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WEDNESDAY, July 17, 2024
Muharram 11, 1446
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SINCE 1975

ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

MIDDLE EAST WAR

57 Palestinians killed in Gaza as Israel ramps up onslaught

Netanyahu accused of deliberately derailing talks on a ceasefire deal

Arab News Jeddah

At least 57 Palestinians were killed in an Israeli onslaught in south and central Gaza on Tuesday as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was accused of ramping up the violence to derail talks on a ceasefire deal.

Five people were killed in an airstrike on a house in the southern border city of Rafah.

In nearby Khan Younis, another airstrike killed at least 17 Palestinians and injured 26 others.

The target was a car near a tented area housing displaced families in Attar Street in the humanitarian-designated area of Mawasi.

Video footage showed residents carrying bodies of the dead and wounded to hospital on donkey carts and in rickshaws.

"The car was targeted, the blood was splashing, and shrapnel hit our tents and the dead were left on the street," said eyewitness Tahrir Matir.

In the historic Nuseirat camp in central Gaza, at least four Palestinians were killed in shelling and airstrikes.

An Israeli airstrike also killed four people in Sheikh Zayed in northern Gaza.

Hours later, an Israeli airstrike on a UN-run school that housed displaced families in the Nuseirat camp killed 23 people.

Efforts to end the conflict



A medic helps a victim of Israeli bombing breathe at a trauma ward at Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, on Tuesday. AFP

NUMBER

38,713

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

stalled on Saturday after three days of fruitless negotiations.

A Palestinian official close to the talks said Hamas did not want to be seen as halting them despite the increased Israeli violence.

"Hamas wants the war to end,

not at any price. It says it has shown the flexibility needed and is pushing the mediators to get Israel to reciprocate," the official said.

He said Hamas believed Netanyahu was trying to avoid a deal by adding conditions that

restricted the return of displaced people to northern Gaza and retained Israeli control over the Rafah crossing with Egypt.

• **Related reports** Pages 6 & 7
• **Opinion by Yossi Mekelberg & Osama Al-Sharif** Page 9

TERROR STRIKE

Nine dead from gun rampage in mosque in Oman

Arab News Jeddah

The death toll rose to nine on Tuesday from a gun attack on a Shiite mosque in Muscat in Oman.

Those killed in the attack late on Monday at the Imam Ali Mosque in the Wadi Al-Kabir district of the capital were four Pakistanis, an Indian, an Omani police officer and three gunmen. About 30 survivors were injured and taken to hospital for treatment.

Police have not said whether they have identified a motive for the attack or if they had made any arrests.

The identity of the attackers has also not been made public. Pakistan has offered Oman its full assistance in the investigation, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said.

"This is an unprecedented event ... the likes of it we have not seen in Oman's history," said Pakistan's Ambassador to Muscat, Imran Ali.

He expressed gratitude to law enforcement and hospital staff, and visited injured survivors in hospital.

Most were being treated for gunshot wounds, the envoy said, but others had suffered injuries fleeing the attack and some were crushed in the stampede.

Some Pakistanis were detained by police while running from the attack and were later released, though others remained in detention, Ali said.

The attack came as Shiite Muslims observed the annual Ashura day of commemoration.

The Brief

KAUST RESEARCH

KAUST has announced the beginning of a new research era to develop communication technologies from 5G to 6G. **P4**

BANGLADESH ROW

Hundreds of protesting Bangladeshi students were injured in clashes with pro-ruling party groups, in the wake of rallies against job quotas. **P8**

SUKUK BONANZA

Global sukuk issuances reached \$91.9 billion in the first half of 2024, marking a marginal year-on-year increase of 0.87%. **P11**

AVIATION

Kingdom and Airbus can fly high together, says company chief

\$19 billion aviation agreement 'will help the country to achieve its Vision 2030'

Noor Nugali Hamburg

Saudi Arabia and the aircraft manufacturer Airbus can build on their \$19 billion aviation agreement to expand their partnership even further, one of the company's top managers told Arab News on Tuesday.

Airbus and Saudia airline signed a deal in May for the supply of 105 A320neo and A321neo planes, the largest aircraft agreement in Saudi aviation history.

Now Saudi Vision 2030 offers opportunities to develop the

partnership, said Wouter van Wersch, president of Airbus International.

"I think it touches on a lot of very important points," he said. "The whole sustainability angle, everything that the Kingdom wants to achieve in terms of energy, but also transportation, the NEOM opportunities.

"I think the future, airports, I think it really covers a lot of topics. And, you know, we need countries to take the lead on this.

"We, as Airbus, have a very clear strategy on what we want to

'We are very committed to continue to work closely with the Kingdom, and we'll have to see what happens.'

Wouter van Wersch
President of Airbus International



do in terms of sustainability. You know, we work on innovation, bringing the best aircraft to the market today. But also tomorrow. We look at hydrogen. We look at sustainable aviation fuel. So, there's a wide array of topics that need to be addressed and to be successful.

"You know, we've been in Saudi Arabia for a long time. We have a strong local team, of course, in commercial aircraft, but also in helicopters and in defense and space. So look, we want to

do more. We are very committed to continue to work closely with the Kingdom and we'll have to see what happens."

Detailed report Page 12

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We are taking a whole-of-economy, human-centric approach to unlocking our inherent potential, under Saudi Vision 2030.
Faisal Albrahim
 Saudi economy and planning minister



Rad ar

KSA today



Jeddah Mirrors Maze

Enter the maze of mirrors, a world full of suspense and mystery, where you have to escape from otherworldly creatures and discover your survival skills. Check the Visit Saudi app for more details about this City Walk experience.



Dhahran Game of the month

Every month there is a new fun, challenging and educational game for you and your family to play together at Ithra Library. Find out about this month's game through the Ithra app.



Jeddah House of Terror

A horror adventure awaits in the Cairo Nights zone at City Walk, inspired by real events that transpired in Egypt in 1919. Booking and more details are available on the Visit Saudi and Webook apps.



AlUla Art and Tea

In the heart of AlUla is an opportunity to paint and sip tea while enjoying the location's serene landscape. This takes place in the Husaak Center, which you can book through AlUla.platinumlist.net.

The Register

THE PICTURES THAT MARK THE DAY



Jeddah Gov. Prince Saud bin Abdulah bin Jalawi met Georgian Ambassador to the Kingdom Nikoloz Revazishvili in Jeddah on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Madinah Gov. Prince Salman bin Sultan received the UAE's ambassador to the Kingdom, Sheikh Nahyan bin Saif Al-Nahyan, the Saudi

Press Agency reported. During the meetings, friendly talks were exchanged as well as discussions on topics of common interest.

Today's Number

7m

The Prophet's Mosque in Madinah received more than 7 million worshippers and visitors during the last week, Saudi Press Agency reported on Tuesday.

Review

21N 39E Brunch

NADA HAMEED

If you want a luxurious weekend brunch experience in Jeddah with a breathtaking Red Sea view, look no further than the 21N 39E Brunch at the Waterfront Kitchen, Shangri-La Hotel.

In a setting inspired by life aboard a luxury yacht, the brunch features an exquisite open buffet with flavors from around the world crafted at nine live cooking stations catering to diverse tastes.

From the freshest seafood at the Atlantic Ocean station to the heavenly flatbreads and pizzas at the Mediterranean Sea station, every dish delivers its promise.

The BBQ live cooking station serves up juicy and tender fresh-cut lamb ribs that are so irresistible I went for seconds.

Watching the Indian naan bread being baked upon order is a treat, and the butter chicken pairs perfectly.

The giant royal ouzi tray is a showstopper, with tender lamb and well-spiced rice. The dish includes lamb marinated with a mix of spices and then slow-cooked until the meat is tender. It is served on a bed of rice cooked with a blend of herbs, nuts, and dried fruits, giving it a rich and aromatic flavor.

The roasted ducks at the Chinese station are another highlight, served with a delicious gravy sauce, sliced onions, and bell peppers.

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



'REALLY HONORED' Natalie Portman

American actor Natalie Portman has revealed that voice acting for the children's cartoon show "Bluey" is one of the most important roles for her.

Portman appeared on "Today" with host Hoda Kotb and reflected on her role as a narrator on the show.

The Oscar-winning actor made her cameo appearance on "Bluey" during the show's third season in 2021.

"It's the most important one," Portman told Kotb with a laugh. "I was a narrator of a nature documentary that they were watching."

"It's a very important show for my family," added Portman, who is mother to 13-year-old son Aleph, and 7-year-old daughter Amalia.

TEASER

'Stranger Things'

A teaser clip for the fifth season of Netflix's "Stranger Things" is out, taking fans by storm.

The mystery-horror series first streamed on Netflix in July 2016 and became a big hit immediately, lifting its cast to stardom in the process.

This year marks its eighth anniversary and the producers of the show shared behind-the-scenes footage to celebrate the occasion, while announcing that they are halfway through filming the upcoming season.

"Take it all in, nerds ... we've hit the halfway mark of filming the final season and wanted to give you all a look at what we've been up to," read the caption under the clip.

"This is day one," said Joe Keery, who plays Steve Harrington, before Maya Hawke, who plays Robin Buckley, added: "On 'Stranger Things' five."

The video showed the cast and crew on different sets. While some were filming and producing scenes, others were working on the props and the set of the upside-down dimension, building sites, and spreading fake blood here and there.

"We're just kind of savoring every single moment," said Sadie Sink, who plays Max Mayfield, as she took viewers on a speedy trip through the wardrobe with all the outfits prepared for each and every character in "Stranger Things."

Finn Wolfhard said: "I'm excited to have scenes with the original four."

Gaten Matarazzo added: "This is home. You remember why you're doing it and how much fun you have."

While most of the cast members expressed their excitement about the new season, Millie Bobby Brown, who plays Eleven, shared her thoughts about filming the season as an adult after starting the show when she was a 10-year-old child.



The Region

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Jeddah

• Beirut Contemporary Ballet presents "Aswad" from July 17-19, a dance performance about conflicts in relationships and the hope of redemption. The work is a tribute to the human ability to overcome adversity and find strength. The performance is taking place at Metro Al-Madina,

Aresco Center in Beirut, Lebanon. For tickets and more information, check lebtivity.com.

• In "Lailat Al-Sitt," a concert in honor of Umm Kulthum, rising star Amal Ibrahim will enthrall the audience with her own rendition of the legendary singer's songs on the Rainbow Theater stage in Amman, Jordan, on

Thursday, July 18. For tickets and more details, check calendar.jo.

• Experience the ultimate summer adventure at Bahrain's Lost Paradise of Dilmun. This massive water park offers something for everyone, with over 20 slides, rafts, and pools. Dive in, race down slides, or simply relax in the sun.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

July 17	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghreb	Isha
Makkah	4:23	5:48	12:27	3:42	7:06	8:36
Madinah	4:15	5:43	12:28	3:51	7:13	8:43
Riyadh	3:46	5:14	12:00	3:24	6:45	8:15
Abha	4:21	5:43	12:17	3:34	6:50	8:20
Dammam	3:27	4:57	11:46	3:14	6:35	8:05



Syria has no effective way to deter Israel from attacking it at will.

Joshua Landis
Director, Center for Middle East Studies,
University of Oklahoma



Spotlight

RESEARCH & STUDIES
THE MIDDLE EAST, BETTER EXPLAINED

ARAB NEWS

SYRIA AND ISRAEL

A lopsided confrontation

Despite assistance from Iran-backed militias, the Syrian regime has failed to prevent Israeli strikes on its territory

Anan Tello London

Since the outbreak of civil war in Syria in 2011, Israel has repeatedly struck military targets on the nation's territory. However, these attacks have sharply increased in frequency since the Gaza conflict erupted last October, with Israel seemingly free to act with impunity.

Following the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas-led attack that triggered the war in Gaza, Israel has mounted strikes against suspected Iran-backed targets on Syrian soil, leaving Syrians fearful their country could be dragged into a wider regional conflagration.

Israel rarely claims responsibility for its strikes on Syrian territory but has consistently cautioned that it will not tolerate Iran gaining a military foothold there or using the country to transport advanced weapons to Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Although Syrian air defenses and the Bashar Assad regime's Russian allies have occasionally intercepted Israeli missiles over Syrian territory, they have failed to deter Israeli attacks on military installations and commanders of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Indeed, at least 19 senior officials of the IRGC's extraterritorial Quds Force have been killed in suspected Israeli strikes since Oct. 7, including top-ranking officer Mohammad Reza Zahedi.

