

**SPOTLIGHT**  
TURNING  
SUNSHINE  
INTO A  
SUSTAINABLE  
WATER  
SUPPLY  
Page 3



**SAUDI  
ARABIA**  
SAUDI ARTIST  
ABUBSHAIT'S  
GALLERY  
CELEBRATES  
UNBOUNDED  
IMAGINATION  
Page 5



**OPINION**  
HOW SAUDI FEMALE  
ENTREPRENEURS CAN  
BE ENCOURAGED  
TO FLOURISH  
By Maha Akeel  
Page 10



**WEEKEND**  
THE BEST MOVIES  
OF 2024 SO FAR  
Page 16



**SATURDAY**, June 22, 2024  
Dul Hijjah 16, 1445  
[www.arabnews.com](http://www.arabnews.com)

# ARAB NEWS

*The Voice of a Changing Region*

SINCE 1975

MIDDLE EAST WAR

## Israel bombards Gaza in last push to capture all of Rafah

• City pounded from land, sea and air • Close-quarter combat with Hamas fighters

Arab News Jeddah

**At least 38 Palestinians died on Friday as Israeli forces pounded Rafah in southern Gaza and fought close-quarter battles with Hamas militants.**

Palestinian residents said the Israelis appeared to be trying to complete their capture of Rafah, which borders Egypt and has been the focus of an Israeli assault since early May.

Tanks forced their way into western and northern parts of the city, having already captured the east, south and center. Israeli forces fired from planes, tanks and ships off the coast, forcing a new wave of displacement.

People in Rafah said the pace of the Israeli offensive had accelerated and explosions and gunfire indicating fierce fighting had been almost non-stop.

"Last night was one of the worst nights in western Rafah, drones, planes, tanks, and naval boats bombarded the area. We feel the occupation is trying to complete the control of the city," said Hatem, 45. "They are taking heavy strikes from the resistance fighters, which may be slowing them down."

At least 18 Palestinians were killed in Mawasi in western Rafah when an Israeli tank shell hit a tent housing displaced families. Israel said it was investigating the strike.

Rafah Mayor Ahmed Al-Sofi said: "The entire city is an area of Israeli military operations. The city lives through a humanitarian



Anti-government protesters gather near the residence of the Israeli prime minister in Jerusalem during a rally calling for early elections. AFP

### FASTFACT

Armenia said it would recognize a Palestinian state, prompting Israel to summon its ambassador for what the Foreign Ministry described as a 'severe reprimand.'

catastrophe and people are dying inside their tents because of the Israeli bombardment."

There was no medical facility functioning in the city and the remaining residents and displaced families lacked the minimum daily needs of food and water, the mayor said.

In nearby Khan Younis, an Israeli air strike on Friday killed three people, including a father and son. Further north, Israeli forces continued a new push back into some Gaza City suburbs, where they fought with Hamas militants.

Five people died in an Israeli

airstrike in the city, and rescue teams searched the rubble for missing victims. In the nearby Beach camp, an Israeli airstrike on a house killed at least seven people.

• **Related reports** Page 7  
• **Opinion: Hussain Abdul-Hussain** Page 8

POLITICS

## President vote will make no difference, Iranians say

Arab News Jeddah

A week before they go to the polls, few Iranians believe electing a new president will address the economic hardships they face every day.

"They promise change, but won't do much," said Hamid Habibi, 54, a shop owner in the Grand Bazaar in Tehran. "I've watched the debates and campaigns. They speak beautifully but need to back their words with action."

Fariba, 30, who runs an online store, said: "The economic situation is deteriorating daily, and I don't foresee any improvements. Regardless of who wins, our lives won't change."

On June 28, voters will choose from six candidates to succeed Ebrahim Raisi, who died in a helicopter crash. The candidates have taken part in two debates, in which each pledged to tackle the financial challenges affecting the country's 85 million people.

Iran's Guardian Council approved the six candidates after disqualifying most moderates and reformists. Leading contenders include conservative parliamentary Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, ultraconservative former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili, and the sole "reformist" candidate, Masoud Pezeshkian.

"There's hardly any differences between the six," said Jowzi, a 61-year-old housewife. "One cannot say any of them belongs to a different group."

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has urged a high voter turnout. In the 2021 election, participation was under 50 percent.

## The Brief

### REFUGEES BACKED

Saudi Arabia has reaffirmed its support for refugees and displaced persons. **P4**

### BRAIN DRAIN

A warning has been sounded by Sri Lanka's largest trade union of doctors about a wave of a brain drain among medical professionals. **P8**

### INVESTMENT

Significant investment is needed to unlock the potential 1,400 gigawatts of offshore wind energy in the Middle East and North Africa. **P11**

ENTERTAINMENT

## Heavy metal hijabis set to take Glastonbury by storm

Three-woman band from Indonesia will perform at legendary English music festival

Sheany Yasuko Lal Jakarta

There will be Coldplay. There will be Dua Lipa. There will be Cyndi Lauper. And there will be Voice of Baceprot — a three-woman group of heavy metal hijabis from Indonesia who are set to take next weekend's Glastonbury music festival in southwest England by storm.

The band — whose name means "annoyingly noisy" in their native Sundanese tongue — were formed 10 years ago when lead singer and

guitarist Firda "Marsya" Kurnia met drummer Euis Siti Aisyah and bassist Widi Rahmawati at an Islamic boarding school in Garut, West Java.

Now in their early twenties, they have been overcoming prejudice and shattering stereotypes about Muslims and Islam. "We try to introduce the other side that is closer to the truth," Marsya said.

"We certainly feel excited and proud, especially after finding out that we are going to be the



The group have toured Europe and the US, and released their debut album last year. Supplied

first Indonesian musicians to perform at Glastonbury. It will also be our first performance in the UK."

The group have toured Europe and the US, and released their debut album last year with lyrics that address issues from gender inequality to climate change.

"We care about what's happening around us, that's why we make a lot of songs about what we ourselves experience, see, and hear. We only want the world that we live in to become

a better place for the generations after us," Marsya said.

Voice of Baceprot will take to the Woodies stage at Glastonbury on June 28.

2 Riyals • Vol. XLIX  
No. 199 • 16 pages



9 771319 833047




Many of the leading businesses have booked their stands for the World Defense Show 2026 in Riyadh.

Andrew Pearcey  
CEO of the World Defense Show



Radar

KSA  
today



Madinah  
Museum

The International Fair and Museum of the Prophet's Biography and Islamic Civilization offers an insight into the life and legacy of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and explores the rich history of Islamic civilization, set amid beautifully landscaped gardens and architecturally stunning buildings. Visit [welcomesaudi.com](https://welcomesaudi.com).



Aseer  
Al-Habala Park

Enjoy panoramic views, cable car rides, lush greenery with hidden waterfalls, camping opportunities, play areas for children, and a variety of dining options for families seeking both tranquility and adventure.



Jeddah  
Cruise day

Embark on a sunset cruise aboard the Shorouk Sat in Obhur Bay, and enjoy sunset views, luxury amenities, and spectacular sightseeing opportunities. Visit [platinumlist.net](https://platinumlist.net), for more information.



Riyadh  
Fight Night

Mixed martial arts organization UFC makes its Saudi Arabian debut with a main event between Robert Whittaker and undefeated Russian fighter Ikram Sabirovich Aliskerov. For booking details, visit [enjoy.sa](https://enjoy.sa).

TheRegister

THE PICTURES THAT MARK THE DAY



Saudi Minister of Finance Mohammed Al-Jadaan led the Kingdom's delegation at the fourth Saudi-Swiss Financial Dialogue, recently held in Zurich. Senior officials from the Ministry of Finance, Saudi Central Bank, Insurance Authority, Financial Sector Development Program, and Fintech Saudi were part of the delegation.

Al-Jadaan, alongside Swiss counterpart Karin Keller-Sutter, inaugurated the event, highlighting its importance in strengthening economic and financial ties. The Saudi minister noted Switzerland's role as a trading partner with over 100 companies in the Kingdom.

What's Trending

Today's hot topics explained by Afshan Aziz



'THE BLUFF'  
Priyanka Chopra

Priyanka Chopra is diving headfirst into her role as a former pirate in her upcoming film, "The Bluff" The actress recently gave fans a glimpse into her intense filming experience on Instagram, showcasing a series of photos and videos. These included images of her character sporting bloody and bruised makeup, hinting at the demanding physicality of the role and the lengths she is going to for her craft.

Chopra posted a reel and a sequence of images. The first slide captured the actor in a video selfie with tousled hair and a visibly bloodied face, with injury marks visible below her neck. Dressed in a black vest, she said: "Yeah, when you do action movies."

ENTERTAINMENT  
Blackpink

YG Entertainment has said that Blackpink's acclaimed "Born Pink" world tour will hit cinemas on July 31, aligning with the group's eighth anniversary. Titled "Blackpink World Tour In Cinemas," the film captures their electrifying live performance at the tour's culminating event in Seoul's Gocheok Sky Dome on Sept. 17, 2023. The movie also details their worldwide journey supporting their second album, "Born Pink," spanning October 2022 to September 2023 and featuring 66 concerts across 22 countries.

This tour, hailed as "the highest-grossing tour by an Asian act and a female group in history," attracted an audience of 1.8 million fans. Billboard recognized it by ranking the tour at number 10 on their 2023 Year-End Top 40 Tours chart worldwide.

Scheduled to premiere in 110 countries, including the US, UK, Mexico and Indonesia, this cinematic release celebrates Blackpink's global odyssey. The film will showcase Blackpink's performances at Gocheok Sky Dome in Seoul, along with footage from other tour locations. It promises to highlight the tour's distinctive hanok (traditional Korean house) set, emphasizing its unprecedented production scale and offering live renditions of Blackpink's popular songs.

According to their agency, the group's film will be presented in multiple screening formats including 4DX and ScreenX, offering large screens, dynamic seating, special effects and enhanced sound.

The agency also announced that the film is set to run for more than three weeks.

Tickets for the global release will go on sale from June 27.



Today's  
Number

160k

More than 160,000 citizens, residents, tourists and visitors attended this year's Eid Al-Adha celebrations at Al-Bahja Garden and Prince Saud bin Abdul Mohsen Park in Hail city.

Review

Ricci San

AFSHAN AZIZ

Nestled on King Abdulaziz Road in Jeddah's Obhur neighborhood, Ricci San offers a sophisticated blend of traditional Japanese cuisine and modern culinary innovation.

This new dining outlet has quickly garnered attention for its sleek, contemporary aesthetic and artful approach to flavor.

The restaurant's interior harmoniously combines deep red sofas, private seating sections and warm timber accents, with striking paintings inspired by the Japanese master Hokusai's "Great Wave Off Kanagawa" adding a cultural elegance.



Ricci San's menu honors the legacy of Japanese cuisine, while infusing it with fresh, innovative twists. The "Bites and More" section features an array of delightful starters. Miso soup and edamame beans served in various styles — salted, spicy, and truffle-infused — make for a perfect beginning. The shrimp and vegetable gyoza offer a delightful mix of textures and flavors.

For those seeking something a bit more unconventional, the taco offerings are a revelation. From duck and salmon to tuna and shrimp, each taco is a unique fusion of Japanese and Mexican culinary traditions. The Wagyu beef, with its rich, melt-in-your-mouth quality, stands out as a highlight.



TheRegion

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Jeddah

- The 14th edition of Dubai Sports World is now underway at Dubai World Trade Centre, running until Sept. 8. Stay active with 11 different sports across more than 40 indoor courts and pitches. There are also special one-off events taking place throughout the summer

as part of Dubai Sports World, including pop-up markets, an Academy Day, and a Rumi Earth yoga day. Further information is available on the Dubai Sports World website.

- A new initiative from the Petra Tourism Development Region Authority in collaboration with the Japan International

Cooperation Agency, has established a craft market in Petra region. This initiative not only supports local artisans and food producers by promoting their products but also, according to the organizers, "enriches the cultural experience for visitors to the region." The market will be held on consecutive Saturdays — June 22 and 29.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia							
June 22	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghreb	Isha	
Makkah	4:12	5:39	12:23	3:43	7:06	8:36	
Madinah	4:03	5:33	12:24	3:44	7:14	8:44	
Riyadh	3:34	5:05	11:56	3:17	6:46	8:16	
Abha	4:11	5:35	12:12	3:35	6:49	8:19	
Dammam	3:14	4:47	11:42	3:08	6:36	8:06	



Renewable energies for desalination reduce the operation's carbon footprint and water production costs.

Sultan Al-Rajhi

Spokesperson, Saudi Water Authority



# Spotlight **GREEN & BLUE**

SAUDI ARABIA

## Turning sunshine into a sustainable water supply

Solar-powered desalination meets water needs while cutting carbon emissions

Ghadi Joudah Riyadh

**In regions with limited rainfall, desalination is a practical means of sourcing plentiful water for farming and human consumption. However, the process of turning seawater into freshwater is notoriously energy intensive.**

Indeed, desalination is a significant contributor to carbon emissions in the water-scarce Arabian Peninsula. That is why Saudi Arabia has been investing in green energy to power its desalination plants.

"Using renewable energies for desalination is crucial as it contributes to reducing the operation's carbon footprint and water production costs," Sultan Al-Rajhi, spokesperson for the Saudi Water Authority, told Arab News.

Due to the scarcity of freshwater resources in a region with a rapidly growing population, seawater desalination is essential to keep pace with demand, he added.

"Saudi Arabia depends on desalination of seawater due to the nature of the desert climate, in which the presence of surface water and natural rivers is rare."

In fact, desalination accounts for about 75 percent of the Kingdom's water supply.

