on her story, sharing a picture of Al-Zuhair. Almamy added: "Happy birthday our Amira," playfully hinting at the Arabic meaning of the model's name — princess.

Al-Zuhair, born in Paris to a French mother and Saudi father, has made her mark on the fashion world and appeared on the runway for an array of renowned fashion houses such as Missoni, Maison Alaia, Brunello Cucinelli, Balmain, Dolce & Gabbana, Giambattista Valli, Giorgio Armani, Elie Saab and many more.

Earlier this month, Al-Zuhair walked in Louis Vuitton's high jewelry show in Saint-Tropez, which was attended by celebrities such as British actress Phoebe Dynevor and Thai actress Urassaya Sperbund.

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

Al-Zuhair wore an intricate chunky choker featuring a wide structured design with a lattice-like pattern in gold. It was adorned with diamonds and featured a large yellow gemstone as a focal point.

The catwalk star shared a picture on her Instagram story of herself with Amfitheatrof and her fellow



models, where she wore 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.

In May, she walked the runway for the Chanel Cruise 2024/2025 show

Amira Al-Zuhair turned 23 this week. Getty Images Inset: Aisha Almamy, left, took to Instagram to wish the model a happy birthday. Instagram

in Marseille, France. She sported a vibrant yellow ensemble featuring hot shorts paired with a button-down top and coordinating cardigan, along with a beige hat, a gold choker embellished with blue detailing, chunky earrings and a chain belt adorned with pendants.

In addition to her runway appearances, Al-Zuhair has featured in campaigns for high-profile brands such as Prada, Chanel and Carolina Herrera.



INTERVIEW

Sonia Al-Sowaiegh on making music and 'relatable' humor

Dalal Awlenat Dubai

From starring in a campaign for US label Calvin Klein to singing and amassing a loyal following on TikTok, Saudi Bahraini talent Sonia Al-Sowaiegh is working to conquer the entertainment space.

Better known by her online persona, "Shessonia," Al-Sowaiegh says she wanted to be a singer from the age of eight. Her discography, she told Arab News, is geared toward evoking emotions. "I don't care if my music

goes viral or not, I just want to make one person laugh or make someone's day," she said. "Obviously I have goals ... but those don't equate to my goals of making people feel something and resonate with something."

Her first EP, "Adulthood and Adapting,"

Sonia Al-Sowaiegh is a Saudi Bahraini singer. Instagram



which was released in 2020, was inspired by the anxiety of transitioning into adulthood.

"I didn't know how to maneuver and act like an adult when I felt like such a child inside," she said. "That inspired so much of the album because I wanted people to relate to the feeling of being lonely when you are forced to go out there in the world and

experience heartbreak and being broke all by yourself."

She added: "Sadness really is motivation for me to write. Every time I am sad, I write."

But behind the emotional music, Al-Sowaiegh shows her bubbly side on social media, more specifically on TikTok. With videos gaining millions of views, she describes her content as "relatable Khaleeji" humor.

Like many others, her TikTok journey started in 2020 during the COVID lockdown.



Justin Timberlake. AFP

COURT CASE

Justin Timberlake charged with driving while intoxicated

AP New York

Pop star Justin Timberlake was charged this week with drunken driving in a village in New York's Hamptons, after police said he ran a stop sign and veered out of his lane in the posh seaside summer retreat.

The singer was driving in Sag Harbor around 12:30 a.m. when an officer stopped him and determined he was intoxicated.

Timberlake told the officer he had one martini and was following some friends home. After being arrested and taken to a police station, he refused a breath test, said the court papers.

The singer was released without bond on Tuesday after being arraigned in Sag Harbor.

ON SHOW

Pharrell Williams kicks off Paris Fashion Week

Reuters Paris

Louis Vuitton men's creative director Pharrell Williams took to an outdoor, turf-lined runway at UNESCO headquarters this week, opening Paris Fashion Week with an evening show.

The fashion label, known for its checked damier patterns and monogrammed trunks, drew on a travel theme for the spring summer 2025 men's collection, with a towering globe sculpture, rows of international flags and - in the distance - the Eiffel Tower as a backdrop.

"I started posting on TikTok, making fun of other people as a joke, and then my videos went viral. So I started making lifestyle-ish story time (videos) just putting my makeup on and telling extreme stories that happened in my life," she said.

Al-Sowaiegh is keen to encourage young Arab creatives to put themselves out there and follow their passions. "Be yourself. If you have a drive inside you that makes you feel like you want to do something, do it," she said.