Joshua Landis, director of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Oklahoma, believes Israel has been attacking Syria for almost a decade simply because "Israel can."

"Syria has no effective way to deter Israel from attacking it at will," he told Arab News. "Israel has every incentive to destroy weapons sent to Syria from Iran or elsewhere, especially those that might end up strengthening Hezbollah."

In late June, Israel reportedly struck multiple targets in southern Syria, including a pro-Iran service center and an IRGC stronghold south of Damascus, according to the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Syrian air defenses were activated but failed to repel the attack.

"Iran and Hezbollah have no answer to Israel's technological superiority," said Landis. "Syria's air force is in shambles, its anti-aircraft missiles are inadequate, and Russia does not want to alienate Israel, which could easily seek revenge against Russia by helping Ukraine."

Mohammed Al-Basha, a senior Middle East analyst at the research network Navanti Group, agrees that "Syrian government and Hezbollah aircraft defense



The regime of Bashar Assad, bottom, has seen its air defenses depleted, mainly by 13 years of civil war, leaving the country vulnerable to Israeli attacks, right.
AP file/AFP



and anti-aircraft capabilities are limited."

He told Arab News: "These capabilities are generally quite restricted and likely concentrated around key targets, such as Damascus."

He added that the Syrian government and Hezbollah "primarily receive their air defense systems from countries like Russia, Iran, and possibly China."

"While Syria may have had some capacity to counter missile attacks five years ago, as evidenced by their response to a strike by US President Donald Trump's administration ... it is now likely that Russia is prioritizing these resources for its own conflicts in Ukraine, South Ossetia, and potentially Transnistria."

On April 14, 2018, the US, UK, and France fired more than 100 missiles at three government sites in Syria, claiming these were chemical weapons facilities. Russia said Syrian air defenses downed at least 71 incoming cruise missiles.

Whatever the condition

of Syria's air defenses today, Al-Basha stressed that "Israel's air capabilities are almost certainly more advanced than those of the Syrian government and Hezbollah."

While Syria may lack the means to meaningfully retaliate against Israel, the same cannot be said for Iran and its regional proxies, including Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and Al-Hashd Al-Sha'abi in Iraq — groups that collectively make up the "Axis of Resistance."

On July 9, Hezbollah retaliated for the killing of a bodyguard of its leader Hassan Nasrallah by firing dozens of rockets into the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

Earlier that day, the bodyguard's vehicle had been hit with an Israeli shell in Syrian territory on the Damascus-Beirut highway.

The killing of senior Hezbollah commander Mohammed Nasser in southern Lebanon on July 3 also did not go unpunished. The following day,

the militia said it launched more than 200 rockets and a swarm of drones at 10 Israeli military sites.

War-shattered Syria, by contrast, appears to Israel as a soft target.

Syrian Canadian analyst Camille Alexandre Otrakji told Arab News that by targeting Syria, Israel "strategically targets both the broader resistance camp and Syria specifically."

"Israel is attempting to weaken the overall capabilities of the resistance camp, with Syria being a relatively safe target compared to other regional resistance actors," he said.

"If Israel targets non-state actors in Lebanon, Yemen, or Iraq, it would likely face retaliatory attacks. Unlike Syria, these actors are not constrained by international agreements, complicating their decision to retaliate against Israel."

The Baathist regime itself, however, has also long been considered a sworn enemy by Israel.

INNUMBERS

50+

Israeli strikes targeting Iranian assets in Syria since Oct. 7.

75+

Syrians killed in reported Israeli air strikes since Oct. 7.

Pointing out that Syria's army "has been significantly weakened" by 13 years of civil war, Otrakji said Damascus "faces a more challenging situation," and "its close allies are not all supportive of a decision to escalate toward military confrontation with Israel."

He added: "Syrians legitimately claim that Damascus is the world's oldest continuously

inhabited capital. With comparable validity, they also assert that Syria holds the oldest continuously inhabited position within the resistance axis.

"Since 1947, Syria has frequently opposed Israeli and American initiatives in the Middle East with varying degrees of intensity.

"In a CIA analysis document titled 'Israel: Perceptions of Syria,' declassified in 2011 and obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, CIA analysts noted that 'Israelis, both in and out of government, view Syria as Israel's most determined enemy.'

"The document further states, 'Most Israelis foresee an extended period of internal unrest in Syria after Assad leaves the scene ... the Israelis believe it would weaken Syria's position in the region and force the successor regime to turn inward.'"

Otrakji argues that "although Israel cannot deploy its full military might to achieve its long-term goal of creating a power vacuum in Syria, it can pursue this objective gradually."

While Israel is expected to continue mounting attacks on Syria, Landis does not foresee it becoming the central arena in Israel's shadow war with Iran.

"Syria will not be the main battlefield, but Israel will strike any arms depots or manufacturing sites in Syria that may resupply Hezbollah," he said.

"If Iran tries to reinforce Hezbollah through Syria, Israel will be sure to attack Syria in an effort to stop arms from reaching Lebanon."





Heritage The third annual Beit Hail Festival showcased the traditional art of wood carving, a craft practiced by locals since ancient times.

SPA

COLLABORATION

KAUST to research and enhance Kingdom's 6G tech ambitions

More than 50 billion devices will be connected to the internet by 2025

Arab News Riyadh

King Abdullah University of Science and Technology has announced the beginning of a new research era to develop communication technologies from 5G to 6G in collaboration with a foreign company.

The Saudi Press Agency reported that telecommunications experts expect that by 2025, there will be more than 50 billion devices connected to the internet, including devices that control city power grids and devices used for browsing social media and platforms.

KAUST said that this collaboration involves the company's continuing to fund two communications programs at the university.

The first program focuses on Free-Space Optical

communications, while the second revolves around developing Reconfigurable Intelligent Surfaces, or RIS. Both technologies have been identified by the industry sector as essential for the development of 5G and 6G communication structures.

FSO communications use lasers to transmit signals through outer space, air, to a wireless detector. The signal attenuation rate increases with higher frequency signals, and 6G has the highest frequency so far (at least 100 gigahertz).

This technology is used to measure the effects of weather on signal transmission in order to build a comprehensive database of weather conditions in the Kingdom to address the causes of communication outages, the frequency of occurrences, and their duration.

With this information, the company and other companies can strategically place their

stations and deploy backup systems in case of failure.

Reconfigurable Intelligent Surfaces provide another solution to signal loss, as urban buildings often contain essential reception stations on their rooftops. RIS are made up of thousands of cells, each typically consisting of layers of metal, insulators, and semiconductors, and are expected to greatly contribute to enabling 6G technology access.

According to SPA, KAUST contributes to enhancing the Kingdom's leadership in developing and adopting 6G communication technologies, attracting global companies to invest in infrastructure and scientists to assess their research by testing optical communication technologies in space and new reconfigurable smart surfaces, and collecting an unprecedented amount of data on weather conditions and communication performance in the Kingdom.

ATTRACTION

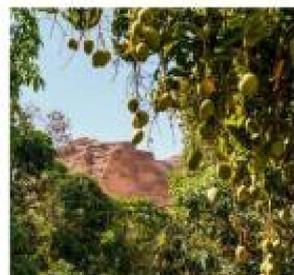
Summer fruit season kicks off in AlUla

SPA AlUla

The Royal Commission for AlUla has announced the launch of the area's summer fruit season, which offers a variety of the finest local products at the farmers market in Manshiya Plaza, from July 17 to 24.

AlUla's seasonal goods project aims to provide support to farmers and small business-owning families and increase sustainable demand for organic fruits and other products, which will provide new opportunities for economic diversification within and beyond the agricultural community.

The project will feature four annual events: the first for summer fruit products from July 17 to 24, the



The fruit season seeks to empower the seasonal cycles of AlUla's farms. SPA

second for dates from mid-October to mid-November, the third for gum Arabic during November, and the fourth for citrus fruits for nine days starting in early January 2025.

The fruit season seeks to empower the seasonal cycles of AlUla's farms, known for producing the highest quality mangoes, grapes, figs, dates and citrus fruits, as well as gum Arabic, a traditional plant highly valued for its medicinal and cosmetic uses.

The Manshiya market, a hub of community and agricultural life in AlUla, will host vendors and buyers of fresh local produce, boosting economic activity beyond traditional crop cycles.

The market attracts increasing numbers of visitors to its annual agricultural events, showcasing the diversity of the region's crops and how fresh products are used in famous local dishes.

TheSpace

How Shakespeare and Vision 2030 inspire through storytelling

DR. THAMER A. BAAZEEM



No one likes to be told, and no one likes to be sold, but everyone likes a good story. This quote from my friend Jennifer Bishop resonates deeply with me. It encapsulates the essence of why storytelling is such a powerful tool in developing and implementing nearly everything, particularly when it involves people. However, it begs the question: What makes a good story?

Recently, as a courtesy act, I visited the Warner Brothers Studio Tour, specifically "The Making of Harry Potter." This visit reinforced my understanding of storytelling's significance. No matter how creative you are, how much budget you spend, how excellent your strategy is, and how capable your talents are, it all centers on the clear distribution of roles and a careful focus on details.

One of the most striking aspects of J.K. Rowling's writing in the Harry Potter series is the distinctness and clarity of each character's role. Readers can vividly feel every element of the environment surrounding the characters, which is a testament to the level of detail and care put into the narrative. This meticulous attention to details and the clear delineation of roles are what engaged readers even before the books were adapted into movies.

The film crew, undoubtedly inspired by the books, maintained this detailed approach. During the tour, it was evident that everyone knew their roles precisely, and every aspect received the necessary attention to craft a well-articulated story. This has allowed the Harry Potter series to

leave an indelible mark on the world.

Similarly, the works of William Shakespeare exemplify the power of clear roles and detailed storytelling. In plays like "Hamlet," "Macbeth," and "Romeo and Juliet," Shakespeare intricately crafted each character's role, ensuring that their actions and motivations were clear and compelling. This clarity and attention to detail have made Shakespeare's works timeless, captivating audiences for centuries and demonstrating the enduring power of well-told stories.

In storytelling, having clear roles for each character and focusing on details are crucial methods for captivating the audience. This principle applies equally to products and services. If leaders and those in charge focus on the specifics of their products or services and provide clear roles for their team members,

they can create compelling stories that forge excellent relationships with beneficiaries, customers and stakeholders.

A good story pivots on these fundamentals. When characters are well defined and their roles are clear, the narrative flows smoothly. This clarity allows the audience to connect with the story on a deeper level. Likewise, in any organization (public or private), when every team member understands their role and the details of the product are precisely attended to, the result is a cohesive and compelling narrative that resonates with beneficiaries.

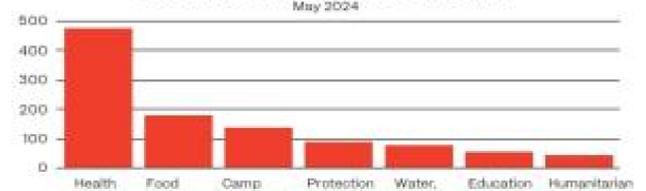
Thamer A. Baazeem is chairman of Marketing Association, Saudi Arabia

The power of storytelling lies in its ability to engage, inspire, and connect.

The Day's FIGURES

SAUDI AID AGENCY PROJECTS IN YEMEN

May 2024



Source: kirelef.org

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Event

Saudi Arabia part of global audit conference

The International Conference of the Institute of Internal Auditors 2024 began on Monday in Washington with a strong Saudi presence.

The three-day event is being attended by a delegation of 100 participants from the Saudi Association of Internal Auditors, including leading internal audit professionals and service providers.

The delegation is led by Dr. Hussam bin Abdulmohsen Al-Angari, president of the General Court of Audit and chairman of SALA's board of directors.

SPA Riyadh

Culture

Local bread attracts visitors at Al-Baha fest

The art of skillfully preparing local bread from the Al-Baha region has attracted visitors and residents to the second Dar Festival at Al-Mousa Heritage Village in Al-Baha.

Muqana bread is considered a staple food for the people of the region. It is made from wheat flour mixed with water, then placed on a thin stone heated by lighting a fire beneath it.

The dough is then covered with a dish-like object made of either pottery or thin iron. It is then covered with ash and embers, and a small fire is lit on top until it is ready to be taken out and served. SPA Al-Baha

Maintenance

Taif municipality ramps up services as tourism surges

As Taif experiences a boom in summer tourism, more than 240 field teams from the municipality are working around the clock to ensure the city's key attractions are well-maintained to welcome visitors.