"Therefore, investment is being made in desalination of seawater to meet the demand for population and economic growth witnessed in the Gulf region as a whole."

Each year, the Kingdom requires an average of 5.5 billion cubic meters of freshwater. Home to more than 37 million people, the Kingdom is the world's third-largest consumer of water per head of population. Agriculture alone accounts for around 84 percent of total water consumption.

Desalination is a complex process that involves removing salt and other impurities from seawater. Since the process requires a significant amount of energy, adopting renewables such as solar to power these facilities has become a top priority.

Al-Khafji Desalination Plant, located in the Kingdom's Eastern Province, is the world's largest solar-powered water desalination project. The plant can generate up to 90,000 cubic meters of freshwater per day using innovative technology created by the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology.

Its Solar Saline Water Reverse Osmosis method uses a process



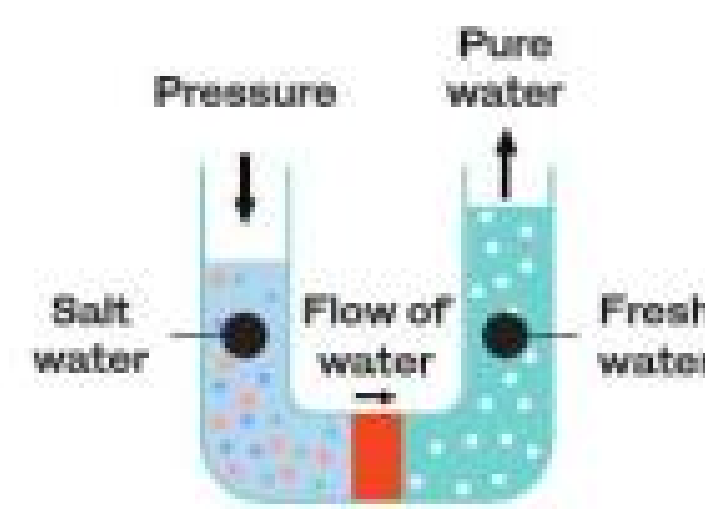
### TECHNOLOGY USED IN AL-KHAFJI DESALINATION PLANT



1. One innovative technology for transforming salt water to fresh water is the saline water reverse osmosis desalination method.



2. This process incorporates the use of ultra-filtration to remove salt and impurities from seawater, making it safe to drink and use for various purposes.



3. The ultra-filtration process involves forcing seawater through a semi-permeable membrane, which traps salt and other contaminants, leaving behind fresh, clean water.

### DID YOU KNOW?

**1** In 2023, Saudi Arabia had a desalination capacity of 13.2m cubic meters per day.

**2** 7m cubic meters of desalinated water have been generated by the Al-Khafji plant.

**3** Desalination accounts for 60 percent of the urban water supply in Saudi Arabia.

known as ultra-filtration during the pre-treatment phase.

The method involves forcing seawater through a semipermeable membrane that only allows water molecules to pass, while blocking the salt and other contaminants.

Since its launch in 2018, more than 7 million cubic meters of freshwater produced by the

plant have already been utilized.

"Using reverse osmosis technology is considered to have the lowest rates of carbon emissions as a result of the increase in energy efficiency through the development of this field in recent years," said Al-Rajhi.

"The rate of carbon emissions per cubic meter in some

Al-Khafji, above, is the world's largest solar-powered water desalination project. Supplied

## Addressing water and land challenges at COP16

IBRAHIM THIAW

**S**tanding on a rocky outcrop on the outskirts of Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, one cannot help but be struck by the vast expanse of arid land that stretches endlessly to the horizon.

The rolling dunes and rugged terrain tell a story of resilience and adaptability. But behind this harsh beauty lies an urgent crisis. According to the World Bank, three-quarters of the region's arable land is already degraded, and 60 percent of the population faces water scarcity — a figure that is expected to reach 100 percent by 2050.

Water scarcity and land degradation are not just environmental issues. They are existential threats to the Kingdom and beyond. With no natural rivers or lakes, Saudi Arabia relies heavily on groundwater and desalinated seawater.

Climate change is exacerbating the problem, causing unpredictable rainfall, prolonged droughts and heat waves that deplete water resources faster than they can be replenished.

This is why Saudi Arabia recently joined the International Drought Resilience Alliance, whose secretariat is hosted by the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.

The implications of this looming water crisis are profound. Agriculture, which consumes around 85 percent of Saudi Arabia's water, could face catastrophic disruption.

As water becomes scarcer, food security is threatened, and the livelihoods of those who depend on agriculture hang in the balance.

Desertification further exacerbates food insecurity and economic instability.

The economic costs are staggering. In the Middle East alone, land degradation affects more than 50 million hectares, resulting in annual losses estimated at \$9 billion.

This December, these issues will be in the global spotlight when Riyadh hosts the UNCCD COP16.

This pivotal moment is an opportunity for all nations to come together to develop sustainable solutions and demonstrate their commitment to land restoration.

Every year we lose 100 million hectares. If current trends continue, we will need to restore 1.5 billion hectares by 2030 to achieve land degradation neutrality.

Around the world, countries are taking bold steps to restore land. In Africa, for example, the Great Green Wall initiative aims to restore 100 million hectares of degraded land in 20 countries by 2030.

China's Kubuqi Desert, once a storm-ravaged wasteland, has been transformed through reforestation, ecosystem restoration, organic farming, eco-tourism, green industry and solar energy, benefiting 102,000 local people.

Furthermore, the Middle East Green Initiative, a regional effort led by Saudi Arabia, is set to plant 50 billion trees, revitalizing 200 million hectares.

These initiatives, along with the Saudi Green Initiative, which aims to restore 40 million hectares, illustrate the global commitment to tackling land degradation and water scarcity.

Through collaborative efforts and innovative solutions, there is hope for a more sustainable future for the Kingdom, the Middle East, and beyond.

Ibrahim Thiaw is the under-secretary-general and executive secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.



SERVICES

# Saudi AI authority to ease Umrah visitors' procedures

Kingdom has begun issuing Umrah visa after successful Hajj

Arab News Riyadh

The Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority has prepared the technical infrastructure to ease entry procedures for Umrah visitors following the announcement that Umrah visas will be issued after Hajj.

Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Hajj and Umrah has started issuing Umrah visas, Saudi Press Agency reported on Thursday.

The new Umrah season will coincide with the start of the new Islamic year on Muharram 1, and the move aims to streamline the arrival of pilgrims and ensure a smooth and worry-free experience.

The ministry is working diligently to implement the directives of the Saudi leadership and accommodate more Umrah pilgrims, providing services that

meet their needs.

The SDAIA works to facilitate the entry procedures for Umrah performers into the Kingdom in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior and relevant government entities across all air, sea, and land entry points in the Kingdom, which are now

## HIGHLIGHT

The new Umrah season will coincide with the start of the new Islamic year on Muharram 1.

preparing for the arrival of Umrah performers from around the world.

SDAIA is present at the entry points of Makkah, Madinah, the Eastern Region, Tabuk, Al-Jouf, the Northern Borders, Najran, and Jeddah Islamic Port. It has equipped these entry points with primary and backup

communication circuits.

These are operated by SDAIA's national experts, specializing in computing and necessary technical devices.

Moreover, SDAIA provides round-the-clock technical and logistical support, carries out preventive maintenance for data rooms, network devices, and workstations, and activates the traveller system, which helps expedite the transfer of Umrah performers' data to streamline their entry procedures.

SDAIA has also installed biometric capture and registration stations at entry points, configuring and programming the devices. Additionally, it has prepared mobile kits equipped with biometric registration devices and provided backup systems to ensure uninterrupted operations at entry points, facilitating the year-round entry of Umrah performers.

## TheSpace

### Two-state solution for Israel and Palestine is very much alive

HASSAN BIN YOUSSEF YASSIN



When the establishment of the state of Israel was proclaimed by David Ben-Gurion on May 14, 1948, the eve of the termination of the British Mandate for Palestine, there was no reference at all to any borders except for the use of the term Eretz Israel (Land of Israel), which many Israelis have always considered as encompassing the entire Biblical land of Israel.

The UN General Assembly Partition Plan for Palestine in 1947 had mapped suggested borders, but Israel's proclamation and the subsequent war between Israel and Arab neighbors all but erased that initial international basis for an Israeli and a Palestinian state.

Ever since, the very idea and potential of a Palestinian state has been deliberately deconstructed by each generation of Israeli leaders. It has been their clear intention to make the establishment of a Palestinian state as difficult in every possible way, both practically and politically. After pocketing remaining Palestinian lands with Israeli settlements ever since the 1967 war, Israel now claims that this self-made reality makes a Palestinian state inconceivable today.

This fundamental misconception and dishonesty made me think of an episode in India's history that was powerfully represented in the movie, "Gandhi." The episode concerns the Amritsar massacre of April 1919, in which Indians protesting the arrest of pro-

independence activists were trapped by British troops under the direction of General Dyer on the Jallianwala Bagh and fired at until the British had no bullets left. Up to 1,500 people are said to have died, with many more injured.

In the movie, Gandhi attends a meeting with Lord Chelmsford, the viceroy of India, who is forced to repudiate the massacre perpetrated by his troops.

Gandhi responds: "Despite the best intentions of the best of you, you must, in the nature of things, humiliate us to control us," concluding: "It is time you left."

The viceroy, stating that India is British, asks Gandhi: "You don't think we're just going to walk out of India?" — to which Gandhi simply answers: "Yes." Gandhi adds that "in the end, you will walk out, because 100,000 Englishmen simply cannot control 350,000,000 Indians if those Indians refuse to cooperate." The British mocked Gandhi's statement,

considering the concept of an independent India as simply not possible.

Colonial Britain's standpoint on India was not so different from Israel's insistence today that a Palestinian state is simply not possible because there are too many Israeli settlements dotting Palestinian territories — facts on the ground that they claim can no longer be removed.

Hassan bin Youssef Yassin worked closely with Saudi Arabia's petroleum ministers, Abdullah Tariki and Ahmed Zaki Yamani, from 1959-1967. He led the Saudi Information Office in Washington from 1972-1981 and served with the Arab League's observer delegation to the UN from 1981-1983.



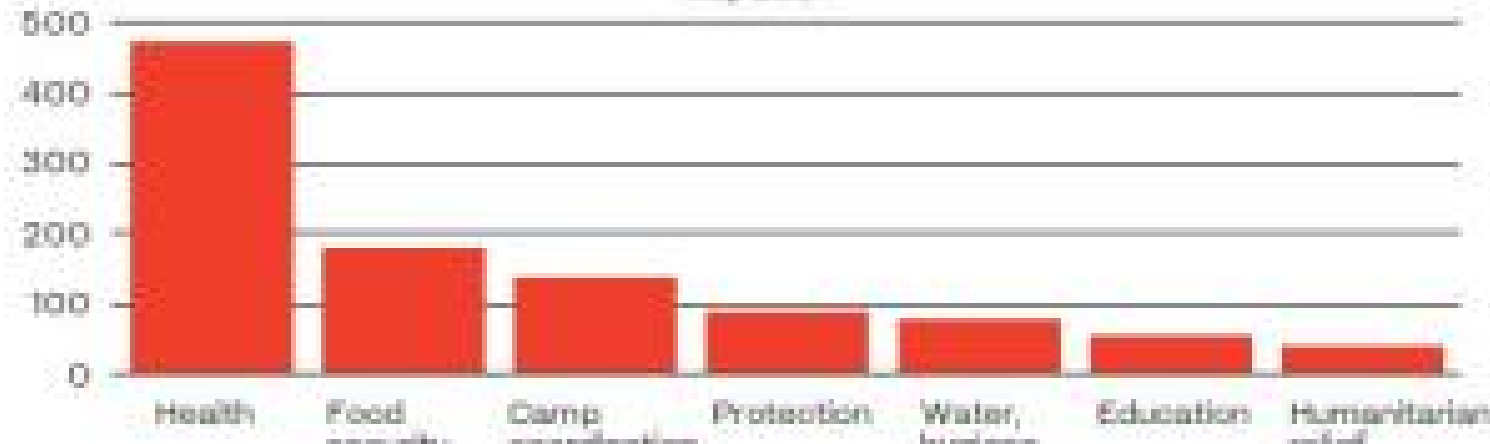
**Islamic history** Pilgrims hosted by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Guests Program for Hajj, Umrah and Visit visited the International Fairs and Museums of the Prophet's Biography and Islamic Civilization in Madinah.

SPA

## The Day's FIGURES

### SAUDI AID AGENCY PROJECTS IN YEMEN

May 2024



Source: ksrelief.org

## Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

### Festive season Over 160,000 visitors attend Eid events in Hail

More than 160,000 citizens, residents, tourists and visitors attended this year's Eid Al-Adha celebrations at Al-Bahja Garden and Prince Saud bin Abdul Mohsen Park in Hail city.

Municipality spokesperson Saud Al-Ali said the celebrations showcased the region's high quality of life and many advantages.

The result was a delightful experience for different ages and nationalities, he added.

Recreational and cultural activities, theatrical performances, and Saudi ardah and samri dances were staged as part of the celebrations. **SPA Hail**

### Culture King Abdulaziz library participates in Beijing book fair

Saudi's King Abdulaziz Public Library is currently participating in the Beijing International Book Fair, which runs until June 23.

The Kingdom's pavilion features new publications, translated books, and a presentation of the library's system of cultural programs and projects, including the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Award for Translation and the Arabic Union Catalog.

The presentation also highlights the library's experience of organizing artistic exhibitions. **SPA Beijing**

### Health safety Attempt to smuggle rotten carcasses foiled

An attempt to smuggle 1,243 rotten carcasses was foiled by the Jeddah Municipality thanks to five checkpoints set up at entrances to the area during Eid Al-Adha. Also seized were 109 vehicles being used to transport the rotten meat.