The focus is on children's play areas, family seating areas, sports equipment, and walkways at popular destinations such as Al-Hada, Al-Shafa, wilderness parks, and public gardens. The seasonal municipal work plans are focused on immediate waste removal and the upkeep of irrigation networks, electrical installations, and fountains.

SPA Taif

News Saudi Arabia

BEAUTY CULTURE

Have a safe and sun-kissed summer

Experts advise on how you can get that golden glow and save your skin from damage, cancer

Ghadi Joudah Riyadh

As summertime rolls in, recreational tanning becomes a popular trend among young Saudi men and women who seek a sun-kissed glow all year-round.

Despite the allure of a bronzed complexion, the dangers associated with recreational tanning cannot be overlooked, especially if one skips applying sunscreen.

Jumana Ghassan, 25, told Arab News that she remains steadfast in her belief that sunscreen will get in the way of a proper bronze tan.

"I never use sunscreen when I tan, which is something I do every weekend, because I believe SPF does not allow me to get a golden and glowy tan."

She is convinced that by skipping this vital step in her skincare routine, she will achieve a deeper, more even tan.

Sun exposure is the number one cause of skin cancer, with cases increasing in Saudi Arabia because of the high levels of sunlight throughout the year.

According to research conducted at King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences in 2020, the two most common types of skin cancer in Saudi Arabia are basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma, making up 51.4 percent and 22.5 percent of cases respectively.

While sunlight exposure has some benefits, exposure to ultraviolet, or UV, radiation from tanning beds or the sun can have detrimental effects on the skin.

Oncology specialist at King's College Hospital London in Jeddah, Dr. Ali Al-Bayer, told Arab News: "Prolonged exposure to UV rays can damage the DNA in skin cells, leading to potential mutations and abnormal cell growth."

This damage is cumulative over time and increases the risk of melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer, he added.

Al-Bayer said that it was crucial to try to avoid direct sunlight from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Dermatologist Dr. Fatima Al-Satouf told Arab News that sunscreen acted as a barrier, shielding the

skin from the sun's rays and preventing damage.

"Overexposure to the sun's harmful rays can lead to the breakdown of collagen and elastin in the skin, resulting in wrinkles, age spots and sagging," she explained.

She added that by applying sunscreen regularly and correctly, people could significantly reduce their risk of skin damage and premature aging caused by sun exposure.

Sunscreen should be applied generously to all exposed areas of skin, including the face, neck, arms, legs, and even the scalp.

Al-Bayer said that in nearly all cases, skin cancer appeared in areas that were most exposed to the sun.

"It is important to choose a sunscreen with a high SPF (sun protection factor) and broad spectrum coverage to ensure maximum protection against both UVA and UVB rays," he said.

Al-Bayer said that the use of sunscreen should be combined with other sun-safe practices, such

HIGH LIGHTS

• Sun exposure is the number one cause of skin cancer, with cases increasing in Saudi Arabia because of the high levels of sunlight throughout the year.

• While sunlight exposure has some benefits, exposure to ultraviolet, or UV, radiation from tanning beds or the sun can have detrimental effects on the skin.

as seeking shade during peak sun hours and avoiding unnecessary sun exposure.

Consulting a dermatologist for skin checks and advice on sunscreen use can further enhance a sun protection regimen.

"Regularly checking your skin for signs of sun damage, like freckles, moles, or sunspots, can help detect potential issues early on," Al-Bayer said.

Al-Satouf said that it was recommended to apply sunscreen at least 20 minutes before going outside to allow time for it to be absorbed into the skin.

"Reapplying sunscreen every two hours, especially after swimming or sweating, is crucial to maintain its effectiveness."

Al-Satouf added that the proper amount of sunscreen for the face is equivalent to two-finger lengths.

In addition to sunscreen, wearing protective clothing, such as hats, sunglasses and long-sleeved shirts, can further shield the skin from sun exposure.

Resorting to tanning beds is dangerous as they emit concentrated UV radiation that can be even more damaging than natural sunlight.

In fact, indoor tanning before

the age of 35 increases the risk of melanoma by 59 percent, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation.

To achieve a tan while minimizing the risk of sun damage, there are several strategies that individuals can adopt.

Rasha Al-Ghamdi told Arab News: "After a skin cancer scare, I opted to use spray tan to get my desired shade, and my skin has never felt this healthy and supple."

Self-tanning products and spray tans offer a safer alternative to traditional sunbathing or tanning beds.

These products can help to achieve a sun-kissed glow without the damaging effects of UV radiation.

It is important to choose self-tanning products that contain safe and effective ingredients and to follow the manufacturer's instructions for application and maintenance.

Young people must prioritize their skin health and take measures to protect themselves from the dangers of recreational tanning.

By promoting sun-safe practices and embracing natural beauty, we can work toward a healthier and more inclusive beauty culture for all.



THAT'S A WRAP

Kernels of promise in Asir as farmers ready for summer harvest

Arab News Riyadh

As the summer rains loom, farmers in Saudi Arabia's Sarawat Mountains of Asir are in a race against time to bring in their wheat harvest.

This year's crop is notable for both its abundance and superior quality, the Saudi Press Agency recently reported.

The wheat-cultivation cycle in Asir, which begins in February and spans five to six months, culminates in the traditional harvest known as Al-Sareem.

While some farmers still employ time-honored harvesting methods using sickles, many have embraced modern machinery, including large harvesters and handheld devices.

"Our terraced fields yield a variety of grains," Issa Al-Waymani, a local farmer, told the SPA. "Besides different wheat varieties, we also grow barley and white and yellow corn."

He highlighted the diverse grain production of Asir's terraces. The region's various types of wheat include Al-Seeb, Al-Mabia, Al-Qiyad and Al-Sumeira.

"We know it is time to harvest when the ears turn yellow and reach full maturity," Al-Waymani said regarding the wheat-harvesting process. After harvesting, the crops are transported to designated threshing

areas known locally as Al-Jareen.

Al-Waymani said these threshing grounds have evolved over time. "Traditionally, cattle or camels would drag a large stone weighing over 100 kg over the crop to separate the grains from their husks, called Al-Hatha," he said.

Today, however, modern methods have largely replaced these traditional practices. "Now we use large harvesters or smaller machines operated by agricultural tractors," Al-Waymani added. "We manually feed the crop into these machines after it has been sun-dried for at least 14 days."

The region's wheat production is concentrated along the Sarawat mountain range, from Dhahran Al-Janub in the south to Balqarn in the north, the report explained.

Areas including Al-Soudah, Tabab, Billahmer and Billasmar are renowned for producing the highest quality grains in the region for traditional local markets and the summer festivals in Asir.

Asir's farmers take great care to protect their crops from birds and monkeys until the harvest is complete. After threshing and winnowing, the



The wheat-cultivation cycle in Asir, which begins in February and spans five to six months, culminates in the traditional harvest known as Al-Sareem. SPA



FASTFACTS

• While some farmers in Asir still employ time-honored harvesting methods using sickles, many have embraced modern machinery.

• Asir's farmers take great care to protect their crops from birds and monkeys until the harvest is complete.

crop is weighed for Zakat purposes before being marketed.

Wheat remains one of the most sought-after crops in local markets, with prices ranging from \$106 to \$160 for a 50 kg bag.

Scientific studies have highlighted the nutritional benefits of this local wheat, which is packed with essential fatty acids, folic acid, B-complex vitamins, and fiber.

News Middle East

PEACE PUSH

Sudan's warring parties continue talks with UN envoy

AFP Geneva

Talks between a UN envoy and delegations from both warring parties in Sudan are continuing in Geneva this week, focused on humanitarian aid and protecting civilians, the UN said on Tuesday.

War has raged since April 2023 between the Sudanese regular army under Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan and the paramilitary

Rapid Support Forces, led by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's personal envoy for Sudan, Ramtane Lamamra, invited delegations from the army and the RSF for talks which began on Thursday.

The discussions are taking place under the so-called proximity format, whereby

SPEEDREAD

• The conflict in Sudan has left tens of thousands dead and displaced more than 10 million people

• Nearly 26 million people, or slightly more than half of the population, are facing high levels of acute food insecurity.

Lamamra is meeting separately with each delegation at a time, in different rooms. The two delegations are not scheduled to meet each other.

Lamamra and his team had several interactions with both delegations throughout the weekend, UN spokeswoman Alessandra Vellucci told a media briefing.

"The teams engaged intensively

on the two key items discussed during these talks: humanitarian assistance and protection of civilians," she said.

"The discussions are continuing this week."

No end date has been scheduled. The two delegations are comprised of senior representatives of the warring parties and include humanitarian, security and military experts.



Mourners attend the funeral of a Hezbollah fighter who was killed along with two of his family members after an Israeli airstrike hit their house in south Lebanon. AP

PEACE ELUSIVE

Israeli attacks kill 5 Lebanese in 24 hours, including two women

Hezbollah shells Kiryat Shmona; warns of 'severe response' if Israel launches large-scale war

Najla Housseini Beirut

Israel continued to target Hezbollah members on Tuesday with attacks by combat drones, less than 24 hours after a member of the party and his two sisters were killed in an air assault on their home in the town of Bint Jbeil.

On Tuesday afternoon, an Israeli drone launched a missile at a motorcycle on the Khardali road, a strategic route connecting the Nabatieh area to Marjayoun, killing two people.

An eyewitness said: "The motorcycle was carrying two

persons, and when several citizens tried to approach the targeted motorcycle, it was subjected to a second airstrike with a guided missile."

On Monday evening, Israeli warplanes had conducted intense raids on the towns of Bint Jbeil, Kfarkela, Mays Al-Jabal and Marwahin, destroying several homes and causing significant damage.

One of the strikes hit the home of Amer Jamil Dagher and his sisters, Taghreed and Fawzia, in Bint Jbeil, destroying it and killing all three, who were said to be in their 40s and 50s.

Hezbollah mourned their deaths and they were buried

FASTFACT

A Hezbollah member and his two sisters died on Monday night in an attack on their home, and two people on a motorcycle were killed on Tuesday by a drone attack.

on Tuesday afternoon in their hometown, 18 people from which have been killed since fighting in southern Lebanon began on Oct. 8.

The Israeli army said it had "targeted Hezbollah infrastructure in several areas in southern Lebanon on Monday night to eliminate threats."

Hezbollah said it responded to the attacks by "shelling the Kiryat Shmona settlement with dozens of Falaq and Katyusha rockets."

Meanwhile, Israeli forces also shelled the outskirts of Deir Mimas and the town of Yohmor Al-Shaqif, along the Litani River.

Lebanese Civil Defense teams and paramedics from Hezbollah and the Amal Movement reportedly worked through the night fighting fires in forests alongside the river caused by Israeli phosphorus shells.

Hezbollah said it had targeted a "gathering of Israeli enemy soldiers around the Pranit barracks opposite the Lebanese

border town of Rmeish," "spy equipment at the Al-Raheb site" and "Al-Samaqa site in the occupied Kfarchouba hills."

MP Mohammed Raad, the head of Hezbollah's parliamentary bloc, threatened Israel with "a severe response if the Israeli army launches a large-scale war in Lebanon."

He added: "The Israeli army knows this. We know the enemy's strengths and weaknesses, and it knows we know its weaknesses."

Raad urged the "enemy to stop its evil against Lebanon and Gaza; we are ready to cease fire on the Lebanese front if the aggression on Gaza stops and the enemy will comply with this."

DEFIANT MILITIA

US military destroys 5 Houthi drones amid ship attacks

Saeed Al-Batati Al-Mukalla

US naval forces in the Red Sea destroyed a barrage of drones launched by Yemen's Houthis as the militia increased drone, boat and missile strikes on ships in international commercial channels.

The US military said in a statement on Tuesday that its forces intercepted three Houthi unmanned aerial vehicles over the Red Sea and two more over Houthi-held areas of war-torn Yemen during the past 24 hours, all of which were aimed against international commercial and navy ships.

"It was determined these UAVs presented an imminent threat to US, coalition forces and merchant vessels in the region."

"These actions were taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure," US Central Command said on X.

During the last 24 hours, the Houthis targeted a Panama-flagged, Israel-owned, Monaco-operated tanker vessel, MT

BACKGROUND

Yemen's internationally recognized government reiterated on Tuesday its request for international groups to shift their offices from Houthi-held Sanaa to the southern city of Aden, Yemen's temporary capital.