The municipality said surveillance teams in municipalities to the south, along with slaughterhouse management and the public benefit markets, were supported by security services in confiscating the carcasses, which were unfit for human consumption. **SPA Jeddah**

## CARING KINGDOM

### KSA reaffirms humanitarian efforts for refugees

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia reaffirmed its commitment to strengthen its support for refugees and displaced persons around the world, reported Saudi Press Agency.

On the occasion of World Refugee Day, Saudi aid agency KSrelief said its humanitarian support "includes all countries of the world without discrimination."

The organization has so far carried out 2,984 projects in 99 countries as it continues to expand its work for the needy and people affected by wars and disasters.

Support for refugees and displaced people in Syria, Palestine, Myanmar and Yemen alone was delivered through 424 humanitarian projects with a value of over \$1.18 billion. The schemes have included food and

agricultural security, protection and health services, shelter, early recovery and education.

KSrelief also supported those displaced in other countries by implementing 304 projects worth more than \$2.19 billion.

The Kingdom hosts a large number of people from countries affected by war, with refugees from Yemen, Syria, and Myanmar alone constituting 5.5 percent of its population.



News Saudi Arabia

CREATIVITY

# Saudi artist's gallery celebrates unbounded imagination

Mohammed Abubshait's 'Living in Wonderland' is a treasure trove of imaginative expression

Rahaf Jambri Riyadh

Saudi artist Mohammed Abubshait has created a haven for other artists in Riyadh. His gallery, *Living in Wonderland*, is a treasure trove of imaginative artistic expression.

Art has always been in my blood, and I believe it is in everyone's blood. I used to mess around with my clothes, accessories, goods, cars, and whatever else. I don't like the way things are," Abubshait told Arab News.

After 10 years as an employee at an oil company, he chose to switch gears and pursue his passion for creating art out of various materials including metal, wood, and resin.

"When COVID-19 hit, I decided work on my art and I ended up with 150 pieces ... I decided to open a gallery in Riyadh to showcase them," he explained. "It was kind of risky at the time because, as you see, this is not a typical art gallery. It's different — a lot of pop art, street art and things that are a bit outside-of-the-box."

Abubshait opened *Living in Wonderland* in 2020. "Many of us have seen and grew up with 'Alice in Wonderland.' It's an escape to another world — unrealistic, creative, no boundaries," he said. "So, I thought it would fit the creative idea and concept that we're looking for. (The gallery)



## HIGHLIGHTS

• The gallery supports many local artists, work created in a variety of mediums, with a particular focus on modern and pop art.

• It also currently includes work by artists from Mali, Italy, the UK and the US. Prices range from SR2 (50 cents), to more than SR20,000.



takes you down the rabbit hole to another world."

The gallery supports — and sells the work of — many local artists, work created in a variety of mediums, with a particular focus on modern and pop art. It also currently includes work by artists from Mali, Italy, the UK and the US. Prices range from SR2 (50

After 10 years as an employee at an oil company, Mohammed Abubshait chose to switch gears and pursue his passion for creating art out of various materials including metal, wood, and resin.  
AN photo by Loal El-Kelawy

cents), to more than SR20,000.

"We've got something for everyone," Abubshait said. "I believe we introduced something unique and different to the market."

From paintings and sculptures to installations and interactive displays, the gallery features an eclectic mix of work that pushes

boundaries, giving visitors an intriguing and thought-provoking experience.

Abubshait is also known for incorporating currency — both real and virtual — into his work.

"The majority of my art features money in the background, whether Saudi riyals or American dollars," he

said. "And the cryptocurrency Bitcoin is one of my signature backgrounds. People ask me why I use money and I'm, like, 'Well, we use money in our everyday lives.' Everyone can manifest money."

The gallery also offers a variety of workshops including resin, rug tufting, and painting.

NATURAL ASSET

# Harnessing agricultural terraces for blackberry cultivation in Al-Baha

SPA Al-Baha

Al-Baha is proving to be an ideal region for the cultivation of blackberries.

Utilizing advanced plant tissue culture techniques, this initiative has shown great potential, benefiting both farmers and beekeepers due to the plant's rapid growth, high yield, and superior quality blossoms.

The blackberry cultivation initiative in Al-Baha has thrived, with more than 30,000 bushes planted to date. According to the Saudi Press Agency, this endeavor promises significant economic and investment returns for the region, leveraging its natural agricultural assets, fertile soil, and ample groundwater.

Fahd Al-Zahrani, director of the Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture in the region, highlighted the crop's potential. He stated that over 30,000 blackberry seedlings have been planted in open fields,

achieving nearly 100 percent success. The seedlings began producing high-quality fruit in the spring of 2024, underscoring the experiment's success.

The ministry aims to increase the number of blackberry trees in Al-Baha to 3 million within the next three years, supported by various programs and collaboration with farmers and agricultural associations. Numerous field workshops have been conducted to train farmers in propagation techniques, facilitating the expansion of blackberry cultivation.

Hassan Saeed Al-Shantir, owner of Al-Shantir Farm, emphasized the region's favorable agricultural conditions, including fertile soil and groundwater. He started preparing the agricultural terraces and planting blackberries at the end of 2022, supported by the regional branch of the Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture, and the Agricultural Arabian Shield initiative,



The blackberry cultivation initiative in Al-Baha has thrived, with more than 30,000 bushes planted to date. Supplied



## SPEEDREAD

The ministry aims to increase the number of blackberry trees in Al-Baha to 3 million within the next three years, supported by various programs and collaboration with farmers and agricultural associations.

planting around 100 blackberry seedlings.

Al-Shantir reported that his farm now boasts over 750 seedlings, with notable production increases. The farm has

opened sales points in Al-Baha and begun exporting to Jeddah, with plans to expand to other major cities. He noted the rapid growth, abundant blossoms, high-quality fruit, and economic benefits of blackberries, which also resist various climatic conditions.

He plans to utilize the attractive, sweet blackberries, rich in nutrients and antioxidants, in various products such as desserts and food decorations, capitalizing on their low-calorie content.

He also benefited from workshops organized by the ministry, which focused on crop composition plans, propagation techniques using tissue culture, suitable irrigation methods for blackberry cultivation, and seedling production through tissue culture.

Dr. Fatima Al-Omari, an advisor at the agriculture undersecretariat, explained that blackberry is a perennial plant or small shrub with curved, thorny branches. It blooms from late spring to early summer,

with typically white flowers and black fruit.

This fruit offers high health and nutritional benefits due to its vitamins, minerals, and fiber, with relatively low sugar content.

She added that the current condition of the farms is good, with high-quality blossoms and fruit observed in several farms within a year of planting the seedlings. These farms are regularly monitored by a committee headed by Dr. Ibrahim Mohammed Aref, the initiative supervisor and adviser at the Agriculture Agency, in cooperation with the Agricultural Cooperative Society in Baljurashi and the Ministry's regional branch.

Al-Baha region, known for its unique agricultural identity, boasts distinct terraces that align with the mountainous terrain, slopes, and elevations retaining soil and rainwater. The region also offers a variety of fruits year-round.



GRIEF

# Iraqi Kurds mourn loved ones lost on Mediterranean migrant route

More than 60 remain unaccounted for as boat sinks around 120 nautical miles off Calabria, Italy

AFP Irbil

**Waiting at home in Iraqi Kurdistan, Khadija Hussein holds faint hope of hearing word of further survivors from the shipwrecked vessel that carried 11 of her family members from Turkey.**

Khadija's nephew Rebwar, his sister-in-law Mojdeh, and both their families were aboard a sailing boat that sank overnight between Sunday and Monday off the Italian coast.

Twelve people were plucked from the water after the boat sank around 120 nautical miles off Calabria, one of whom died after disembarking.

More than 60 remain unaccounted for after six bodies were retrieved on Wednesday from the sea by the Italian coast guard.

"What's clear is that Mojdeh survived. We spoke to her on the phone," said the 54-year-old housewife.

Mojdeh's son and another child from the family are also known to have survived — the eight other relatives of Khadija who were onboard are still unaccounted for.

"We have no further details," Khadija said, a black veil draped over her hair.

On a moldering wall at the entrance to the family home in Irbil, the capital of the autonomous Kurdistan region in northern Iraq, a poster announces a vigil organized on Wednesday to receive condolences.

Two family photos on display showed the victims, parents, and children smiling broadly and dressed in their best clothes.

Mojdeh is with her husband, Abdel Qader, a cab driver.

Her sister Hiro is pictured with her husband Rebwar, a blacksmith.



Mourners gather for a memorial service in Irbil for Iraqi Kurds who died at sea in a migrant boat off the southern coast of Italy. AFP

The two couples had almost changed their minds and decided not to depart.

"They had informed the parents, and everyone was relieved," Khadija explained, but after an insistent intervention by a people smuggler, the group had a change of heart.

They were supposed to contact the family in Irbil when they arrived in Europe to start their new life.

"Hours went by, and we heard nothing more," Khadija said.

The smuggler, meanwhile, had switched off their phone.

News of deaths like these on

## FASTFACT

**Some 3,155 migrants died or disappeared in the Mediterranean last year, according to the International Organization for Migration.**

Europe's migrant routes has become all too common in the autonomous Kurdish region.

The area has been touched by other tragedies, whether on the English Channel or in the frozen forests of Belarus.

In the Irbil schoolyard requisitioned for the vigil, dozens of

women huddle together, seated under a tent, all dressed in black, their features drawn, in a silence broken by the cries of children.

At the mosque, the men of the family welcomed dozens of visitors who had come to pay their respects in a reception room, listening to verses from the Qur'an.

Rebwar's father, Kamal Hamad, said he spoke to his son on Wednesday, June 12, when he was already on the boat.

His grief is compounded by incomprehension.

"They knew full well that traveling by sea in this way

meant certain death," the 60-year-old said.

"Why leave? In our country, it's better than elsewhere."

The Kurdish region has always represented relative prosperity and stability in an unstable Iraq. Property developments, highways, universities, and private schools are all under construction.

But the autonomous region, like the rest of the resource-rich country, also suffers from endemic corruption, the cronyism of the ruling clans, and an economic stasis that has disillusioned its young people.

'TOUGH CASE'

## Swedish court acquits former Syria general of war crimes charges

AP Copenhagen

A Swedish judge has acquitted a former Syrian army general of indiscriminate attacks on civilians in his home country more than a decade ago, saying prosecutors failed to provide evidence of his involvement in the war crimes.

Brig. Gen. Mohammed Hamo, who now lives in Sweden, was charged in February with aiding and abetting crimes against international law.

Prosecutors said that as head of the Ordnance Department of the Syrian Army's 11th Division, he was responsible for providing the weapons that were used to commit war crimes in 2012.

The prosecutor alleged that Hamo, described by Swedish news agency TT as the highest-ranking officer to stand trial in a European court for such crimes

## BACKGROUND

**The Stockholm District Court said it was clear that the Syrian army's warfare included "indiscriminate attacks" that violated international law.**

in Syria, had participated in the division's indiscriminate attacks on military and civilian targets in the Syrian cities of Homs and Hama.

The Stockholm District Court said it was clear that the Syrian army's warfare included "indiscriminate attacks" that violated international law.

But Judge Katarina Fabian said prosecutors did not produce sufficient evidence to convict Hamo.

During the trial, the prosecution chiefly relied on video clips, photographs, and testimonies to paint a broad picture of the period showing shelling and fighting between the Syrian Army and armed groups.

'UNBEARABLE' SCENES

# Huge wildfire kills 11 people in southeastern Türkiye

AFP Cinar, Türkiye

A huge wildfire killed 11 people and critically injured five as it ripped through Türkiye's mainly Kurdish southeast, the health minister said on Friday.

Hundreds of animals also perished or were badly injured in the blaze that roared across the dry landscape, sending flames into the night sky.

By morning, the fire had left huge areas of charred and blackened land across the Diyarbakir and Mardin provinces.

"Eleven people lost their lives," Health Minister Fahrettin Koca wrote on X, adding that another 78 people suffered injuries and smoke inhalation.

Of that number, five people were being treated in intensive care, he said.

Türkiye's pro-Kurdish DEM party, which won many municipalities in the southeast in the March local elections, criticized the government's intervention as "late and insufficient."

During the night, DEM had urged the government to send water bombers, saying fighting the blaze from the ground was "not enough."

An AFP reporter in Koksalan village in Diyarbakir province saw around 100 animals lying dead on the ground.

Residents said around half their flock of about 1,000 sheep and goats had perished in the blaze.



Firefighters work to extinguish a fire burning in the Gallipoli peninsula. AP

A local vet, who did not want to give his name, confirmed around half the flock had died and said many of those that survived were being treated for burns.

"We don't have very clear

information on how many animals have been affected," the vet said.

"But at the moment, just under half of the survivors will have to be slaughtered because

they can't be saved."

Seracettin Bedirhanoglu, a member of the opposition CHP party and leader of the eastern Van province, described the images as "unbearable," urging vets to go to the area to help treat the wounded animals.

"They are defenseless and helpless ... In every big fire, they get hurt first. I ask my veterinarian brothers and sisters: please go to the fire zone because they need you," he wrote on X.

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya blamed the fire on "a stubble burn" which started late on Thursday and spread quickly due to strong winds, affecting five villages.

Justice Minister Yilmaz Tunc

said on X the public prosecutor's office had opened a probe into the cause of the fire.

Türkiye has suffered 74 wildfires so far this year, which have ravaged 12,910 hectares of land, according to the European Forest Fire Information System.