Bentley I, which was transporting vegetable oil from Russia to China.

The militia deployed three surface ships, one explosive-laden drone boat and two small boats, causing no damage to the ship or casualties, according to the US military.

The Houthis subsequently launched a ballistic missile from Yemeni territory toward the same ship in the Red Sea.

The Houthis also fired an explosive and remotely controlled boat at the MT Chios Lion, a Greek-operated, Marshall Islands-owned crude oil tanker operating under the Liberian flag in the Red Sea, inflicting damage to the ship but no reported casualties.

The US statement came hours after Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarea claimed that the militia's naval, drone and missile forces launched a joint attack against MT Bentley I in the Red Sea, and struck the Chios Lion oil tanker ship with a drone boat.

The two ships were targeted because their owners defied the militia's warnings against traveling to Israeli ports.

News International

DETERMINATION

'I'm doing this for all of Palestine' — Abu Sal on making boxing history

20-year-old fighter from Ramallah is first-ever Palestinian boxer to take part in Olympics

Michelle Kuehn Dubai

Despite the challenges of checkpoints, roadblocks and casualty updates from Gaza, Waseem Abu Sal has surpassed all previous achievements by a Palestinian boxer with his wildcard spot at the 2024 Olympics in Paris.

Not surprisingly, this milestone has not come without tremendous sacrifice, with the everyday struggles of living in the occupied West Bank presenting a far more formidable battle than the endless rounds he faces in the ring.

Over the last 12 months, Abu Sal has spent every waking moment preparing for the Olympics.

He underwent training camps in Morocco and Jordan in 2023, competed in tournaments in Algeria and Russia, and wrapped up his preparations in China for the 2023 Asian Games in Hangzhou last September.

Although he did not secure an Olympic spot in the qualifying events, earning a wildcard spot has reignited his hopes for success on the grand stage.

"I'm going to the Olympics not just for myself, but for all of Palestine," said the 20-year-old, who will be fighting in the 57 kg category in Paris.

"I'm fighting to show the world our dignity and to preserve our identity. It's important to me and to the Palestinian Olympic Committee. My message is one of peace, but also to show the world that we are strong and resilient."

Abu Sal is poised to enter the ring for his debut Olympic bout on July 28 at the Roland Garros Stadium in the French capital, where he will be among 248 boxers from 70 countries vying for gold.

His journey to such exalted company began at age 10 when his father took him to Elbarrio Gym in Ramallah, with a vision far beyond giving his son a mere hobby or self-defense skills.

Even at such an early stage, he aspired for his Waseem to become an Olympian, and barely 10 years on from that day, the dream of an Olympic ticket has become a reality.

Nader Jayousi, head of the Palestinian Olympic Committee and owner of Elbarrio Gym, has been instrumental in guiding and coaching Abu Sal.

His Gazan coach, Ahmed Harara, restricted by occupation barriers between the West Bank and Gaza, supports him remotely by sending daily training schedules.

With Harara only being able to meet Abu Sal during international competitions, the boxer trains each morning and then again in the evening under the guidance of Jayousi.

After the Asian Games last October, the onset of the war in Gaza significantly intensified the challenges Abu Sal faced.

Initially, Israel imposed a



Abu Sal's Gazan coach, Ahmed Harara, restricted by barriers, supports him remotely by sending daily training schedules. Supplied

mandatory halt on all sports activities. As the conflict escalated during the final qualifying rounds, Abu Sal's training opportunities were severely limited.

Training in Palestine has become increasingly perilous due to a rise in checkpoints, military presence and settler violence, complicating travel even between West Bank cities and thus restricting his access to sparring partners.

For international travel, Abu Sal must undertake a journey by road from Ramallah to Amman, Jordan, to catch a flight — if he is fortunate enough not to be denied an entry visa.

Despite the hardships — witnessing his friends trapped in

FASTFACTS

- Abu Sal is poised to enter the ring for his debut Olympic bout on July 28 at the Roland Garros Stadium in the French capital, where he will be among 248 boxers from 70 countries vying for gold.

- His journey to such exalted company began at age 10 when his father took him to Elbarrio Gym in Ramallah, with a vision far beyond giving his son a mere hobby or self-defense skills.

Jordan, unable to return to Gaza, and suffering the loss of family members and injuries due to the conflict — Abu Sal channeled the pain into his training.

The devastating impact of the conflict has taken a toll on Abu Sal and his teammates, yet it has also fueled his determination to continue working toward his Olympic goals.

As part of the Olympic preparation program, the Olympic Committee provides support through supplements, training and international travel, significantly boosting performance.

"This support has led to a historic achievement, with seven athletes traveling to the Olympics this year," said Jayousi.

"When applying for wildcard entries, we chose to focus on the best-performing athletes. We aimed to highlight the high level of talent emerging from Palestine, showcasing our potential on the global stage."

Abu Sal has been winning medals internationally since 2018.

He has come a long way since, and compared to the challenges of his daily life, no goal is too big for the fighter from Ramallah.

With the Paris Olympics only 10 days away, Abu Sal is now undergoing a specific training period.

Having traveled to France for a two-week international training camp on July 4, he will reunite with his squad at the Olympic village starting from July 20.

DISCRIMINATION

Amnesty slams French hijab ban in sports

Arab News London

Amnesty International has accused France of breaking international human rights law by enforcing a ban on women competing at this summer's Olympic Games in Paris wearing headscarves.

In a report on the ban published on Tuesday, Amnesty also accused the International Olympic Committee of weakness by not challenging France's "discriminatory" law.

Anna Blus, Amnesty's women's rights researcher in Europe, said: "Banning French athletes from competing with sports hijabs at the Olympic and Paralympic Games makes a mockery of claims that Paris 2024 is the first 'Gender Equal Olympics' and lays bare the racist gender discrimination that underpins access to sport in France."

She added: "Discriminatory rules policing what women wear are a violation of Muslim women's and girls' human rights and have a devastating impact on their participation in sport, blocking efforts to make sports more inclusive and more accessible."

France is the only European country to enforce a ban on headscarves in sport, which also contradicts the rules of international sports bodies such as FIFA, the International Basketball

BACKGROUND

The human rights group accuses the host country of breaching international law.

Federation and the International Volleyball Federation.

Basketball player Helene Ba told Amnesty that the French ban "is a clear violation of the Olympic charter, values and provisions, and an infringement on our fundamental rights and freedoms ... I think it's going to be a shameful moment for France."

She added: "Mentally it is also hard because you really feel excluded ... especially if you go to the bench and the referee tells you to go to the ladders (stands). Everyone sees you ... It's a walk of shame."

Another female athlete told Amnesty anonymously: "It is sad. It's even shameful to be at this point in 2024, to block dreams just because of a piece of fabric."

In a press release, Amnesty said: "For several years, French authorities have been weaponizing these concepts (of secularism) to justify the enactment of laws and policies that disproportionately impact Muslim women and girls."

Foune Diawara, co-president of the football collective Hijabeuses, told Amnesty: "Our fight is not political or religious but centered on our human right to participate in sports."

Blus said: "No policymaker should dictate what a woman can or cannot wear and no woman should be forced to choose between the sport she loves and her faith, cultural identity, or beliefs."

UPGRADING SKILLS

King Salman Global Academy trains Indian scholars in Arabic teaching

Sanjay Kumar New Delhi

A top Saudi linguistic institution, the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language, launched special training sessions for instructors teaching Arabic at Indian universities.

Some 50 lecturers are taking part in the four-day course held in New Delhi at Jawaharlal Nehru University, which is the main host of the KSGAAL's ongoing Arabic Language Month.

The event is aimed at developing and improving the teaching of Arabic for non-native speakers in the world's most populous nation, and kicked off



King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language experts train Indian scholars of Arabic at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi on Tuesday. Supplied

online in late June, running until July 26.

It includes both online and offline competitions and sessions for students and lecturers.

"The teaching of the Arabic language has transformed

significantly. There are a number of institutions which teach pedagogy of Arabic according to the latest trends," Prof. Mujebur Rahman, head of the Centre of Arabic and African Studies at JNU, told Arab News.

"There is lots of research in the Arab world, published materials also, which Arabic teachers in the (Indian) universities are not aware of and not equipped with ... So, the purpose of this training is to apprise the teachers of the latest pedagogy of Arabic teaching as a foreign language ... and also tell them about the technological tools that are available."

Nine Saudi experts in different domains of language teaching were conducting the course under the supervision of Dr. Abdullah bin Saleh Al-Washmi, the academy's secretary-general.



Bangladeshi students carry a wounded woman after clashes with the youth wing of the ruling Awami League in Dhaka on Monday. AFP

RISING VOICES

Hundreds of Bangladeshi students injured as job quota protests ramp up

30% of all government jobs reserved for families of 1971 liberation war fighters

Shehab Sumon Dhaka

Hundreds of protesting Bangladeshi students have been injured in clashes with pro-ruling party groups, the country's largest hospital said on Tuesday, in the wake of campus rallies against public sector job quotas.

The students have been demonstrating since early July against a quota system under which 30 percent of well-paid government jobs are reserved for the families of those who fought in the 1971 liberation war against Pakistan that resulted in

Bangladesh's independence.

The movement to reform the system started in 2018, forcing the government to issue a circular canceling the quota, but last month a high court order nullified it.

Students have been rallying since the announcement of the court's ruling and on Monday and Tuesday morning clashed with members of the youth wing of the ruling Awami League party.

In the capital Dhaka alone, at least 234 were injured.

"A total of 234 students received treatment at our hospital following the students' clashes on Monday," Brig. Gen. Asaduzzaman, director of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, told Arab News.

"At the moment, six of the injured students are admitted to our hospital. We have kept them under observation as some of them got head injuries ... among the injured, there are students from different educational institutions, including Dhaka University."

The protests escalated on Sunday, after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina undermined demonstrators by saying: "If the grandchildren of freedom fighters do not receive benefits, who would get it? The grandchildren of raskars?"

The word "raskar," a deeply offensive term in Bangladesh, means someone who collaborates with an enemy occupying force

and refers to those who collaborated with the Pakistani military during the 1971 war.

"The comparison with the collaborators agitated the protesting students very much. It's not right that all the families who don't belong to freedom fighters' families are all collaborators," Mohammad Nahid Islam, coordinator of the Students Against Discrimination group, which is part of the protests, told Arab News.

"Till last week, students from 35 public universities joined the protests with us across the country ... now, the protests spread over almost all educational institutions."

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Relief

Indian farmers plant crops as monsoon revives

Indian farmers have accelerated the planting of summer-sown crops, such as paddy, soybean, cotton, and corn, following above-average monsoon rainfall in July that came after a deficit in June, according to government data.

Summer rains, critical for economic growth in Asia's third-largest economy, usually begin in the south around June 1 before spreading nationwide by July 8, allowing farmers to plant summer crops. The lifeblood of the nearly \$3.5 trillion economy, the monsoon brings nearly 70 percent of the rain India needs to water farms and refill reservoirs and aquifers. **Reuters**

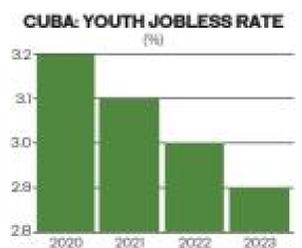
Communication

Hotline to open for China, Philippines presidents' offices

A recently signed agreement will open a direct line of communication between the presidential offices of China and the Philippines to help prevent any new confrontation from spiraling out of control in the disputed South China Sea. China and the Philippines have created such emergency telephone hotlines at lower levels in the past to better manage disputes, particularly in two fiercely disputed shoals where the Philippines has accused Chinese forces of increasingly hostile actions and China says Philippine ships have encroached despite repeated warnings. **AP**

The Day's FIGURES

Source: Statista



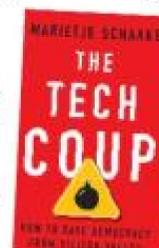
What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

'The Tech Coup'

MARIETJE SCHAAKE

Over the past decades, under the cover of "innovation," technology companies have successfully resisted regulation and have even begun to seize power from governments themselves. Facial recognition firms track citizens for police surveillance.



Cryptocurrency has wiped out the personal savings of millions and threatens the stability of the global financial system. In "The Tech Coup," Marietje Schaake offers a behind-the-scenes account of how technology companies crept into nearly every corner of our lives and our governments.

Precaution

Russia mulls banning, fining scooter riders

The speaker of Russia's lower house of parliament asked Russians in a poll on Tuesday whether they supported an outright ban on electric scooters, spurred by public concerns over safety after thousands of accidents last year involving scooters.

The initiative by Vyacheslav Volodin, speaker of the State Duma and a close ally of President Vladimir Putin, comes as deputies examine legislation to introduce fines for irresponsible riders of electric scooters, including penalties for speeding or riding while intoxicated.

Scooters have surged in popularity in Russian cities. **Reuters**

Tragic

Bus accident in Spanish tunnel injures 9 people

A dramatic bus accident at the mouth of a highway tunnel in northeast Spain left nine people injured, three of them critically, officials said Tuesday.

The bus was carrying 50-60 textile workers to a nearby factory when the accident occurred on the C-32 highway about an hour north of Barcelona, according to emergency services and local officials. The bus appears to have hit the sloped edge as it was entering the tunnel and it was vaulted upward until its front came to a rest at the top. That left it propped diagonally across the entrance to the tunnel. Police are investigating the cause. **AP**

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

The beetles of the earth roam freely while the thoroughbreds are tethered to a stake; and while lions are caged, the lowly worms move untroubled.

Jafar Abbas
(Contemporary Sudanese poet)

Opinion

The world is numb as Israel ratchets up its Gaza slaughter

OSAMA AL-SHARIF



Osama Al-Sharif is a journalist and political commentator based in Amman. X: @plato010

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

When the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court Karim Khan announced in May that he was submitting an application for arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his Defense Minister Yoav Gallant on multiple charges of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza, the Palestinian death toll stood at about a staggering 35,000, including 14,000 children. Back then, Khan's move was received with both commendation and revulsion. The Palestinian leadership and most Arab and Muslim countries welcomed the declaration. European governments were divided. The US condemned Khan and the court and Republican lawmakers issued a stark warning against the prosecutor, the panel of judges and their families. Netanyahu brushed the move aside, declaring that Israel does not recognize the court, nor does it care about the arrest warrants that were yet to be issued.

Today, the death toll in Gaza stands at more than 38,000. And since May, Israel has intensified its indiscriminate bombing of houses, schools, mosques, hospitals, UN buildings and even "safe areas" that were designated as such by the Israeli army. The carnage has been ongoing round the clock since Oct. 8. Gaza's Health Ministry admits that its figures are conservative, since it can only count those hospitals receive. But thousands more people are believed to be buried under the rubble in destroyed neighborhoods that are beyond the reach of the civil defense or, for lack of heavy equipment, cannot be recovered. With almost all of Gaza's hospitals having been taken out of service due to Israeli bombings, an unknown number of people have been buried in makeshift graves all over the beleaguered enclave. Since Israel took over the Rafah crossing point with Egypt, all aid supplies from Egypt have been halted. The US has dismantled the temporary pier that was supposed to help deliver much-needed food, water and medicine. Israel now controls all crossing

points and is failing to allow fuel, food and medicine to enter the Strip. Governments have become numb to the daily slaughter of Gazans by Israel. News of the killings has slipped from the front pages and is now barely reported by the mainstream media. The UN Security Council has not met in weeks to discuss the war and its binding resolutions on the need for unfettered delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza have been ignored by Israel. Israeli officials admit Netanyahu is derailing mediation efforts to reach a ceasefire deal for personal reasons. He wants the war to go on as long as possible. He knows that the Biden administration has exhausted all means to pressure Netanyahu to stop the war. He is using the febrile election mood in the US to his benefit. Joe Biden has been weakened and is fighting for his political life as he faces critics from his own party. Almost two months have passed since Khan submitted his request. But there are no signs that the court will issue those warrants any time soon. Meanwhile, the International Court of Justice is also silent,

even as Israel is violating its orders not to impede the delivery of aid. Still, the International Court of Justice has announced that it will make public an advisory opinion on July 19 regarding the legal consequences of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories. This advisory ruling will be rejected by Israel and questioned by the US, rendering it another symbolic victory for the Palestinians while changing little on the ground. Palestinians have been waiting for justice for more than seven decades. They have been waiting for the International Criminal Court to issue arrest warrants for almost two months. They have dozens of UNSC resolutions in their favor. None have been implemented and Israel has rejected them all. Due to blackmail, intimidation and all sorts of pressure, the International Criminal Court is hesitant to move against Israel. Palestine is not a lost cause and it is a just one indeed. But for justice to be delivered, the culprit must be held accountable. Otherwise, Israel's exceptionalism will become the rule and international law will become a farce.

An unknown number of people have been buried in makeshift graves all over the beleaguered enclave



Allowing Netanyahu to play the statesman, which he is not, is an act of betrayal of all those who have been killed

The case against Netanyahu speaking at the US Congress

YOSSI MEKELBERG



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

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

Already, a week before taking off for a visit to Washington to address US lawmakers on July 24, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's wings have been somewhat clipped. Nearly a decade ago, in his boundless vanity and envy of state leaders who are flown by an aircraft specially designated for them, he ordered an aging Boeing 767 to be converted to the highest pampering demands of himself and his wife. Eight years on, and at an estimated cost of 1 billion shekels (\$277 million), the "Wing of Zion" will leave the ground for one of the most controversial visits of an Israeli prime minister to the US. Nevertheless, it was revealed that this expensive toy was unable to make a direct transatlantic flight while carrying the full load of the prime minister's entourage and hence an interim stopover in the Czech Republic and Hungary was considered. Alas, according to Kan, Israel's public

broadcaster, this plan was decided against, amid fears that the International Criminal Court was readying an arrest warrant against the Israeli PM as a result of the way he has conducted the war in Gaza. What looks like a mere technical issue encapsulates Netanyahu's reign of sheer hedonism and wastefulness when it comes to public money and the transformation of the Israeli prime minister into a pariah with an international arrest warrant hanging over his head after embroiling his country in its longest war since independence. Those are all convincing reasons for the US Congress to have never thrown him the lifeline of inviting him to deliver a speech on one of the world's more prestigious stages. An invitation to a foreign leader to address a joint meeting of Congress is a rare occasion and is usually a recognition of the close relations between the US and this country. It appears to honor the personal contribution of the invitee to these relations or even for his or her

exceptional contribution to world affairs. But Netanyahu represents none of the above. As a matter of fact, he represents the exact opposite. Allowing Netanyahu to play the statesman, which he is not, is an act of betrayal of all those who have been killed, maimed and/or lost everything they had since Oct. 7. And what is the main aim of extending this prestigious invitation? It is a cheap and obvious attempt by the Republicans in Congress, in an election year, to gain some support among friends of Israel and to push the Democrats into a corner, trapped between their support for Israel and their opposition to Netanyahu as someone who is bringing calamity to his own country and endangering its relations with the US as its closest and most consequential ally. Giving Netanyahu a stage that is an international as well as an American one, while he has not made a single concession on any of the issues the US holds as important to ending the war in Gaza, bringing

the hostages back and embarking on the enormous path of rebuilding the Gaza Strip, is providing a failed and discredited prime minister and his coalition of extremists with an undeserved tailwind for their efforts to cling to power. Sadly, one is accustomed to some level of cynicism in politics, but this invitation is a total eclipse of judgment at the expense of the good of the people. In 2015, Netanyahu used a similar occasion in Congress to lobby against the Iran nuclear deal and to unashamedly intervene in US domestic affairs. In 2015, 58 American lawmakers showed their integrity and good political judgment in skipping Netanyahu's speech. This time, the number is expected to be higher and it will be a true test for those who are genuine friends of Israel, who care about human rights and who support peace, let alone doing what is best for US interests. They should vote with their feet by leaving the benches of Congress empty during that speech.

Opinion

What Modi-Putin summit means for China and US

ZAID M. BELBAGI



July is proving to be an eventful month globally, with concerns over American President Joe Biden's candidacy, an assassination attempt on Republican candidate Donald Trump and last week's much-talked-about visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Moscow to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin for the 22nd India-Russia annual summit.

This was Modi's first visit to Russia since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022. The visit led to a renewed commitment to political, military, economic, cultural and energy cooperation.

India and Russia have shared strong relations since the former's independence in 1947. As India's independence coincided with the start of the Cold War between the US and the Russian Federation's predecessor, the USSR, the South Asian giant led the move to be nonaligned in this great power competition. Its nonalignment, however, always had a slight tilt toward the USSR and India actively sought American support only briefly during its 1962 war with China.

The convivial exchange between the two leaders was equally the result of India's

historical warmth toward Russia and Modi's style of personalized diplomacy. In Putin, Modi has found a friend who shares the skill of being a muscular leader with a penchant for maintaining strong visibility in the public eye. This has provided a fillip to bilateral relations since Modi's ascent to power in 2014.

India's neutral position under Modi's leadership on the Russian invasion of

Ukraine in 2022 and the ongoing war has also helped. Moreover, India has made use of the significant drop in price of Russian oil to today become its largest purchaser.

Despite this closeness, India has never abandoned diplomatic relations with the West. Building on the nonalignment inherent

in its foreign policy, New Delhi has built strong economic and political cooperation with the US and its Western allies. India's increased proximity to Russia is, therefore, increasingly of concern to the US and its Western allies.

Modi's recent visit to Russia was undoubtedly part of an Indian effort to preserve ties with an old ally, but the relationship is increasingly changing. India is wary of Russia's growing closeness with China under

President Xi Jinping's leadership. Moscow is certainly dependent on India for trade and, since 2022, for international legitimacy amid Western sanctions and hostility. However, its dependence on China is greater.

China and Russia have shared strong commercial, diplomatic and military relations in recent years and Moscow is today China's largest oil supplier. This is a matter of concern for India, whose own relations with Beijing have historically been tense and have deteriorated in recent years due to several border disputes.

In this light, Modi's visit to Moscow aimed to be a reminder to Putin that India continues to be a time-tested ally of Russia. This is key to India's efforts to reduce Russian dependence on China and secure Russian support during any hostilities between India and China.

The fact that the US keenly watched and expressed its concerns over the clear camaraderie between Modi and Putin illustrates India's growing strategic significance for the West, with the latter believing that India's diplomatic relations directly impact Western interests. Further, India's location as a neighbor of China is strategically important for the US amid the atmosphere of a "great game" between Washington and

Beijing. This location is integral to Western plans to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative, the strongest example of which is the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, which was announced last year at the G20 Summit in New Delhi.

Given the role played by India in the West's global ambitions, it is clear why the White House raised concerns over the recent India-Russia summit, while urging

the former to use its relations with Moscow to end the war in Ukraine.

In reality, India will not take any diplomatic decision that may jeopardize its relations with the US in any significant manner. However, Modi's continued strategic ambivalence toward Russia is an important reminder to the US that

India, and the broader Global South, has come into its own in foreign policymaking. As analyst Chietig Bajpae highlights, India is drawing up a foreign policy that is "non-Western, but not explicitly anti-Western."

Despite India's commitment to maintaining relations with the US, it is nonetheless going to secure its partnership with Russia, as this is key to security in India's immediate neighborhood.

India will not take any diplomatic decision that may jeopardize its relations with the US in any significant manner

Modi has found a friend who shares the skill of being a muscular leader with a penchant for maintaining strong visibility

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

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Shanghai grouping continues under global radar

EHTESHAM SHAHID



The 24th Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit in Astana this month had all the ingredients of a multilateral potboiler. Chinese President Xi Jinping's emphasis on "a common home of good-neighbourliness and friendship" notwithstanding, the summit presented a usual mix of hits and misses. More importantly, another Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit went beneath the global radar, which is not ideal for a forum representing about 40 percent of the world's population and whose members contribute about \$23 trillion to global gross domestic product.

The agenda was understandably inward-looking, as has mostly been the case. Its member countries looked to strengthen relations, provide practical solutions to shared challenges and enhance regional and international cooperation. Considering the group's composition, the agenda typically revolves around Central Asia. These forums do not often address broader global concerns or significantly impact major international crises.

Some member countries' internal issues have ramifications on the forum's agenda. So, if China and Russia face criticism for their domestic and foreign policies, this

can undermine the organization's credibility as a forum for promoting lofty values elsewhere. Due to this contradiction, the group has not produced many tangible outcomes or resolutions with significant global repercussions. Its activities are often seen as more symbolic than substantive in addressing major global challenges.

It operates in a crowded field of international organizations and regional groupings.