In the summer of 2021, Türkiye suffered its worst-ever wildfires. They claimed nine lives and destroyed huge swaths of forested land across its Mediterranean and Aegean coasts.

The disaster prompted a political crisis after it emerged that Türkiye had no functioning firefighting planes.

It heaped pressure on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was forced to accept international help.



## News Middle East

## SUFFERING

## Israel 'pause' in Gaza had no impact on aid supplies: WHO

AFP Gaza

A daily "pause" the Israeli military declared in Gaza to facilitate aid flows has had no impact on deliveries of badly needed supplies, the UN's health agency said on Friday.

More than eight months of war, sparked by Hamas's unprecedented Oct. 7 attack on Israel, have led to dire humanitarian conditions in the Palestinian territory and repeated UN warnings of famine.

"We did not see an impact on the humanitarian supplies coming in since that ... unilateral announcement of this technical pause," said Richard Peeperkorn, the World Health Organization's representative in the Palestinian territories.

Medical charity Doctors Without Borders, or MSF, warned in a statement that "without a significant refill of medical supplies in the coming days," the NGO may have to "stop or drastically reduce some of its medical

activities in Gaza."

Over the weekend, the Israeli military announced a daily humanitarian "pause" in fighting on a key road in southern Gaza.

However, a UN spokesman said, "This has yet to translate into more aid reaching people in need."

According to the WHO, as of May 17, only 750 people remained in Rafah.

There were between 60,000 and 75,000 in the Al-Mawasi area in the south of the Gaza Strip, where many Palestinians have taken refuge since the start of the Israeli offensive in Rafah.

Dr. Thanos Gargavanis, a trauma surgeon and emergency officer at the WHO, said the UN in Gaza was trying to "operate in an unworkable environment."

"We have patients with severe burns, open fractures, and we don't even have enough painkillers to alleviate their suffering," said MSF medical coordinator Guillemette Thomas.



A Palestinian child walks with a stuffed bear recovered from the rubble of a destroyed building following Israeli bombardment in Khan Younis on Friday. AFP

## GRAVE THREAT

## German foreign minister to visit Beirut as fears rise of wider conflict with Israel

Lebanon counts on success of US diplomatic efforts to prevent full-scale war

Najla Houssari Beirut

**Lebanon's Foreign Affairs Minister Abdallah Bou Habib met with French Ambassador Herva Magro, the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and US Ambassador Lisa Johnson on Friday.**

The minister reiterated Lebanon's call for the full implementation of UN Resolution 1701.

Hennis-Plasschaert said there was "no inevitability (to wider conflict with Israel)" during her visit to UN peacekeepers in southern Lebanon.

Also on Friday, it was announced that German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock will make shuttle visits to Lebanon, Israel, and the West Bank.

Concerned at the risk of Israel's war on Gaza spreading across the region, US President Joe Biden sent his special envoy Amos Hochstein

to embark on a new round of diplomacy last week. Hochstein called for "urgent" de-escalation during talks with Lebanon and Israel on Tuesday, informing both sides that "the threat of a full-scale war persists and must be avoided."

It is widely believed in Lebanon that Hochstein convinced Israel to refrain from escalating its military actions against Lebanon for the time being.

In a meeting with visiting Israeli officials including National Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi and Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer in Washington on Thursday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken underscored the importance of "avoiding further escalation in Lebanon and reaching a diplomatic resolution that allows Israeli and Lebanese families to return to their homes," according to a statement.

According to his spokesperson, Matthew Miller, Blinken also stressed America's "unwavering commitment to Israel's security."



People sit outside a cafe along Beirut's Hamra street in Lebanon. File/AFP

## FASTFACT

**UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned on Friday that fighting between Israel and Hezbollah must not turn Lebanon into 'another Gaza.'**

During his talks in Beirut, Hochstein reportedly reassured Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati that Biden's proposal for a ceasefire in Gaza was being viewed positively, and that Qatar was

working to make it happen.

Hochstein also reportedly told Mikati that "things are under control and positive when it comes to the war between Lebanon and Israel."

Former Lebanese Ambassador to Washington, Riad Tabbarah, described threats of war as a "mere outburst." He told Arab News: "Since military operations began on the southern front about nine months ago, the Lebanese have been hearing that war is coming, but it never arrives.

"During diplomatic negotiations, it is common for both sides to face pressure and threats," he continued. "It appears that there are numerous and diverse negotiations happening behind the scenes, including discussions between the Americans and Iranians, as well as between the Americans and Hezbollah."

Tabbarah acknowledged the recklessness of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and said the Israeli leader "has two options — either war or prison. And there is significant pressure on him, especially from the families of the hostages."

Tabbarah noted that there are limits to what military action can achieve. "We still recall the time when former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon crossed those limits in 1982 when he set the Litani Line as his target. However, he went beyond that and reached Beirut. As a result, international powers united to bring him back to the Litani Line.

"No one has an interest in war," he continued. "Americans, Europeans, and Iranians are working in the opposite direction. The general trend is to avoid escalating to open war."

Military operations on the Lebanese front decreased significantly on Friday, although the outskirts of Naqoura in the western sector were targeted by Israeli artillery, causing a fire in a house. In the morning, an Israeli military raid targeted the town of Wazzani.

Hezbollah made a series of announcements about their operations, which were "focused on specific targets within the rules of engagement."

Hezbollah attacked the sites of Ramtha and Samaka in the occupied Lebanese Kfar Shouba Hills, the Zabadin site in the occupied Lebanese Shebaa Farms, and carried out an air attack using drones on the Ras Al-Naqoura naval site, aiming at locations containing Israeli military personnel.

## AGGRESSION

## 2 Palestinians killed in West Bank

AFP Qalqilyah

Israeli and Palestinian authorities said at least two Palestinians were killed in an Israeli operation in the occupied West Bank city of Qalqilya on Friday.

The Palestinian Ministry of Civil Affairs reported the death of the two men.

"The General Authority

of Civil Affairs informed the Ministry of Health of the martyrdom of Mahmoud Hassan Abdul Rahman Zaid, 28, and Ihab Abdul Karim Musa Abu Hamed, 29, by Israeli gunfire in Qalqilya," it said in a statement.

The Wafa Agency reported that eyewitnesses saw Israeli special forces firing live

ammunition at a vehicle on Friday afternoon as it passed along the main street of Qalqilya in the northern West Bank.

Images taken by an AFP journalist on the ground showed the destroyed storefront of a downtown shoe shop and blood stains in front of it.

Police forces have killed 2 "wanted terrorists in Qalqilya,"

Israeli authorities said.

In a joint statement, the Israeli police, army, and Shin Bet security service said that Israeli forces "attempted to arrest two terrorists" from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group, one of whom "was planning to carry out an attack in the area."

"During the arrest, fire was opened on our forces, who

returned fire and neutralized the terrorists," the statement read, adding that the forces found handguns on the Palestinians.

The West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967, has experienced a surge in violence for more than a year, particularly since the Israel-Hamas war erupted on Oct. 7.



LURE OF THE LUCRE

# Medical brain drain worsens in Sri Lanka as 25% of doctors ready to migrate

- More than 1,800 medical doctors left Sri Lanka in 2022 and 2023
- Their salaries in the UK and Australia are often 30 times higher

**Mohammed Rasooldeen Colombo**

The biggest trade union of government doctors in Sri Lanka warned on Friday about a wave of economic crisis-driven brain drain among medical professionals, as 25 percent of them have already taken the necessary exams to find employment abroad.

Before the worst economic crisis pummeled Sri Lanka in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, on average 200 doctors would migrate to work in another country, according to Ministry of Health statistics.

The number has surged since early 2022, when the country defaulted on its foreign debt. Sri Lankans started experiencing power cuts and shortages of basics such as fuel, food and medicine, and the inflation rate rose to 50 percent a year.

"If we consider the situation within the last two years, more than 1,800 doctors have left the country in 2022 and 2023," Dr. Chamil Wijesinghe, spokesperson of the Government Medical Officers Association, told Arab News.

Many more are likely to follow in their footsteps as GMOA data shows that at least 25 percent of doctors currently serving in the government health system have already passed the necessary exams to find employment abroad.

To practice medicine in the UAE or Oman, doctors need to take the Prometric Exam for GP Doctor.

To work in the UK, they are required to complete the Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board's exams, while in



Australia they have to follow the examination of the Australian Medical Council.

"Considering only those three ... recent statistics show that nearly 5,000 Sri Lankan doctors have completed these exams and they're waiting to take their decision of leaving the country," Wijesinghe said.

"In government health institutions of Sri Lanka ... there are around 20,000 doctors."

He warned that an increasing number of those leaving were specialists, mainly in emergency medicine and anesthesia, followed by pediatricians, psychiatrists, neurologists and cardiac surgeons.

Some of the world's most rigorously trained, Sri Lankan doctors are required by their country's health system to obtain both local

**Health workers take part in a strike to demand incentives at Colombo South Teaching Hospital. AFP/File**

and international training before they practice as consultants. At the same time, and compared with the years of experience, they are among the most underpaid, earning between \$170 and \$720 per month.

In the past two years, those who had left for compulsory training in countries such as the UK, Australia or the US, are not willing to return.

"The high salaries they are being paid in those countries, compared to Sri Lanka, is the main reason. If you consider Middle East countries, it is nearly tenfold of the salary they are getting in Sri Lanka. In the UK and Australia, around 20

to 30-fold," Wijesinghe said, adding that they are attracted by better working environments, better living standards, and education opportunities for their children.

"Majority of the Sri Lankan doctors migrate to Australia and the United Kingdom ... They are migrating with their family members as well."

He estimated that nearly 400 specialists have left in the past two years, which was becoming a "huge problem" for the Sri Lankan health sector.

"It has affected from the biggest hospital in Sri Lanka, the National Hospital of Sri Lanka, which is situated in Colombo, to the rural hospital system ... Patients have to travel hundreds of kilometers sometimes to get their surgeries done," he said.

LANDMARK EVENT

## EU confirms launch of Ukraine, Moldova membership talks Tuesday

AFP Luxembourg

EU countries on Friday formally approved launching accession talks with Ukraine and Moldova next week, a landmark event for the two countries at the start of their long path toward joining the bloc.

European Union ministers will start negotiations first with Ukraine and then with Moldova in Luxembourg on Tuesday afternoon, officials said.

Ukraine — followed by its neighbor Moldova — lodged its application to join the 27-nation EU in the wake of Russia's 2022 invasion.

Starting the negotiations will still only put the two ex-Soviet states at the beginning of what is likely to be a years-long process of reforms before they can finally become members.

EU leaders took the key step in December of agreeing to open talks on war-torn Ukraine — and Moldova — joining the club.

But to actually begin the negotiations the bloc's members still had to sign off on a formal framework for the process.

The EU's executive told member states this month that Ukraine and Moldova had met all the criteria needed to launch the talks.

### BACKGROUND

**The EU's executive told member states this month that Ukraine and Moldova had met all the criteria needed to launch the talks.**

Pressure has grown to move Ukraine onto the next step in its quest for membership, in the face of fears that Hungary could stall progress when it takes over the EU's rotating presidency in July.

Hungary — the friendliest country to Russia in the EU — has said it does not intend to hold

any further rounds of talks with Ukraine during its six months at the helm.

Russia's war in Ukraine has reinvigorated a push in the EU to take on new members, after years in which countries particularly in the Western Balkans made little progress on their hope to join.

The EU in December 2023 also granted candidate status to another of Russia's former Soviet neighbors, Georgia.

It has also approved accession negotiations with Bosnia and has opened such talks with Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and North Macedonia.

## Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

**French election**  
**Far-right candidate assaulted during campaign**

Black-clad attackers have beaten up a far-right candidate on the campaign trail ahead of France's snap parliamentary election, police said, echoing violence against politicians in Germany and elsewhere in Europe as the political atmosphere coarsens.

Herve Breuil, a candidate for Marine Le Pen's National Rally (RN) party, was assaulted as he campaigned in the industrial town of Saint Etienne, near Lyon, in central France. **Reuters**

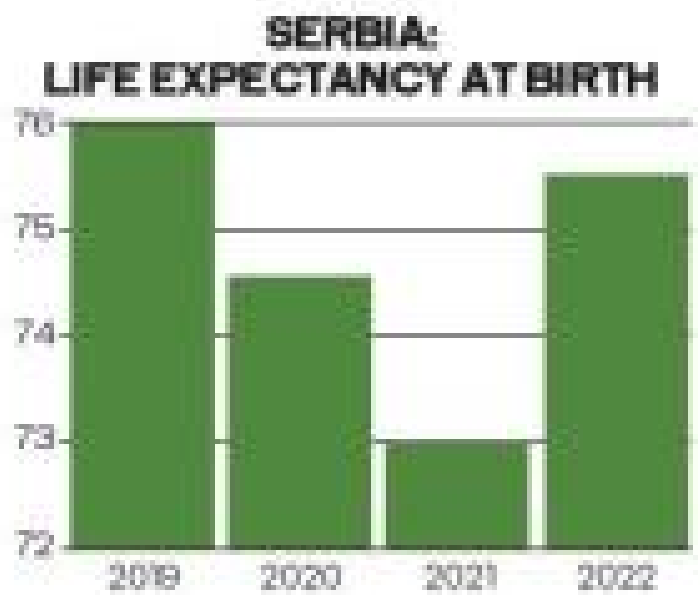
**Border conflict**  
**South Korea fires warning shots after incursion**

Seoul's military said Friday it had fired warning shots after North Korean soldiers briefly crossed the heavily fortified border in the third such incursion this month.