It competes for attention and influence with organizations that have broader memberships and more established roles in global governance. Seen through the prism of geopolitical rivalry, particularly between its major members, China and Russia, and other global powers like the US, the organization can cause skepticism about its intentions and effectiveness in promoting genuine cooperation and stability.

China and Russia now see the grouping as an extension of their sphere of influence in their growing challenge to the US-led alliance. This is a departure from the days when Beijing and Moscow looked at the organization as a platform to project influence beyond Central Asia, including regional security, stability in Afghanistan and economic connectivity through the Belt and Road Initiative. In recent years, they have strengthened their

cooperation within the group amid increasing tensions with Western powers.

Noticeably, they have sought to deepen economic ties, enhance military cooperation and align their diplomatic positions on international issues such as climate change and multilateralism. They typically try coordinating their regional and global positions, often advocating for a multipolar world order and opposing unilateralism. In other words, the organization serves as a platform where China and Russia can bolster their strategic partnership and influence in Eurasia while managing their differences and ensuring regional stability.

Some takeaways from the summit were worth noticing. As part of the group's development strategy until 2035, for example, the member states approved a long-term strategy outlining collective contributions.

Ironically, what makes Shanghai Cooperation Organization summits relevant to the world order is also perhaps why they have been largely ignored over the years. At the core of the experiment lies the "Shanghai Spirit" and the pursuit of shared development. Despite efforts to make it mainstream, the spirit remains a distant dream in today's bipolar world, as it advocates for a multipolar world order. The organization emphasizes equal partnerships, respect for

sovereignty and noninterference in internal affairs, contrasting the unilateral actions and hegemonic tendencies often associated with bipolarity.

Dichotomy also surrounds economic cooperation and development. The Shanghai Spirit encourages economic cooperation and integration among member states, which is particularly relevant in today's global economy, where

economic interdependence can mitigate the adverse effects of geopolitical rivalries. Moreover, initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative, supported by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, promote infrastructure development and connectivity, enhancing economic resilience and growth.

Overall, while the organization plays a role in regional affairs and serves as a platform for dialogue among its member states, its limited global influence and the perceptions surrounding its member states' domestic policies contribute to its lack of serious consideration by the broader international community. A global ecosystem for such a spirit to pervade does not yet exist, so events such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization summits slip below the radar, whether inadvertently or otherwise.

Its activities are often seen as more symbolic than substantive in addressing major global challenges

The organization serves as a platform where China and Russia can bolster their strategic partnership

Ehtesham Shahid is an editor, researcher, and analyst based in the UAE. X: @e2sham

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Morgan Stanley delivered another strong quarter in an improving capital markets environment.

Ted Pick
CEO of Morgan Stanley



Business



Saudi Arabia has strategically expanded its sukuk issuance to diversify financing sources and promote Islamic finance within its economy, supporting infrastructure and economic development while attracting global investors seeking Shariah-compliant opportunities. SPA

ISLAMIC BONDS

Global sukuk issuance hits \$91.9bn in H1: S&P Global

Marginal year-on-year increase of 0.87 percent driven by issuers from Saudi Arabia and the UAE

Nirmal Narayanan Riyadh

Global sukuk issuances reached \$91.9 billion in the first half of 2024, marking a marginal year-on-year increase of 0.87 percent, driven by issuers from Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

According to the latest report from S&P Global, foreign currency issuances reached \$32.7 billion in the first six months of 2024, marking a 23.8 percent surge compared to the same period the previous year.

The credit rating agency highlighted that improved visibility on the medium-term trajectory of interest rates has boosted foreign currency-denominated sukuk issuance.

A sukuk is an Islamic financial certificate that represents ownership of an asset and complies with Shariah law, distinguishing it from conventional bonds.

Saudi Arabia has strategically expanded its sukuk issuance to diversify financing sources and promote Islamic finance within its economy, supporting infrastructure and economic development while attracting global investors seeking Shariah-compliant opportunities.

"High financing needs in core Islamic finance countries, stable rates, and improved clarity on the future path of rate cuts explain the continued increase in foreign currency-denominated issuances," stated S&P Global.

Its findings follow a recent report by Saudi Arabia's Capital

Market Authority, indicating significant growth in the Kingdom's sukuk and debt capital market since 2019, exceeding SR30 billion, and achieving an annual growth rate of 7.9 percent.

Moreover, Saudi Arabia's National Debt Management Center reported completing the issuance of a riyal-denominated Islamic bond for June totaling SR4.4 billion. The Kingdom had issued sukuk amounting to SR3.23 billion in May, SR7.39 billion in April, and SR4.4 billion in March.

Global forecast

Meanwhile, S&P Global has maintained its global sukuk issuance forecast at around \$160 billion to \$170 billion, buoyed by strong market performance in the first half of 2024.

The US-based firm emphasized that the Islamic bond market's steady growth will be propelled by economic diversification initiatives in countries such as Saudi Arabia, as well as the robust expansion of the non-oil sectors in the UAE.

The report also underscored



High financing needs in core Islamic finance countries, stable rates, and improved clarity on the future path of rate cuts explain the continued increase in foreign currency-denominated issuances.

contributions to the sukuk market's growth from countries like Oman, Malaysia, and Kuwait.

It added that geopolitical risks are not expected to adversely impact the issuances of these Shariah-compliant debt products globally.

"Geopolitical risk has not yet dragged on issuance but could pose some downside risk, though we do not expect significant disruption," said the agency.

S&P noted that the adoption of the Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions' Sharia Standard 62 might lower issuance volumes in the medium term if it significantly changes the nature and risk profile of sukuk instruments.

In late 2023, the AAOIFI released its exposure draft of Sharia Standard 62 on sukuk, delaying the industry feedback deadline twice, with the final extension set to July 31, 2024, from March 31, 2024.

According to the credit rating

FASTFACT

Saudi Arabia's National Debt Management Center reported completing the issuance of a riyal-denominated Islamic bond for June totaling SR4.4 billion. The Kingdom had issued sukuk amounting to SR3.23 billion in May, SR7.39 billion in April, and SR4.4 billion in March.

agency, the proposed draft could potentially alter the nature of the sukuk market and lead to increased fragmentation.

The guidelines cover Shariah requirements for issuances, asset backing, and ownership transfer. They also address investment structures, financing mechanisms, and trading and settlement procedures.

"A key requirement of the standard is that the ownership and risks related to the underlying assets are to be transferred

to sukuk holders. As such, the market will shift from structures where the contractual obligations of sukuk sponsors underpin the repayment to structures where the underlying assets have a more prominent role," said S&P Global.

The report further noted that the adoption of these proposed standards could make these Islamic bonds more expensive than conventional issuances.

It added: "However, it is difficult to anticipate the appetite for such instruments from both investors and issuers, as well as the legality of moving assets off their balance sheets, given the current market structure. This could either lead to further market fragmentation or worse, issuance could be put on hold until sukuk structures figure out a middle ground."

The report, however, added that the adoption of the AAOIFI's Standard 62 guidelines is unlikely to disrupt existing sukuk, since any changes in contractual obligations are subject to investors' consent.

Local issuances

Despite the growth of foreign issuances, local currency-denominated issuances witnessed a decline of 8.8 percent in the first half of this year compared to the same period in 2023.

S&P Global noted that this downturn was driven by the drop in local currency issuances in countries like Türkiye, the UAE, and Pakistan.

"The largest drop of local currency issuances was in Türkiye, where monetary

tightening combined with better fiscal policy coordination continues to help rebalance the economy," said the report.

It added: "In the UAE, the decline can be explained by lower local-currency denominated issuance by the Federal Government and other authorities. For Pakistan, the issue might be related to a lack of data on issuances in the first half of 2024."

On a positive note, the report underscored the growth of Saudi Arabia's local currency issuance.

"We have observed that local currency issuance in Saudi Arabia has resumed its growing trend. The government has tapped the market with jumbo issuances and has also started to issue retail sukuk," added S&P Global.

On the other hand, financing needs in core Islamic finance countries, stable rates, and improved clarity on the future path of rate cuts drove the continued increase in foreign currency-denominated issuances.

"We have seen a high issuance volume in Saudi where the government and banks continue to tap into the market to finance various projects related to the economic transformation plan. We now expect the Saudi banking system to shift to a moderate net external debt position in the next few months," said the report.

S&P Global added that countries like the UAE, Malaysia, Kuwait and Qatar also witnessed a rise in foreign currency-denominated issuances during the first half of this year.



The Islamic bond market's steady growth will be propelled by economic diversification initiatives in countries such as Saudi Arabia, as well as the robust expansion of the non-oil sectors in the UAE. SPA



A Saudi-German delegation, including political, economic, and media representatives, along with Saudia Group executives, paid a visit to the Airbus factory in Hamburg, Germany, to commemorate the largest aircraft deal in Saudi aviation history. [X/@SaudiaGroup](#)

COLLABORATION

Saudia delegation visits Airbus in Hamburg to mark historic deal

Landmark agreement signed in May includes the acquisition of 105 state-of-the-art A320neo and A321neo aircraft

Noor Nugali,
Nadin Hassan Hamburg

A delegation from Saudia airline has made a special visit to Airbus's factory in Hamburg to see for itself the progress of the largest aircraft deal in the Kingdom's aviation history.

This landmark agreement, signed in May, includes the acquisition of 105 state-of-the-art A320neo and A321neo aircraft, which are to be distributed between Saudia and its low-cost carrier, flyadeal.

The deal is the latest in the longstanding relationship between Saudia and Airbus, which began in the early 1980s when Saudia became the launch customer for the Airbus A300-600, delivered in March 1984, coinciding with the start of operations to Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The most recent aircraft deal, valued at \$19 billion, aligns closely with Saudia Group's Vision 2030 objectives, aiming to transport 330 million travelers, accommodate 150 million visits, and serve 30 million pilgrims.

Speaking to Arab News at the event, Michael Kindsgrab, German Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, said: "This is a great day for German-Saudi economic relations. This is the biggest aircraft deal we've ever signed between Airbus and Saudi Arabia and Saudia airlines, so this really leads into the future for more sustainable, ever more safe, more comfortable aviation."

He added: "This is a very big sign of the trust Saudia places into Airbus into the possibility of Airbus to make Saudia a happy customer. It's a very good day for Saudi-German relations. I'm happy to be part of it."

The deal significantly strengthens Saudi Arabia's position as a hub for entertainment, sports, and major events, bolstering its global influence. It also boosts local content, fosters business entrepreneurship, and fuels sustainable economic growth for the Kingdom.

Strengthening capabilities and workforce

Emphasizing a holistic investment strategy, the deal prioritizes local workforce development and technology transfer, fostering innovation across the aviation sector, and contributing to local content worth an estimated SR2.5

Our visit today has provided us with a special opportunity to witness the efforts and processes that define Airbus leadership in the industry.

Ibrahim Al-Omar
Director General of Saudia



FASTFACT

The deal is the latest in the longstanding relationship between Saudia and Airbus, which began in the early 1980s when Saudia became the launch customer for the Airbus A300-600, delivered in March 1984, coinciding with the start of operations to Colombo, Sri Lanka.

billion (\$670 million).

Additionally, the agreement will transform the Saudi small and medium enterprise sector into an essential contributor within Airbus' global supply chain.

Addressing the Saudi delegation in Hamburg, President of Airbus International Wouter van Wersch described the deal as "a fantastic opportunity for us to strengthen our cooperation."

He continued: "We are ready right here and right now to grow with the Kingdom through its ambitions. We can turn many opportunities into realities."

Van Wersch said that each aircraft takes six months to finish, and added: "We have many Saudis working in our teams, and our cooperation is built on a strong partnership through various activities."

Another significant outcome of this deal is that it will promote strong economic and diplomatic collaboration between Saudi Arabia and European countries.

Regional stability and global cooperation

This will create investment opportunities and foster the

creation of high-caliber, direct and indirect jobs in the Airbus manufacturing countries across Europe, particularly in Germany.

Reflecting on the 40-year relationship between his company and Airbus, director general of Saudia Ibrahim Al-Omar said the latest agreement was a "historic deal."

Al-Omar also stressed that the partnership will reflect a robust effect that goes beyond just the immediate participants, benefiting regions in Germany and Europe by creating high-quality jobs.

Moreover, the partnership exemplifies how international collaborations can spur innovation and economic growth globally.

Speaking to Arab News, Al-Omar said: "Our visit today has provided us with a special opportunity to witness the efforts and processes that define Airbus leadership in the industry."

The amount of job opportunities that such deals create, make it a social economic deal.