The nuclear-armed North has been reinforcing the border in recent months, adding tactical roads and laying more land mines, which has led to "casualties" among its troops due to accidental explosions, South Korea has said. **AFP**

## The Day's FIGURES

Source: Statista



## What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

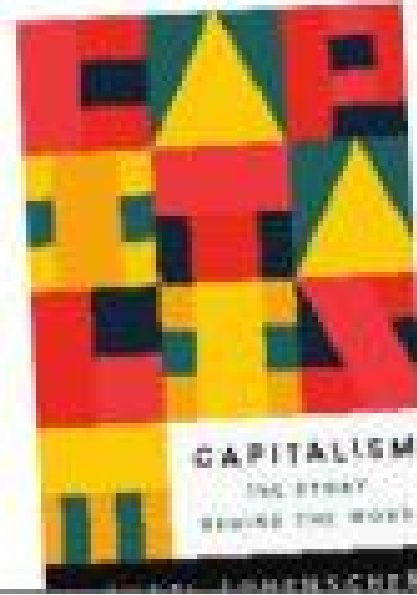
### Capitalism: The Story behind the Word

MICHAEL SONENSCHER

What exactly is capitalism? How has the meaning of capitalism changed over time? And what's at stake in our understanding or misunderstanding of it? In "Capitalism," Michael Sonenscher examines the history behind the concept and pieces together the range of subjects bound up with the word. Sonenscher shows that many of our received ideas fail to pick up the work

that the idea of capitalism is doing for us, without us even realizing it.

"Capitalism" was first coined in France in the early 19th century. It began as a fusion of two distinct sets of ideas. The first involved thinking about public debt and war finance. The second involved thinking about the division of labor. Sonenscher shows that thinking about the first has changed radically over time.



**Unrest in Mali**  
**Junta opponents arrested after civilian rule call**

Eleven opponents of Mali's ruling junta were arrested as they met in the capital after calling for the return of civilian rule in the West African nation, their coalition said Friday.

The military, which seized power in 2020, had promised to organize elections and hand over power to civilians by the end of March this year but later postponed elections indefinitely.

Those detained include the heads of parties and political movements. **AFP**

**Exercises**  
**Modi leads yoga day celebration in Kashmir**

Stretching, arching his back and kneeling on a mat, India's Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi led hundreds of people performing yoga in the Muslim-majority region of Kashmir on Friday.

The exercises in Srinagar, capital of the Indian-administered part of the disputed territory, marked the 10th international yoga day, Modi's own brainchild.

But while yoga is not itself a religious practice, it has its origins in Hindu philosophy. **AFP**



عقلٌ بلا أسئلة صندوقٌ محشوٌّ بالغبار  
(د. أحمد برقأوي)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

*A mind that does not question is a box full of dust.*

Dr. Ahmad Barqawi

(Syrian-based Palestinian academic, intellectual and philosophy researcher)

# Opinion

## How the UK's Starmer factor could boost Biden

CHRISTOPHER PHILLIPS

Things are not looking good for Joe Biden. The latest polls suggests Donald Trump has a two-in-three chance of victory in November's US presidential election.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the picture is quite different for fellow progressive Keir Starmer. The Labour leader has a seemingly unassailable lead in the polls and is likely to become the UK's prime minister by a landslide after elections on July 4.

US elections often feature "October surprises" — unexpected events, often from abroad, that dramatically influence the outcome. Might a thumping win for Starmer serve as a fillip to Biden?

First, it could influence some US voters to favor Biden over Trump. While most American voters pay little attention to British politics, there is some evidence that Britain's vote to leave the EU in 2016 had a positive impact on Trump's election

later that year. Trump sought to connect his campaign to the UK's "liberation" from the EU, and said his victory would be "Brexit plus, plus, plus."

It is plausible that the Biden campaign in 2024 might benefit in a similar way from Starmer's election. If Starmer's election is greeted positively by Biden's base and floating voters, he could also connect his campaign to Labour's in the way that Trump did with Brexit.

Second, as prime minister, Starmer may be able to take policy positions in the four months before the November election to help the White House incumbent. It will be a delicate line to walk. Starmer has insisted he "will work with whoever is elected" in November and would not want to be seen to be working against Trump. At the same time, Labour are ideological fellow travelers of the Democrats and will privately have a strong preference for a Biden victory.

One early opportunity to help Biden



Christopher Phillips is professor of international relations at Queen Mary University of London.  
X: @cjophillips

may be NATO's 75th anniversary summit in Washington from July 9. In opposition, Starmer pitched in vain for a high-profile meeting with Biden. At the summit, it may be the president who is keen to have his photo taken with the victorious Labour leader.

Starmer could also assist by emphasizing the UK's commitment to NATO. Trump, a NATO skeptic, has long claimed that US allies do not pay their way. Labour has already pledged to raise defense spending to 2.5 percent of gross domestic product. Starmer could make much of this in Washington, enabling Biden to reassure US voters that, unlike Trump, he has been able to persuade allies to spend more on NATO.

Beyond NATO, Starmer will have other opportunities to support Biden. Labour is committed to the war in Ukraine, and should the flailing Biden-backed Gaza ceasefire plan gain traction, Starmer would be well positioned to offer the

White House high-profile support.

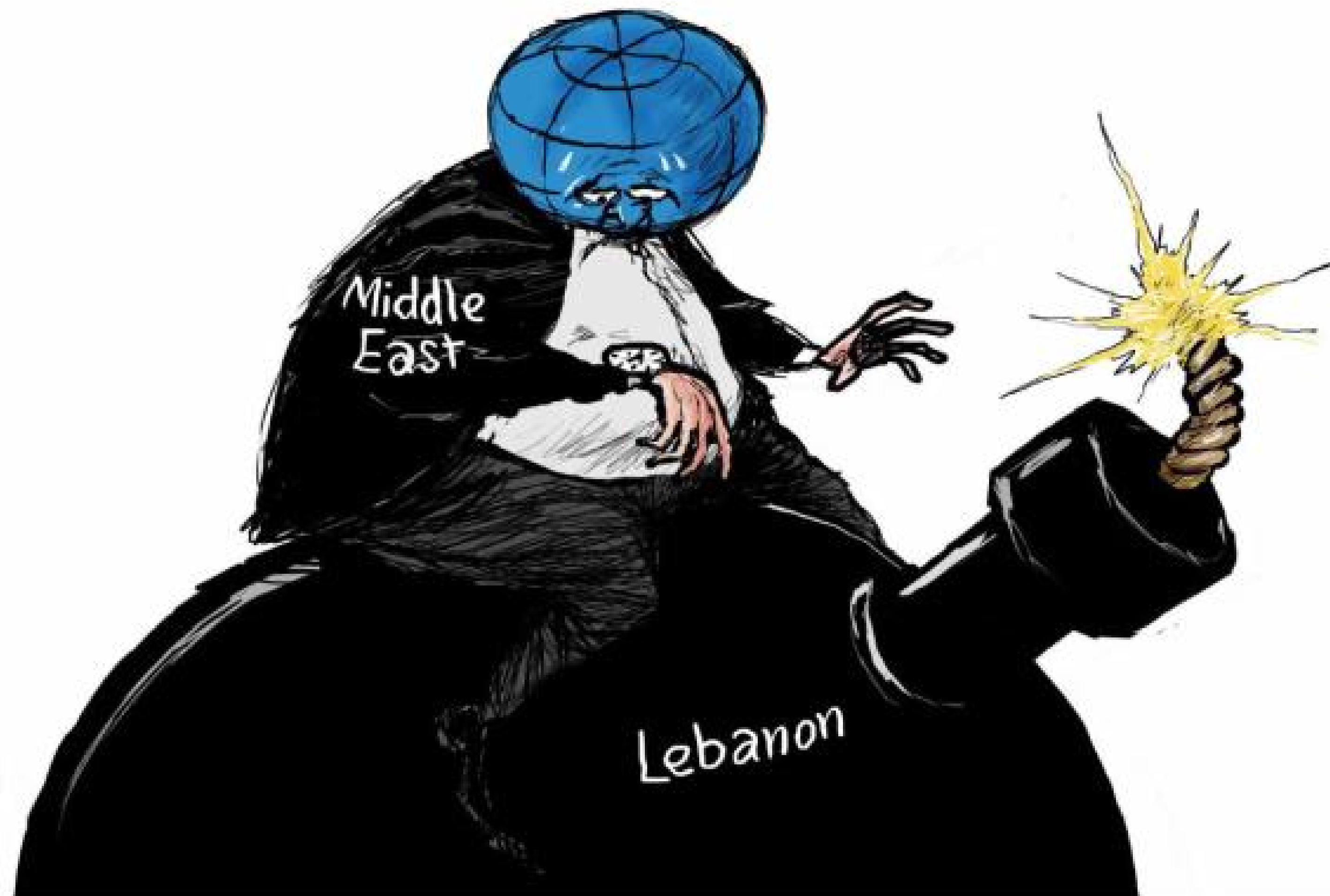
That said, Labour and the Democrats are not fully aligned on all aspects of foreign policy. While Biden (and Trump) characterize China as an adversary, Labour want ties with Beijing to "endure and evolve." That more nuanced approach from London may prove a point of contention with Washington. Starmer could therefore further assist Biden by playing down any potential disagreements until after the US elections.

Despite all this, the impact of a Starmer landslide on the US elections could be limited. Domestic issues tend to decide elections, and if Biden cannot make a strong enough case against Trump at home, then he may be doomed anyway. However, if the race is close, every vote will count. The few voters who might be persuaded to back the incumbent because of the Starmer factor could make the difference. If so, Biden may have Starmer to thank.

**If Starmer's election is greeted positively by Biden's base and floating voters, he could connect his campaign to Labour's in the way that Trump did with Brexit.**

COURTESY: AMALAD RAHMAN/ASHRAF AL-AWABAT

Rasmi



**Who will guarantee that Tehran, once it produces nuclear weapons, will not threaten to use them against Cyprus or the rest of Europe?**

## Biden has no answer to Hezbollah's spreading threat

HUSSAIN ABDUL-HUSSAIN

Amid increasingly violent cross-border exchanges of fire between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, and growing fears of a full-scale war, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah last week threatened to attack Cyprus if the Mediterranean island made its military bases available to Israel.

Washington has cautioned Israel against any escalation that might encourage other Iran-backed Shiite militias from Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, and Syria to join in, but that warning poses questions: What would the US advise European capitals to do if Nasrallah threatened them over any disagreements they might have with Tehran? And who will guarantee that Tehran, once it produces nuclear weapons, will not threaten to use them against Cyprus or the rest of Europe?

It is no secret that America is restraining Israel from restoring calm in its north by engaging Hezbollah. What is puzzling is that Washington offers no alternative

other than asking Israel to accept Nasrallah's terms: Hezbollah will stop attacking Israel only if it ends its war in Gaza, a position Nasrallah restated last week.

If Israel followed American advice and Lebanese demands, it would give Nasrallah a say in matters that do not concern him — specifically, relations between Israel and the Palestinians. That would undermine the concept of the nation state and the foundation of the global order, but US President Joe Biden appears to be fine with it.

In July 2006, Hezbollah initiated a devastating 33-day war with Israel, ostensibly to force the latter into a prisoner swap, which occurred after the war. The conflict ended with UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which ordered the disarmament of all militias in Lebanon, the redeployment of Hezbollah fighters north of the Litani River (about 30 km from the Lebanese Israeli border), and the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces alongside an expanded UN Interim



Hussain Abdul-Hussain is a research fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies in Washington DC.  
X: @hahussain

Force in Lebanon between the river and the border.

The resolution also required Lebanon and Israel to negotiate border disputes. In 2022, they demarcated their maritime border, but Hezbollah has since refused to negotiate the 13 disputed land points, insisting that Israel withdraw unilaterally or face battle.

Hezbollah launched an offensive against Israel last October, the day after the Hamas attack on Israel and Israel's retaliatory invasion of Gaza. Nasrallah declared that this war was not about the border, but to pin down Israeli forces in the north, diverting them from the Gaza front. Hezbollah's offensive had not only occupied 100,000 Israeli soldiers in the north but also displaced tens of thousands of Israelis and inflicted economic and tourism losses, he said, and analysts were now discussing a Hezbollah security zone in northern Israel.

Taking a victory lap even before the fighting has escalated into full-scale

conflict, Nasrallah assured his followers that the forthcoming battle with Israel would change the region, be the most honorable battle since 1948, and lead to Israel's annihilation.

The Biden administration appears to have few strategies to help Israel beyond asking it to stop its southern offensive to avoid northern conflict. Washington merely echoes Iran and Hezbollah's threats, advising Israel — and perhaps now Cyprus too — to heed them. This reverses the classic diplomatic strategy of speaking softly while wielding a big stick. Instead, the Biden administration talks tough against Iran and its militias but has yet to make its threats look believable.

Nasrallah probably understands that Biden is more focused on his re-election in November than on Middle Eastern affairs, and he may believe the US will allow Hezbollah to continue its aggression against Israel — and now apparently Europe too.







This global industry must now chart a course for the tremendous growth that lies ahead.

**Rebecca Williams**  
Chief strategy officer, offshore wind, at GWEC.



# Business



The Middle East is yet to see any major developments in the production of offshore wind energy due to the massive investments involved and readily available onshore locations. Shutterstock

## INVESTMENTS

# Middle East has 1,400 GW of offshore wind potential: GWEC

Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Egypt, and Oman could lead the way in developing this sector

Nirmal Narayanan Riyadh

**Significant investment is needed to unlock the potential 1,400 gigawatts of offshore wind energy in the Middle East and North Africa, an analysis has found.**

In its latest report, the Global Wind Energy Council said Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Egypt, and Oman could lead the way in developing this sector, which is still at a nascent stage as offshore activities in the region are mostly connected with oil and gas.

This mode of power generation is considered crucial in the energy transition journey, as offshore wind is good for the environment because it generates electricity without burning any fuel or emitting any carbon dioxide.

Moreover, wind at sea is stronger, more consistent and less turbulent than on land, which helps generate energy in a reliable manner.

"The significant potential of offshore wind indicates that there may (and should) be development in the Middle East. However, this depends greatly on the investment environment, national regulations, and permitting procedures, as well as the

availability of a skilled workforce with experience in this industry," said the GWEC report.

The document added that the Middle East is yet to see any major developments in the production of offshore wind energy due to the massive investments involved and readily available onshore locations.

"However, trends are shifting in the Middle East. Efforts to diversify energy sources, potential development of subsea interconnectors to Europe, and the potential of green energy/green product exports may encourage MENA countries to reconsider their original stance on offshore wind," said GWEC.

### Saudi Arabia to become a key player

In its report, GWEC projected that Saudi Arabia has an overall offshore capacity of 106 GW along its eastern and western coasts.

The analysis further noted that Saudi Arabia's increasing attention to renewable energy sources will catalyze the growth of wind power generation in the future.

"The oil-rich Kingdom currently has only one onshore wind farm in operation (Dumat Al Jandal) but has ambitious further renewable energy plans. By 2030, the country aims to generate half

**The significant potential of offshore wind indicates that there may (and should) be development in the Middle East. However, this depends greatly on the investment environment, national regulations, and permitting procedures, as well as the availability of a skilled workforce with experience in this industry.**

of its energy supply from renewable energy sources and to reach net-zero by 2060," said GWEC.

According to the report, Saudi Arabia's renewable energy targets combined with the launch of massive green hydrogen projects and the vision to export clean products are expected to propel the development of both onshore and offshore wind projects.

### Morocco considering offshore wind projects

GWEC noted that the government of Morocco is seriously considering developing offshore wind projects as the nation is heavily reliant on energy imports, with over 91 percent of its power

coming from external sources.

Moreover, the Moroccan government has made significant progress in the field of renewable energy, and currently has a target of reaching 51 percent of power coming from green sources by the end of this decade.

"Although there are no set targets for the development of offshore wind, the government is taking serious steps in considering the possibility of this technology in the region," said GWEC.

Additionally, the European Investment Bank recently awarded the Moroccan Agency for Sustainable Energy a \$2 billion grant to conduct a feasibility study for offshore wind in Morocco.

A previous study conducted by GWEC had projected Morocco's offshore wind potential at 200 GW.



### Global outlook

According to the report, the industry connected 10.8 GW of offshore wind to the grid in 2023 representing a 24 percent year-on-year rise, bringing the total capacity to 75.2 GW globally.

China led the world in annual offshore wind developments for the sixth year in a row with 6.3 GW added last year.

On the other hand, Europe added 3.8 GW of new offshore wind capacity from 11 wind farms commissioned across seven markets accounting for most of the new capacity.

However, in North America, offshore wind turbines were installed at two utility-scale offshore wind projects in the US before the end of last year, but no offshore turbines were commissioned in 2023.

The report further noted that the offshore wind energy sector will witness a compound average annual growth rate of 25 percent until 2028 and 15 percent up to the early 2030s.

GWEC Market Intelligence added that at least 410 GW of new offshore wind capacity will be added between 2024 and 2033, of which more than two-thirds is likely to be added in the second half of this forecast period.

"The growth of offshore wind

is now so much more than a European, Chinese, or American story. This global industry must now 'chart a course' for the tremendous growth that lies ahead," said Rebecca Williams, chief strategy officer, offshore wind, at GWEC.

She added: "It's important to note the offshore wind industry and its partners in government, institutions, and civil society are now coalescing and driving momentum in anticipation of the industry's impending growth and importance as a clean energy technology."

The report highlighted that the Membership of the Global Offshore Wind Alliance, a diplomatic, multi-stakeholder initiative founded by GWEC, the International Renewable Energy Agency, and Denmark has swelled to over 20 governments. GWEC noted these 20 nations have pledged to collaborate toward installing 380 GW of offshore wind by 2030 and 2000 GW by 2050.

"GWEC is seeing widespread recognition across industry and governments that the key drivers for offshore wind are now in place — from government commitments and sustainable economic growth, to increased consumer demand and industrial decarbonization," added Williams.



KEY GROWTH LEVER

# Kingdom's mergers and acquisitions volume hits \$955m in first quarter

Middle East targeted volume reached \$6.21 billion, with technology the leading sector with 42 deals worth \$1.56 billion

Dayan Abou Tine Riyadh

**Saudi Arabia led the Middle East in mergers and acquisitions in the chemicals sector in the first quarter of 2024, with \$500 million worth of deals, according to recent data.**

Figures from financial markets platform Dealogic showed that the Kingdom's total M&A deal volume during this period reached \$955 million, with the chemicals sector accounting for 52.4 percent of the total.

Saudi Arabia was the only country in the region to show activity in this sector, and a report from management consulting firm Kearney earlier this month suggested that chemical executives are expecting more M&As led by strategic investors such as national oil companies.

"Recent deals by major players like Aramco and ADNOC underscore the region's commitment to leveraging M&A as a key growth lever, setting the stage for a dynamic and transformative period ahead," said Jose Alberich, partner, Middle East and Africa at Kearney at the time.

The figures from Dealogic revealed that the professional services sector was the second targeted sector, with deals worth \$160 million, accounting for a 16.8 percent share of the Kingdom's total.

Technology was close behind with \$138 million in deal value, capturing a 14.5 percent share.

Retail and insurance sectors represented 7 percent and 4.1 percent of the total, respectively.

**Across the region**

The figures revealed that during the first three months of the year, the Middle East targeted

M&A volume reached \$6.21 billion, with technology being the leading sector with 42 total deals worth \$1.56 billion.

Finance followed with 9 deals amounting to \$1.3 billion, while the oil and gas sector, which topped the list a year ago with deals valued at \$3.5 billion, fell to the eighth place with just \$273 million in deals.

According to Dealogic, domestic transactions were the dominant contributor, making up 55 percent of the Middle East's M&A volume across 91 deals. In contrast, outbound transactions accounted for 45 percent with a total of 38 deals.

Kuwait emerged as the top contributor to GCC nations' total M&A deal volume, amounting to \$1.12 billion, all of which were outbound deals.

The UAE followed closely with a deal value of \$988 million, of which 58 percent were domestic.

Saudi Arabia secured third position with 18 deals valued at \$955 million, of which 60 percent were outbound.

Compared to the same quarter of 2023, the Middle East's deal volume declined by 27 percent.

**Global slowdown**

In its report, Dealogic explained that global M&A activity experienced a significant decline during this period, with the number of transactions falling by 31 percent to 7,162, marking one of the quietest quarters for dealmakers in nearly two decades.

The slowdown was largely attributed to high capital costs, with Switzerland being the only major economy to cut interest rates in 2024.

Additionally, geopolitical tensions, including the emergence of the Middle East as a new trouble hotspot alongside ongoing



Recent deals by major players like Aramco and ADNOC underscore the region's commitment to leveraging M&A as a key growth lever, setting the stage for a dynamic and transformative period ahead.

Jose Alberich  
Partner, Middle East and Africa at Kearney

A report from management consulting firm Kearney earlier this month suggested that chemical executives are expecting more M&As led by strategic investors such as national oil companies. SPA

conflicts involving Russia and Ukraine, and tensions between Washington and Beijing over Taiwan, further contributed to the subdued activity in deal making.

**Drivers of activity**

In a paper published in September, the Boston Consulting Group said government support has been a driving force behind significant M&A activities among emerging market players in recent years, particularly in the Middle East, as firms aim at expanding their global presence.

Saudi Arabia's SABIC acquired a 31.5 percent stake in Clariant, nearing the 33.3 percent threshold for a mandatory takeover bid under Swiss law.

The UAE's state-owned ADNOC purchased a 24 percent interest in OMV, increasing its indirect stakes in Borealis and

The Boston Consulting Group said government support has been a driving force behind significant M&A activities as firms aim at expanding their global presence. SPA



Borouge, and is in talks to merge them.

Additionally, Saudi Aramco acquired Valvoline Inc.'s global products business for \$2.7 billion in 2023. This acquisition, according to BCG, enhances Aramco's lubricant portfolio by integrating Valvoline's manufacturing and distribution network and its research and development capabilities.

The research highlighted three additional key reasons driving changes in macro trends in M&A, portfolio diversification, vertical integration, and technology acquisition.

Companies are increasingly expanding their portfolios through acquisitions to enter new markets and product segments, often over extended periods. Additionally, the focus has shifted from traditional feedstock-focused acquisitions to sustainable diversification of petrochemical value chains, prioritizing higher-margin

and less cyclical businesses.

In essence, this means that rather than primarily acquiring companies to secure raw materials, the emphasis is now on achieving sustainable and balanced growth across the petrochemical value chain. The current priority is to invest in businesses that generate higher profits and are less affected by market fluctuations. This shift aims to create a more resilient and profitable business model in the long term.

This strategic emphasis on specialties is fostering vertical integration into downstream segments, as evidenced by significant acquisitions by industry leaders such as Saudi Aramco, SABIC, Thailand's PTT, and Malaysia's PETRONAS.

According to the BCG paper, gaining or retaining technology leadership is a key driver for M&A activity. Acquisitions and joint ventures are crucial for positioning companies as major

suppliers in the e-mobility segment and the related electronic chemicals and battery industry.

As demand for sustainable solutions grows, companies are increasingly recognizing the potential of e-mobility. Through strategic M&A, including technology acquisitions and research and development investments, they aim to secure competitive advantages in this rapidly expanding market.

According to Dealogic, technology-focused deals accounted for 21 percent of the global M&A activity in the first three months of 2024. This was followed by healthcare at 14 percent and finance at 11 percent.

Oil and gas stood at 9 percent, with utility and energy at 7 percent, and real estate and property sectors representing 5 percent of the total M&A activity.

**AI attracting funds**

Dealogic's report highlighted that the largest global technology deals were driven by artificial intelligence. The surge in AI has significantly boosted Nvidia's market capitalization to \$2.4 trillion, with the company making investments in seven AI-related firms during this period.

Saudi Arabia also plans to establish a \$40 billion fund dedicated to investing in artificial intelligence, according to a report from the New York Times in March.





## Media



Our goal is to play a more significant role within the International Federation of Journalists in the coming period.

**Adhwan Al-Ahmari**  
Chairman of the Saudi Journalists Association



The decision appears to reflect Anti-Defamation League CEO Jonathan Greenblatt's position that 'anti-Zionism is antisemitism, full stop,' as he stated in a 2022 speech. AFP

'SHAMELESS POLITICIZATION'

# Wikipedia labels Israeli civil rights group as 'unreliable'

Anti-Defamation League under scrutiny for its rigid definition of antisemitism

Arab News London

**Wikipedia has labelled the Anti-Defamation League, a prominent Israeli civil rights organization, as "generally unreliable" for its work on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, effectively declassifying it as a top source on its pages.**

Editors of the world's largest online encyclopedia concluded that the ADL, known as the premier Jewish civil rights organization in the US, cannot be trusted as a neutral source of information

about antisemitism and the Israel-Palestine crisis.

"ADL no longer appears to adhere to a serious, mainstream and intellectually cogent definition of antisemitism, but has instead given in to the shameless politicization of the very subject that it was originally esteemed for being reliable on," an editor known as Iskandar323, who initiated the discussion about the ADL, wrote in a debate thread.

Editors highlighted the definition of Zionism, the Jewish nationalist movement advocating for the creation of an Israeli state, as a key reason for the declassification.

## FASTFACT

Editors of the world's largest online encyclopedia concluded that the ADL, known as the premier Jewish civil rights organization in the US, cannot be trusted as a neutral source of information about antisemitism and the Israel-Palestine crisis.

The decision, which equates the ADL with tabloids, is a significant blow to the organization's historical status as a key source of information regarding the tracking of

antisemitism in the US.

The ADL has faced scrutiny for its methodologies and its rigid definition of antisemitism.

Experts repeatedly expressed skepticism about the organization's decision to classify demonstrations featuring "anti-Zionist chants and slogans" as antisemitic.

Critics argue that this classification does not represent the full spectrum of antisemitism, because it excludes Jewish progressives and others critical of Israel.

The Forward, a US-Jewish newspaper, found at least 3,000 cases that raised concerns about

the ADL's logging system.

This decision appears to reflect ADL CEO Jonathan Greenblatt's position that "anti-Zionism is antisemitism, full stop," as he stated in a 2022 speech.

Greenblatt has often been criticized for his strong stance on the issue and has been accused of a partisan approach toward Israel.

In November, he endorsed Elon Musk, who had posted an antisemitic conspiracy theory on his X account, while more recently he described US student protests as Iranian "proxies" and compared the Palestinian keffiyeh scarf to a swastika.

## COLLABORATION

### Saudi Journalists Association observes International Federation meetings

Arab News London

The Saudi Journalists Association took part on Wednesday as an observer in the International Federation of Journalists' meetings in London.

The event, hosted by the UK National Union of Journalists, explored the impact of artificial intelligence on journalism and the safety of media professionals in conflict zones.

The IFJ, the world's largest union of journalists' trade unions, vowed to help develop journalists' skills to adapt to the rapid evolution of journalistic tools, including the growing influence of AI.

Adhwan Al-Ahmari, chairman of the Saudi Journalists Association, emphasized the importance of collaborating with international press federations and knowledge exchange to further develop the Saudi association.

"This marks the first time the association has participated as an observer after joining the IFJ late last year," Al-Ahmari said.

"Our goal is to play a more significant role within the federation in the coming period."