Khaled Tash
Group chief marketing officer for Saudia



"The facility and the skilled workforce at Airbus demonstrate a commitment to excellence that aligns perfectly with Saudia Group's vision to enhance our guest experience and expand our capability. We are excited about the future and the promising production timeline."

He added that together the firms are "not only shaping the future of aviation but also building a legacy of excellence and innovation."

Also speaking to Arab News, Khaled Tash, the group chief marketing officer for Saudia, noted that as Airbus is a key economic driver in Europe, other countries on the continent will see benefits from the order.

"A deal like these 105 aircraft - imagine what kind of job opportunities it creates here in Germany, in France, in Spain, in the UK where the different parts are being manufactured, but also back in Saudi Arabia," he said.

Tash further explained that each new aircraft requires about six to eight pilots and co-pilots, along with over 20 cabin crew members.

Additionally, a significant number of technicians and engineers are needed to maintain and perform all necessary maintenance work on the aircraft.

"The amount of job opportunities that such deals create, make it a social economic deal, much more than just an airline deal with a manufacturer," Tash said.

A new experience

The \$19 billion deal, announced at the Future Aviation Forum in Riyadh in May, will see Saudia acquire 54 A321neo planes, while flyadeal will receive 12 A320neo and 39 A321neo aircrafts.

The agreement was announced in the presence of Minister of Transport and Logistic Services Saleh bin Nasser Al-Jasser, Director General of Saudia Group Ibrahim Al-Omar, and Benoit de Saint-Exupéry, executive vice president of sales of Airbus.

Speaking at the forum, Al-Omar stated that over the next five years, 88 new aircraft will be added to the fleet, adding: "If we refer to the renovation of the guest cabin, we promise everyone a new experience in the business and hospitality classes based on privacy and the innovation of new products as this project will include new aircraft in addition to the current fleet."

He went on to say that the first plane will be equipped with new seats by the end of 2025.

Starting in the fourth quarter of 2024, Saudi Airlines will begin offering fast and high-quality internet services on its flights.

Additionally, the airline will equip its aircraft with high-resolution screens that are Bluetooth-enabled and compatible with most smart devices. This upgrade will be implemented on both new and existing aircraft.

Saudia Arabia's aviation strategy aims to triple passenger numbers, connect to over 250 destinations, and manage 4.5 million tonnes of cargo by 2030.

Business News



The feeder funds, which become operational under the Qualified Domestic Institutional Investor program, began trading on July 16. Reuters

BOOSTING TIES

Chinese investors show keen interest in Saudi equities

New offerings mark a significant step in deepening economic ties

Arab News Riyadh

Chinese investors showed strong interest in Saudi equities as two new exchange-traded funds focused on the Kingdom's stocks debuted in Shanghai and Shenzhen.

The feeder funds, operating under the Qualified Domestic Institutional Investor program, began trading on July 16, with both briefly hitting the 10 percent daily limit on their launch day.

The first fund, CSOP Saudi Arabia ETF QDII, managed by China Southern Asset Management, is listed on the Shenzhen Stock Exchange after raising 634 million Chinese yuan (\$87 million).

The second fund, the Huatai-PineBridge managed CSOP Saudi Arabia ETF QDII, started trading on the Shanghai Stock Exchange after raising 590 million Chinese yuan, Bloomberg reported.

The new offerings mark a significant step in the deepening economic ties between China and Saudi Arabia, allowing mainland investors to diversify their portfolios with exposure to the Kingdom's stock market.

This comes as investor relations between the two nations flourish with China becoming the top greenfield foreign direct investor in Saudi Arabia with investments amounting to \$16.8 billion in 2023, a 1,020 percent rise from the previous year.

The two ETFs indirectly invest

FASTFACT

The two ETFs indirectly invest in the Kingdom's stock market through the CSOP Saudi Arabia ETF, which was listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, marking the first Saudi Arabia-focused ETF in the Asia-Pacific region.

in the Kingdom's stock market through the CSOP Saudi Arabia ETF, which was listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, marking the first Saudi Arabia-focused ETF in the Asia-Pacific region.

Following their approval from the China Securities Regulatory Commission last month, these funds are designed to

facilitate greater international diversification for Chinese investors, particularly in sectors where Saudi Arabia has considerable influence, such as energy and oil.

"People will pay more attention to Saudi Arabia looking at the energy and financial sector compared with US or Japan investment options," Mao Wei, chief equity investment officer at China Southern Asset Management Co., told Bloomberg.

Mainland investors will find it easier to build exposure to Saudi stocks using the funds as they can invest in yuan and find information in Chinese, according to Melody Xian He, deputy chief executive officer at CSOP Asset Management.

DIVERSIFICATION

Abu Dhabi's GDP grows by 3.3% in Q1

Arab News Riyadh

Abu Dhabi's gross domestic product increased by 3.3 percent annually during the first quarter of 2024, driven by the growth of non-oil economic activities.

According to the Statistics Centre of Abu Dhabi, this rise is primarily attributed to



Abu Dhabi's non-oil GDP increased by 4.7 percent in the first three months of this year. Shutterstock

the performance of non-oil economic activities; non-oil GDP increased significantly by 4.7 percent during the first three months of this year.

This trend of strong performance in non-oil sectors extends beyond Abu Dhabi, with Saudi Arabia's real GDP expected to grow by 2.5 percent in 2024,

driven by a robust 4.8 percent increase in non-oil private activities.

Similarly, economic growth in the Gulf Cooperation Council region is projected to rebound to 2.8 percent in 2024 and 4.7 percent in 2025, according to the World Bank's Spring 2024 Gulf Economic Update.

The SCAD's report noted that transportation, construction, financial activities, and accommodation, as well as food sectors, led the positive trend.

The center's estimates revealed that non-oil activities contributed 54.1 percent to Abu Dhabi's overall economy in that period.

The quarterly value of the non-oil economy reached 154.7 billion dirhams (\$42.1 billion), while the total value of Abu Dhabi's economy, including oil and non-oil sectors, was 286 billion dirhams.

Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development, Ahmed Jasim Al-Zaabi, stated: "Our economy continues to deliver consistent, stellar growth, reaffirming its resilience and dynamism to navigate headwinds and global challenges."

BizBriefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Modest growth

IMF sees steady global growth

The global economy is set for modest growth over the next two years amid cooling activity in the US, a bottoming-out in Europe and stronger consumption and exports for China, but risks to the path abound, the International Monetary Fund said on Tuesday.

The IMF kept its 2024 global real gross domestic product growth forecast unchanged from April at 3.2 percent. The forecasts fail to shift growth from the lackluster levels that IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva has warned would lead to "the tepid twenties." Reuters

Equity markets

Morgan Stanley's profit rose in second quarter

Morgan Stanley's profit rose in the second quarter as investment banking activity rebounded on strength in equity.

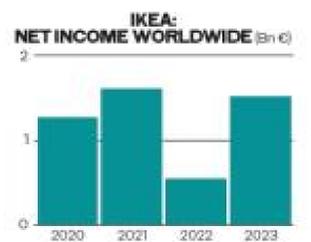
Shares of the bank still fell 2 percent in premarket trading as wealth management revenue rose after powering growth through most of 2022 and 2023. "The firm delivered another strong quarter in an improving capital markets environment," said CEO Ted Pick.

A rosier economic outlook, expectations of US interest rate cuts and surging equity markets have spurred buyouts, debt sales and stock offerings after a nearly two-year dry spell for Wall Street. Reuters

Chart of THE DAY

IKEA had a global net income of around €1.5bn in the financial year 2023.

Source: Statista



What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

The Indispensable Right

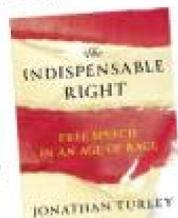
JONATHAN TURLEY

Jonathan Turley's "The Indispensable Right" places the current attacks on free speech in their proper historical, legal, and political context.

The Constitution and the Bill of Rights were not only

written for times like these, but in a time like this.

Turley reminds us that we remain a nation grappling with the implications of free expression and with the limits of our tolerance for the speech of others.



Slower growth

US retail sales flat in June

Retail sales in the US slipped less than analysts anticipated in June on a weaker performance in the auto and gas segments, government data showed Tuesday.

The slower consumption growth adds to recent data showing that the world's biggest economy is cooling gradually — a trend likely to raise the central bank's confidence that it can soon begin cutting interest rates.

To ease demand and bring inflation back down sustainably, the Federal Reserve has rapidly lifted the benchmark lending rate and in recent months, held it at a decades-high level. AFP

Investment banking

Bank of America profits fall in second quarter

Bank of America said its profits fell in the second quarter, as higher interest rates ate into its expenses, including its large consumer banking franchise.

But like Goldman Sachs, Bank of America saw a resurgence of activity in its investment banking division which helped make up for some of the weakness in other parts of the bank.

The bank said Tuesday it earned a profit of \$6.9 billion, compared with \$7.4 billion in the same period last year. On a per share basis, BofA earned 83 cents. AP

The Saudi market is one of our key markets and Rheem continually strives to bring the best value to the Kingdom.

Brian Hemenstall
Vice President and General Manager
of Rheem Middle East



Corporate

PRESS RELEASES FROM THE WORLD OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE

FOSTERING LOCAL TALENT

Saudi space graduate Sarah Alhabbas lauded in Germany

Sarah Alhabbas, the first graduate of Serco's Space Graduate Program, was invited on Thursday to the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Germany to meet with Prince Abdullah bin Khalid bin Sultan Al-Saud, the Saudi ambassador to Germany. The invitation was in recognition of her remarkable progress within a sector pitted to be instrumental in the achievement of Vision 2030. During the meeting, Alhabbas discussed how her experience with Serco can be an inspiration to the next generation of Saudi talent.

Alhabbas, currently working in Serco's Copernicus Operations Support Services or COP-2, with the European Space Operations Center in Darmstadt, Germany as part of her intensive training program, was joined at this special event by Serco's Middle East's Head of Space Amar Vora, Serco's KSA Country Director Mona Althagafi and Serco's Head of COP-2 Islam Alizada. This prestigious invitation underscores Saudi Arabia's keenness to develop its human resources and the pivotal role Serco is playing in advancing the Kingdom's capabilities in the space industry, highlighting how the private sector company is supporting the Kingdom's commitment to nurturing local talent capabilities to support Vision 2030 as a government impact partner.

Alhabbas was chosen by Serco as their first space graduate from more than 400 applications. An aerospace engineering



Sarah Alhabbas and Prince Abdullah Al-Saud were joined at the special event by Serco's senior officials Amar Vora, Mona Althagafi and Islam Alizada.

graduate with a minor in applied mathematics from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in the US, she joined Serco as a graduate spacecraft operations engineer. In the past 12 months, Alhabbas underwent comprehensive training in the Kingdom and is now coming to the end of an intensive six-month training program at Serco's COP-2 facilities in Germany, aimed at deepening her theoretical knowledge. Upon completion, Alhabbas will be certified as a proficient spacecraft operations engineer in a graduation taking place later this summer. After

FASTFACT

Sarah Alhabbas was chosen by Serco as their first space graduate from more than 400 applications.

supporting a launch campaign, she will return to Saudi Arabia where she will transfer the knowledge gained to the wider Serco space team and its clients.

This accomplishment highlights the broader impact of Serco's initiatives in the Kingdom. Serco has more than 60 years of space

experience globally, supporting civil and military space programs, including those of the European Space Agency, the UK Ministry of Defense and NASA. In 2023, it launched a dedicated space division in the Middle East to support local talent and develop regional capabilities, ensuring the transfer of its wide-ranging operational knowledge and capabilities to the region. Its graduate, space-specific program is the first of its kind not only within the Kingdom, but also across Serco globally. By leveraging decades of global experience in the space industry,

Serco is playing a crucial role in transferring knowledge and skills to Saudi nationals, impacting a better future.

Prince Abdullah said: "Sarah Alhabbas' accomplishments epitomize the potential and the great expectation of Saudi Arabia's youth in pioneering new frontiers. Her journey marks a significant personal achievement and symbolizes the leadership's confidence and ambition in our nation's youth. We are happy to celebrate Sarah's accomplishment and look forward to her contribution to the Kingdom's aerospace sector."