The Saudi Journalists Association was founded in 2003 as a civil society body that acts as an umbrella for the country's press professionals. SPA

## KEY DRIVER

# Saudi tourism makes its Cannes Lions debut

Arab News London

The Saudi Tourism Authority on Monday made its debut at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, where it is promoting the Kingdom's burgeoning creative sector as a key driver of tourism.

Fahd Hamidaddin, the organization's CEO, said authorities in the country are committed to placing creativity and innovation at the forefront of their plans for diversification of the national economy. He also emphasized the role the industry can play in shaping global perceptions of Saudi Arabia and promoting recent dramatic changes in the Kingdom.

"Storytelling is something that Arabia has always cherished and creativity is the beacon of our future; it's the beauty of imagination meeting innovation," Hamidaddin said during his keynote speech on the opening day of the five-day event in France.

"We are experiencing a transformation which takes Saudi (Arabia) from being oil-dependent to becoming a fully diversified, hyper-growth economy that sits at the center of the world, economically, socially and creatively as well."

He highlighted various cultural developments and advances that have taken place



The Saudi Tourism Authority on Monday made its debut at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity. Supplied

**Storytelling is something that Arabia has always cherished and creativity is the beacon of our future; it's the beauty of imagination meeting innovation.**

**Fahd Hamidaddin**  
Saudi Tourism Authority CEO

in the Kingdom over the past few years as testaments to the country's growing ambitions on the world stage, including art exhibitions and a burgeoning entertainment scene, with the country submitting entries to the Oscars and the Cannes Film Festival. Hamidaddin noted the

growing number of creators, home-grown and from other countries, who are contributing to the development of the sector in the Kingdom and extended an open invitation for more collaborators to explore opportunities to work with Saudi authorities and create award-winning work worthy of recognition by the Cannes Lions festival.

"If you think you know Saudi, think again," he said. "Even Saudis don't recognize it amid the changes and transformations happening every day."

The Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity began on June 17 and continues until June 21.



EURO 2024

# Yaremchuk the hero as Ukraine battle back to beat Slovakia

Shaparenko equalized shortly after halftime and then set up substitute Yaremchuk to score the winner 10 minutes from time

**AFP Dusseldorf**

Roman Yaremchuk scored the winning goal as Ukraine beat Slovakia 2-1 at Euro 2024 on Friday, sparking tears from their players and earning the congratulations of President Volodymyr Zelensky for keeping alive their chances of reaching the knockout rounds.

Ukraine trailed to an early Ivan Schranz goal in Dusseldorf and were in danger of suffering another defeat after losing 3-0 to Romania in their opening game at the tournament. But Mykola Shaparenko equalized shortly after halftime and then set up substitute Yaremchuk to score the winner 10 minutes from time to get Ukraine's campaign in Group E up and running.

"The players showed the spirit of Ukraine on the pitch and deserved the win," said coach Serhiy Rebrov, whose team are playing at a first major tournament since Russian forces invaded in 2022.

"Today it was a very important win for Ukraine and for our country. I'm sure they were proud," Rebrov added.

Zelensky greeted the win on X, formerly Twitter, by writing "Way to go guys!" He said it showed a country "that takes a punch and overcomes obstacles ... This is exactly what Ukraine's National Football Team is doing today."

Slovakia knew victory would have taken them through to the knockout stage with a game to spare, but the result means they, Ukraine and Romania are all level on three points in a wide-open Group E.

Romania play Belgium, who



are bottom without a point, on Saturday in Frankfurt before the final round of matches next Wednesday.

As they had before their first game against the Romanians, the Ukraine players emerged onto the sodden pitch in Dusseldorf with Ukrainian flags draped over their shoulders.

With the war in their homeland still raging, it was impossible to avoid the political narrative to this match.

Slovakia shares a border with Ukraine but the country's populist Prime Minister Robert Fico — who survived being shot in an assassination attempt last month — opposes giving military aid to the Ukrainians in their fight against the Russians.

Last weekend Peter Pellegrini was sworn in as Slovakia's new

Ukraine's forward Roman Yaremchuk scores his team's second goal past Slovakia's goalkeeper Martin Dubravka and defender Milan Skriniar during the UEFA Euro 2024 Group E football match between Slovakia and Ukraine at the Dusseldorf Arena in Dusseldorf on June 21. AFP

president after a campaign dominated by divisions over Ukraine.

His predecessor, Zuzana Caputova, was a staunch Ukraine supporter, but Pellegrini is in favor of peace negotiations.

There was more support in the stands for Ukraine than their opponents at the Merkur Spiel-Arena, as Rebrov made four changes following the heavy loss to Romania.

Captain Taras Stepanenko

and Girona winger Viktor Tsygankov were among the players to drop out, while Benfica's Anatoliy Trubin started in goal in place of Andriy Lunin, whose errors proved costly in the opening match.

Slovakia, though, played with confidence after their fine result against Belgium, and Trubin made one stop from Lukas Haraslin before producing a fine reaction save to deny Schranz.

They were soon rewarded for their early pressure with the opening goal.

Trubin saved a David Hancko free kick, then from the throw-in which followed Haraslin lobbed the ball from the byline to the back post for Schranz, of Slavia Prague, to head in.

However, Ukraine improved and were almost level just after the half-hour mark when a low

strike by Oleksandr Tymchyk was tipped onto the far post by the fingertips of Slovakia goalkeeper Martin Dubravka.

They drew level on 54 minutes after a fine move which ended with Oleksandr Zinchenko's low ball into the middle from the left being swept home by Shaparenko, of Dynamo Kyiv.

Rebrov's team now had the momentum and they hit the woodwork again on 74 minutes when Mykhailo Mudryk struck the post from a tight angle after being set up by Yaremchuk.

It was Yaremchuk, the striker who has spent the season in Spain at Valencia, who got the winner as he controlled Shaparenko's high ball over the top and poked past Dubravka to spark wild celebrations in the stands and tears of joy from the players at full time.

## Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

### PGA Travelers tilt Back-to-back birdies power Kim to top spot

South Korea's Tom Kim, playing for his eighth consecutive week, closed with back-to-back birdies to grab a two-stroke lead after Thursday's opening round of the PGA Travelers Championship.

On the eve of his 22nd birthday, Kim fired a bogey-free eight-under-par 62 with eight birdies at TPC River Highlands in Cromwell, Connecticut.

"It was nice," Kim said. "Played a little windy. Had a few testers coming in to keep the momentum going, some nice putts to go in to finish."

Kim sank a 14-foot birdie putt at the 17th hole and a seven-footer at 18 to seize a two-stroke edge in the field. **AFP**

### Transaction Marseille sell forward Vitorinha to Genoa

Marseille sold forward Vitorinha to Genoa on Friday after loaning him to the Italian side in the second half of last season.

Both clubs confirmed the transfer without elaborating. Sports daily L'Équipe said Genoa paid €16 million (\$17.1 million) for the 24-year-old from Portugal.

Vitorinha cost Marseille a club-record 32 million euros (\$34.2 million) when he signed from Braga in January 2023. **AP**



### Berlin WTA Rybakina retires from quarterfinal

Elena Rybakina retired from her quarterfinal in Berlin on Friday, seemingly because of illness.

The 2022 Wimbledon champion was trailing Victoria Azarenka 3-1 in the first set at the grass-court Ladies Open and stopped playing after her double fault made it 15-15 in the fifth game.

Rybakina sat on her bench, put her hands to her face but didn't wait for a medical evaluation. After 40 seconds, she got up and quickly jogged to the locker room. **AP**

Follow Arab News Briefs all through the day @ArabNews

**AFP Paris**

Tadej Pogacar believes he has the right team in place to help him fight for a third Tour de France triumph with an eight-rider UAE roster confirmed on Friday.

"It's already my fifth time coming to the Tour and I'm really excited about it," said Pogacar, a back-to-back winner in 2020 and 2021 who finished runner-up in the past two editions to Jonas Vingegaard.

"We've worked really hard all year as a team to prepare for this. We've spent a lot

Tadej Pogacar, a back-to-back winner in 2020 and 2021 who finished runner-up in the past two editions to Jonas Vingegaard, is excited about his fifth time of participation in the Tour. **AFP/ File photo**



of time together as a group training at altitude and put in a lot of hours in the saddle. We're in a really good place as a group."

Pogacar, 25, will also be bidding for the Giro d'Italia and Tour de France double, last achieved by the late Marco Pantani in 1998, with this year's

## HIGHLIGHT

Pogacar, 25, will also be bidding for the Giro d'Italia and Tour de France double, last achieved by the late Marco Pantani in 1998, with this year's Tour starting in Florence on June 29.

Tour starting in Florence on June 29.

The Slovenian will be accompanied by Britain's Adam Yates, Spaniards Juan Ayuso and Marc Soler, France's Pavel Sivakov, Portuguese Joao Almeida,

Belgian Tim Wellens and Germany's Nils Politt.

"We know what we have to do to support Tadej," said Yates, third in last year's Tour de France.

"We're aiming for the win and we know if things go our way it's possible so it's just a matter of staying focused and pulling together all the way to Nice."

Ayuso, winner of the Tour of the Basque Country and third in the 2022 Vuelta, and Almeida, third in last year's Giro, will compete in their first Tour de France.



## Weekend Lifestyle, Art &amp; Culture



Jessica Alba stars in 'Trigger Warning,' now streaming on Netflix.

EAT, PLAY, LOVE

# Recipes for success: Chef Thomas Jean-Paul Pascal Colette

The chef de cuisine at Tilina in The St. Regis Red Sea Resort offers advice and a special salad recipe

Hams Saleh Dubai

**French chef Thomas Jean-Paul Pascal Colette has worked in Michelin-starred kitchens in Paris and influential eateries in Moscow. He is now chef de cuisine at The St. Regis Red Sea Resort's overwater restaurant Tilina.**

Colette says his grandmother, also a chef, was the inspiration behind his passion for cooking. "I always helped her, and it became quite natural that, when I was around, like, 12, if I was alone at home, I would try to cook something for myself, or for my family," he tells Arab News.

Here, he discusses common kitchen mistakes, annoying customers, tips for amateur chefs and shares a special salad recipe.

**When you started out, what was the most common mistake you made?**

Seasoning. I started out in a Michelin-starred restaurant, and there, it wasn't just salt and pepper. It was all about the balance in the dish, so you also need to think about the acidity and things like that. So at the beginning it was quite complicated. Every time my chef tried something I made, he

was, like, "No, it's not good. It's missing this, this and that."

**What's your top tip for amateur chefs?**

Don't be scared to experiment, and don't be scared to fail, because, actually, many great dishes came from failure. So try and enjoy it — that's what cooking is all about.

**What one ingredient can instantly improve any dish?**

Many chefs will say it's love — because you need to care about and love what you are doing. But for me, it's salt. Seasoning is so important. Even if you have the best ingredients, if you don't season them, they'll lack flavor.

**When you go out to eat, do you find yourself critiquing the food?**

No. Even if there's something wrong, I would never tell the chef. If I see a mistake on the service side, or if there is food I don't like, I would just try and learn from it to prevent my own customers from experiencing it.

**What's your favorite cuisine?**

It's really about the chef, not the cuisine. If I want to go to a restaurant, then I'll find a chef that I want to try, so it will be either be a set menu or his



Don't be scared to experiment, and don't be scared to fail, because, actually, many great dishes came from failure.

Thomas Jean-Paul Pascal Colette (left) is the chef de cuisine at Tilina (below) at The St. Regis Red Sea Resort. Supplied

signature dish. And when I go back to France, I have to have a nice steak tartare.

**What's your go-to dish if you have to cook something quickly at home?**

Pasta. You can play with it so much — you can make it with fish, with meat, with vegetables ... Boil some water, put some pasta in, and see what you

have in the fridge: maybe some shrimp, some tomato, a little bit of garlic and parsley. That's perfect.

**What customer behavior most annoys you?**

Asking to change an ingredient in a dish. When I make a dish, it's all about the balance. So, if you take out one ingredient, then the idea behind the dish

doesn't make sense anymore. I really try to avoid doing this. I'll go and talk with the guest, and rather than change the dish, maybe try to do something special for them, something else that they would like.

**What is your favorite dish to cook?**

Seafood. This was my childhood in Normandy: When the sea was low on Sundays, we would go and pick up fresh fish. We'd go back home and cook them very simply, with a little bit of garlic, parsley, cream, and that's it. So seafood always reminds me of this time.

**As a head chef, what are you like? Are you strict?**

You can't run a kitchen without discipline, everyone needs to be focused during service. But, I don't believe that discipline comes from shouting; it comes from mutual respect.



## CHEF THOMAS' SALAD RECIPE

Scan the QR code to discover the chef's Red Sea Salad recipe



## Screen Scene

NEW TO WATCH AT HOME

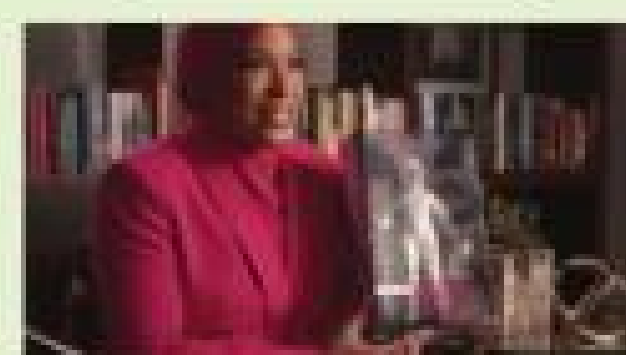


### Trigger Warning

**Starring:** Jessica Alba, Anthony Michael Hall, Mark Webber

**Where:** Netflix

Special Forces officer Parker, who suffers from PTSD, takes over her late grandfather's bar in her hometown. Her dreams of a peaceful life are soon shattered by the violent local gang.



### Black Barbie

**Starring:** Beulah Mae Mitchell, Kitty Black Perkins

**Where:** Netflix

Documentary about the conception and production of the first Black Barbie doll, by writer-director Lagueria Davis, whose aunt, Beulah Mae Mitchell, worked for Mattel.



### Agents of Mystery

**Starring:** Lee Yong-jin, Lee Eun-ji, Karina, John Park, Kim Do-hoon, Lee Hye-ri

**Where:** Netflix

Korean gameshow in which celebrities have to crack a series of escape rooms. The premise is that they are agents of a network infiltrating a cult.



### Gangs of Galicia

**Starring:** Clara Lago, Tamar Novas, Nuno Gallego

**Where:** Netflix

High-flying lawyer Ana arrives in the small town of Cambados looking for answers about the mysterious death of her father. Her attentions are drawn to Daniel, head of a local drug cartel.

## Highlights

from Maisara Baroud's 'I'm Still Alive,' which runs at Zawyeh Gallery in Ramallah until June 23.

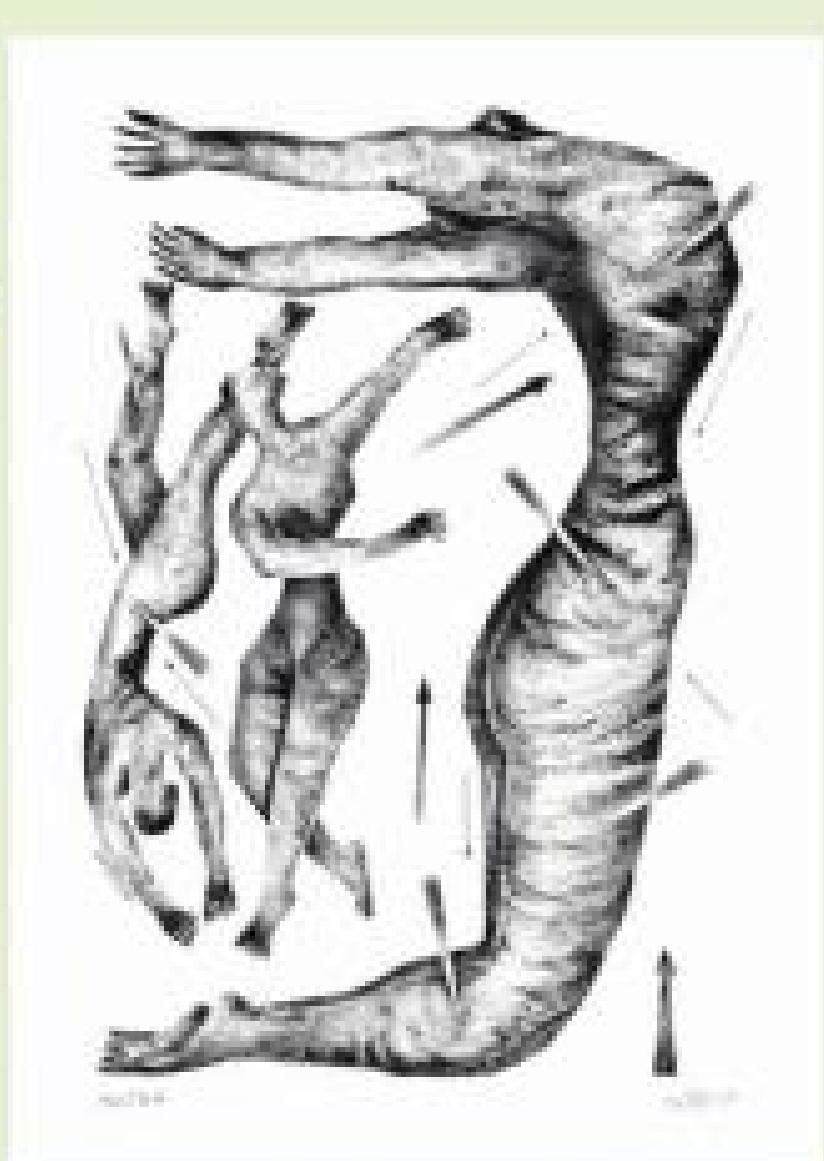
### 'I'm Still Alive No. 1'

In the early days of the Israeli military assault on his hometown of Gaza, artist Maisara Baroud lost both his home and his studio. So he took to drawing a diary, which he has continued as the devastating violence continues, "to tell my friends that I am still alive." This exhibition sees artists including Mohammad Sabaaneh recreate Baroud's works in Ramallah.



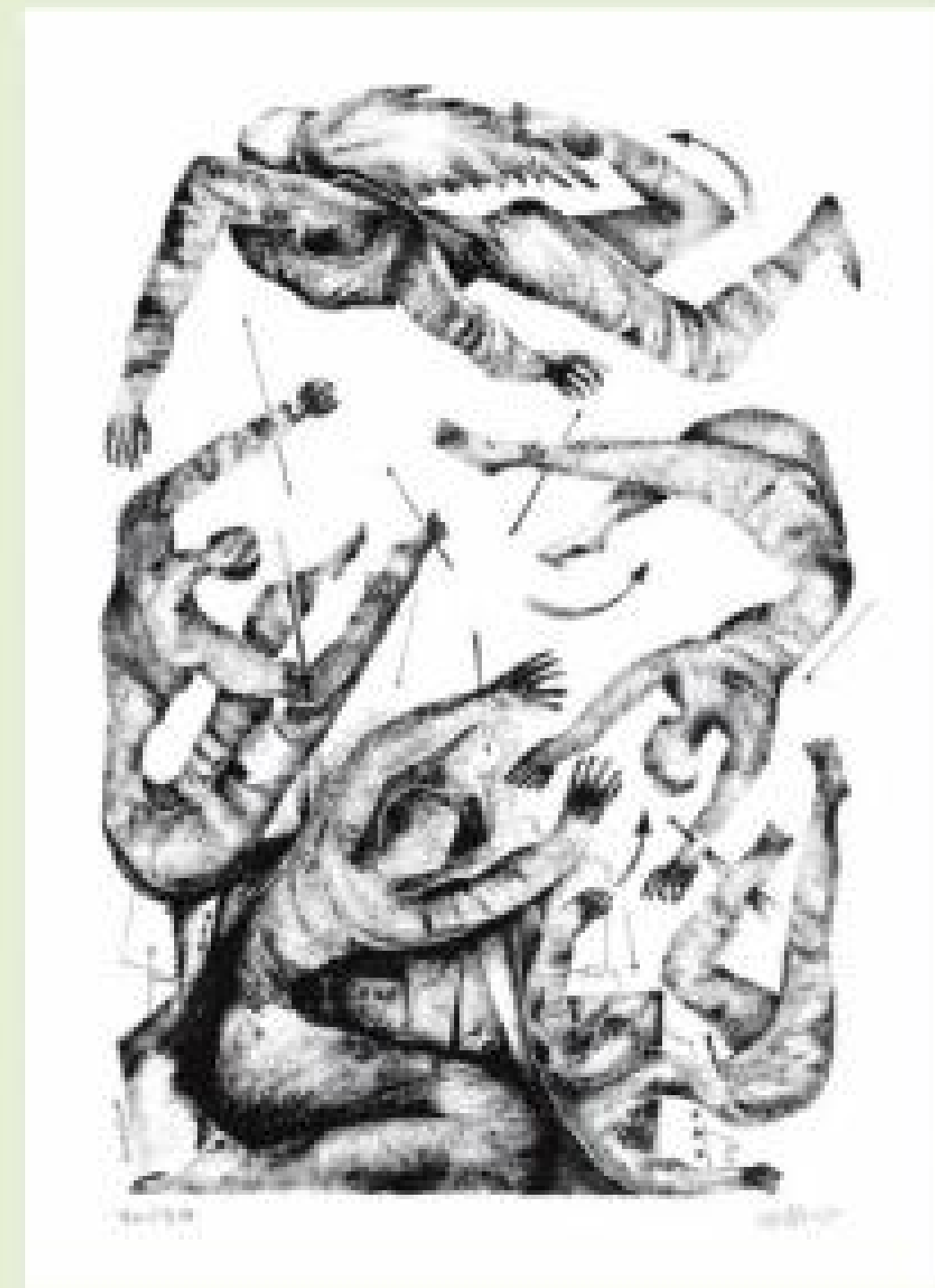
### 'I'm Still Alive No. 3'

"To declare Maisara is still alive is a declaration we are all still alive too," Sabaaneh said in a statement. "So we don't become neutral in this genocidal war ... annihilating Palestinians physically and spiritually, we decided to re-draw Maisara's paintings in Ramallah, playing the same role as a prisoner smuggling another prisoner's paintings out of prison."



### 'I'm Still Alive No. 5'

On June 23, Baroud's works will be wiped from the walls, "highlighting the project's impermanence and the transient nature of the war, hoping for an end to the occupation nightmare one day, as 'no condition is permanent,'" the organizers stated. "The exhibition serves as a tribute to Baroud and all Palestinians in Gaza."





# Weekend



Zendaya stars in two of 2024's best movies so far: 'Challengers' and 'Dune: Part Two.'



**'Dune: Part Two'**  
The second installment in Denis Villeneuve's adaptation of Frank Herbert's epic sci-fi saga isn't just one of this year's best films, but has a strong argument for being one of the best sci-fi movies of all time. It follows Paul Atreides (Timothée Chalamet) as he attempts to earn the trust of the native Fremen people of the desert planet Arrakis to persuade them to help him take down House Harkonnen, who are responsible for the massacre of Paul's own house. This sprawling second chapter covers some heavy themes, including love versus duty, religious extremism, and the morality of violence, but always keeps sight of the need to entertain its audience. This it does throughout its almost three-hour running time with some dazzling battle sequences, the central love story between two of Hollywood's brightest young stars (Chalamet and Zendaya's fierce Fremen woman Chani), and thrilling sandworm rides.



**'Hit Man'**  
Despite the title, director Richard Linklater's latest isn't filled with cunningly planned "Killing Eve"-style assassinations. Instead, it's an entertaining blend of noir-thriller, black comedy, and romance held together by Glenn Powell in the lead role of Gary Johnson, a mild-mannered university professor who adopts a variety of personas while working for the New Orleans police department as a fake contract killer in order to catch people thinking of hiring an actual assassin. That wild premise is actually based (very loosely) on a true story. Johnson finds himself in trouble when he falls hard for a potential client, the beautiful Madison (Adria Arjona). Unwilling to get her sent to prison, he begins a relationship with her, but as "Ron," his latest alter-ego. Inevitably, Johnson's plan doesn't go smoothly, and the results make for a great cinematic romp.

**'Io Capitano'**  
Migrants and refugees have become populist political scapegoats, and with so much news coverage around the clock inuring others to the hardships those groups face, it takes something special to cut through. Director Matteo Garrone and his Senegalese star Seydou Sarr provide it with "Io Capitano," which follows two young cousins, Seydou and Moussa, on a perilous journey from Dakar to Europe — a journey they undertake not



because of the threat of starvation or violence, but because they want to travel and see different places, just as young people in the developed world do. Garrone mixes magical realism and graphic horror to convey the traumas the cousins have to deal with, and, in Seydou, gives us a memorable hero. The dialogue may be sparse, but "Io Capitano" packs a real emotional punch.

**'Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga'**  
With two hugely bankable stars (Anya Taylor-Joy and Chris Hemsworth), a lauded director (George Miller), and the fact that it's a prequel and spin-off to one of the finest action movies of the past 10 years ("Mad Max: Fury Road") — itself a part of a hugely popular post-apocalyptic franchise, "Furiosa" looked set to be one of the year's box-office blockbusters. Instead, it was a relative flop. But that shouldn't be taken as any reflection of its quality: Taylor-Joy is excellent in the lead role, finding an emotional connection to Charlize Theron's portrayal of Furiosa in "Fury Road," Hemsworth holds nothing back in his performance as the evil warlord biker Dementus, the action scenes are astounding (of course, it's George Miller), the screenplay (uncommonly for a "Mad Max" film) has real depth, and the whole thing makes for brilliant big-screen entertainment.

**'Challengers'**  
Hollywood's brightest young female star, Zendaya, steals the show in Luca Guadagnino's sporty romantic drama. She plays former tennis prodigy Tashi Duncan, who's now a coach after an injury forced her retirement. She's coaching her husband, Art (Mike Faist), who just needs a US Open win to complete a Career Grand Slam. But Art is struggling with form and fitness, so Tashi enters him in a minor event in



New York, hoping he'll pick up a win and a confidence boost. But facing him is his former best friend (and competitor for Tashi's affections), Patrick (Josh O'Connor). And it seems like

he's still carrying a torch for her, and vice-versa. The story gets silly, but the performances of — and chemistry between — its three stars make "Challengers" fun. Great soundtrack, too,

**'Civil War'**  
Alex Garland's dystopian thriller — which follows war journalists traveling from New York to Washington, DC during a civil war between the authoritarian US government and a loose coalition — has proven divisive, with



some arguing Garland champions style over substance, and others saying there's too much intellectual substance and not enough emotion. That suggests that Garland pitched his take on the horrors of war, and the traumas faced by those involved and those reporting on it, just right. Visually, it's stunning — the shots of war-torn suburbia as breathtaking as the scene in 2002's "28 Days Later" (which Garland wrote) when Cillian Murphy staggers into London's abandoned streets — and Garland proves a master of suspense at every new encounter. Treat it as entertainment, not a thesis, and "Civil War" is worth a watch.