TRADE SHOW

Second InFlavour expo to position KSA as world's food hub

Organizers of InFlavour, Saudi Arabia's influential government-backed F&B event, are looking to build on the success of last year's inaugural edition as the event moves to Riyadh Front Exhibition and Conference Center later this year. The show's second iteration will run from Oct. 1-3 and will further accelerate the nation's ambitions to become the Middle Eastern food and hospitality hub of the world. It is backed by the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture of Saudi Arabia, the Saudi Business Center and the Local Content and Government Procurement Authority.

InFlavour's second annual event will be a powerful business-generation and knowledge-sharing platform. This year's theme is "A new beginning for food," and InFlavour will help F&B businesses increase trade margins and leverage investment opportunities in the region. The event will also position F&B businesses as leaders and innovators by facilitating trade between key decision-makers,

investors, buyers, and entrepreneurs as well as transcending the culture of food through InFlavour's on-site experiences. Global industry disruptors and pioneers will take to the event's multiple stages to deliver thought-provoking insights on the sector's hottest topics and try to inspire change.

The InFlavour Connect match-making feature will enable participants to find suppliers, partners, and decision-makers to future-proof and grow their F&B businesses. Preparations are also underway to re-stage the highly successful Table of Flavours, where accredited chefs showcase their talents and creativity in the Chef's Arena, including an all-star cast of the world's top culinary talent.

Attracting upwards of 30,000 visitors, InFlavour last year took steps toward establishing an international profile with attendees from 130 countries and the involvement of global celebrity chefs Manal Al-Alem and Marco Pierre White, who dubbed the three-day show "an epicurean playground."

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Rheem Middle East progresses in mission to upskill Saudi workforce

A booming Saudi HVAC sector and growing human resources within the Kingdom has solidified the significance of Rheem Middle East's newly opened Innovation Learning Center in Riyadh. The ILC has already made a significant impact in educating, training and professionally developing the HVAC and water heating industry. The center has hosted numerous training sessions and workshops, welcoming professionals and students in the industry since its launch.

Rheem Middle East, a subsidiary of Rheem Global, which is headquartered in Atlanta, US, has a number of brands under its umbrella — RUUD, Richmond and Friedrich. Together, they bring immense American know-how, knowledge and international best practices in HVAC and water heating to young aspiring Saudi trainees in Riyadh. The ILC's advanced facilities have also played a pivotal role in its



The hands-on training rooms are equipped with installed HVAC and water heating units.

mission. The hands-on training rooms, equipped with installed HVAC and water heating units, along with connected water lines, have provided participants with practical experience in installing, servicing and dealing with such products. The classrooms, featuring state-of-the-art live audio and video streaming, and a roundtable room for open discussions, have facilitated collaborative learning experiences for the many trainees that have attended training sessions or workshops at the ILC.

"The Saudi market is one of our key markets and Rheem continually strives to bring the best value

to the Kingdom, be it through quality products or knowledge transfer between experts. The engagement and enthusiasm we've seen from the attendees and visitors has been positive and nothing short of amazing. It's clear that Rheem Middle East is filling a vital need in the Saudi community through our ILC," said Brian Hemenstall, vice president and general manager of Rheem Middle East.

The ILC in Riyadh, which is the second such center in the GCC, highlights Rheem's commitment to innovation and education in the HVAC and water heating industry across the region.

Corporate Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Digital Transformation Google Cloud opens new offices in Kuwait

Google Cloud announced the opening of its new offices in Kuwait licensed by the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority, at an event attended by Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Communication Affairs Omar Saud Al-Omar. This expansion further signifies Google Cloud's commitment to supporting Kuwait's national digital transformation journey, including the modernization of government services and the advancement of economic development. The Google Cloud offices in Kuwait will serve as a hub for collaboration and innovation, bringing together experts from across Google Cloud to work closely with their customers and partners.

Accreditation Burjeel Holdings achieves major milestone

Burjeel Holdings has achieved a significant milestone by receiving institutional accreditation from the National Institute for Health Specialties, an accreditation program in the UAE. Burjeel Holdings is the first private entity in Abu Dhabi to obtain this accreditation as a group.

The accreditation was officially conferred by Dr. Mohammed Al-Houqani, secretary-general of NIHS, during a ceremony attended by Dr. Rashed Obaid Alsuwaidi, executive director of healthcare workforce planning sector, Department of Health — Abu Dhabi, and senior officials from the group.

Security Breach RockYou2024: 10bn passwords leaked

In a significant security breach, nearly 10 billion unique passwords have been leaked on a widely recognized cyber forum. This record-setting release of passwords, was sourced from decades of data breaches and has the potential to be exploited in future attacks.

The database, named "rockyou2024.txt," reportedly contains nearly 10 billion unique passwords, collected from thousands of data leaks. This massive compilation surpasses the previous record holder RockYou2021 by adding 1.5 billion new passwords.

Japan's Naoya Inoue during a press conference ahead of his Sept. 3 super bantamweight fight with Ireland's TJ Doherty, in Tokyo on Tuesday.



Sport News

SHOW OF FORCE

Team Falcons top Esports World Cup Club Championship standings after two weeks of action

Saudi team asserted their supremacy at the world's biggest gaming festival, which runs until Aug. 25 at Boulevard Riyadh City

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabian side Team Falcons have topped the Esports World Cup Club Championship standings after the conclusion of the second week of competition.

Team Falcons claimed Free Fire gold and 1,000 points on Sunday night to add to the 600 points picked up in Mobile Legends: Bang Bang, which also ended on Sunday.

Team Falcons, who top the table with 2,600 points, won Call of Duty: Warzone, the opening tournament of the Esports World Cup, in week one.

Selangor Red Giants, who defeated Team Falcons 4-3 in an epic best-of-seven Mobile Legends: Bang Bang final, sit in second place in the Club Championship standings with 1,000 points.

T1, the South Korean powerhouses who stormed to League of Legends glory thanks to the exploits of gaming superstar Faker, are third with 1,000 points. With 350 points acquired in Warzone, Saudi side, Twisted Minds, are joint eighth.

Faisal bin Homran, chief product officer at the Esports World Cup, said: "The first two weeks of the Esports World Cup produced tournaments and matches that have captured the imagination of gaming fans across the globe. The standard of play has been at the highest level with moments of magic to last long in the memory."

"A special mention must go to the clubs and players who have put on such enthralling performances for the multitude of fans watching in person at the SEF Arena at Boulevard Riyadh City and online from every part of the world. We hope their achievements provide



Saudi Arabia's Team Falcons celebrate after winning Free Fire at the Esports World Cup in Riyadh. Supplied

inspiration to the next generation of gamers in Saudi Arabia and far beyond."

The eight-week Esports World Cup, which features a cross-game structure pitting the world's top clubs and players against one

another across 22 global competitions in 21 leading games, runs until Aug. 25 at Boulevard Riyadh City. The tournament has a prize pool of \$60 million, the largest in the history of esports.

More than 1,500 players,

representing more than 60 nationalities, are battling it out at the Esports World Cup. Week three begins on Wednesday with competitions taking place in the Dota2 Riyadh Masters, Counter-Strike 2, and PUBG Mobile.

WORLD CLASS

New Murabba Stadium: An iconic landmark in Riyadh's sports, entertainment sector

Arab News Riyadh

The New Murabba Development Co. has unveiled plans for the New Murabba Stadium, a distinctive architectural landmark set in the heart of Riyadh, boasting a seating capacity of over 45,000.

This stadium is a key component of the broader New Murabba destination currently under development in the city.

Designed to be a vibrant community hub, the New Murabba Stadium takes inspiration from the acacia tree, a prominent feature of the Wadi Hanifa landscape. The design merges innovative modern aesthetics with elements of sustainability, reflecting New Murabba's unique vision.

With versatile spaces, the New Murabba Stadium is



An architect's perspective of the New Murabba Stadium, which takes inspiration from the acacia tree. SPA

poised to host diverse events, including sports competitions, entertainment events, gaming tournaments, exhibitions, and educational activities. The

stadium will also incorporate cutting-edge technology to ensure an unparalleled experience for fans and participants.

"The New Murabba Stadium embodies Riyadh's transformation into a lively global destination for sports, culture, and entertainment, demonstrating our commitment to delivering

HIGHLIGHT

With versatile spaces, the New Murabba Stadium is poised to host diverse events, including sports competitions, entertainment events, gaming tournaments, exhibitions, and educational activities.

world-class infrastructure that highlights Saudi Arabia's significant transformation," said Michael Dyke, CEO of the New Murabba Development Co.

Construction is expected to be completed by the end of 2032, and this sporting and entertainment venue promises to be a unique architectural feat, aimed at boosting economic and tourism activities in the Saudi capital.

Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST



Transition

'I will give my all,' says Mbappe at Madrid unveiling

French superstar Kylian Mbappe was officially unveiled as a Real Madrid player in Madrid on Tuesday.

The striker, who had completed his medical earlier on Tuesday morning, signed a five-year contract and was handed a No. 9 shirt by club president Florentino Perez.

"Wow," Mbappe said in Spanish to thousands of fans gathered at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

"For years I've dreamed of playing for Real Madrid and today my dream has come true," said the 25-year-old former Paris Saint-Germain player. **AFP**

No deal

Liverpool owners pull out of talks to buy Bordeaux

Bordeaux's problems deepened on Tuesday when Fenway Sports Group, owners of Liverpool, announced it was ending negotiations with the French club which is facing relegation to the third tier.

Bordeaux, which is appealing its demotion from Ligue 2 because of financial problems, said it had "been informed by Fenway Sports Group of its intention not to pursue discussions." **AFP**

Boxing

Inoue to defend titles against Ireland's Doherty

Naoya Inoue will defend his undisputed super-bantamweight world belts against Ireland's TJ Doherty at Tokyo's Ariake Arena in September, the Japanese boxer known as "Monster" announced Tuesday.

The undefeated Inoue stopped Mexico's Luis Nery in front of 55,000 fans at the Tokyo Dome in his last fight in May. It headlined the first boxing card to be held at the venue since 42-1 underdog James "Buster" Douglas knocked out unbeaten heavyweight champion Mike Tyson there in February 1990 in one of the sport's biggest upsets. **AFP**

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'Barbie' writer-director Greta Gerwig — also known for films like 'Lady Bird' and 'Little Women' — has been tapped to receive this year's Pioneer of the Year Award. She's only the second female director to receive the honor after Elizabeth Banks.



Finally

The Six

AFT_r artists

MDLBEAST is staging a series of performances alongside the Esports World Cup 2024 in Riyadh. Here is part one of who to look out for at the AFT_r music shows.



Gunna

The American rapper, singer, and songwriter will hit the stage on July 19 with hits such as "Jump."



DJ Snake

Set to perform on July 19, the French DJ and record producer previously hit the stage at Coachella, the Ultra Music Festival, and Tomorrowland.



G-Eazy

The "Me, Myself & I" hitmaker will perform in Saudi Arabia on July 25, before he heads to Canada for his next show.



Sebastian Ingrosso

The Swedish DJ and music producer, who will perform on July 26, is also a member of the Swedish House Mafia alongside Axwell and Steve Angello.



Don Toliver

Set to hit the stage on Aug. 1, the US rapper's debut mixtape was titled "Donny Womack."

The Houston-born rapper also featured on Travis Scott's album "Astroworld."



Alesso

Aug. 1 will see the Swedish DJ and music producer perform in Riyadh. The EDM artist is known for such tracks as "Heroes" and "Words."

CLOSE UP

Bella Hadid heads to New York for Adidas campaign launch



Arab News Dubai

US Palestinian Dutch supermodel Bella Hadid is the face of Adidas Originals' new campaign for its SL "Super Light" 72 sneaker.

The brand is reintroducing the running shoe, which launched in the summer of 1972, in five colorways. Hadid took part in the launch campaign, which sees the model star in a digital and billboard campaign for the brand — with her image taking over a largescale billboard in New York this week.

"Lucky to still be able to have these (kinds) of pinch me moments," Hadid posted on Instagram alongside a carousel of photos of the billboard.

The photographs for the campaign were shot in Paris and see Hadid posing in the shoes while wearing an Adidas top-and-shorts set with the brand's identifiable three stripes. She holds a bouquet of red-hued flowers in the photos.

Hadid is celebrating more than just her latest campaign — this spring, the model launched her own brand Orebella. The inaugural products were three perfumes.

In July, the beauty

entrepreneur announced that a percentage of the proceeds from her brand are being donated to the Orebella Alchemy Foundation, a charitable initiative aimed at creating positive change across various communities.

The Orebella Alchemy Foundation partners with organizations that are "deeply personal" to Hadid, such as Girls Club New York, which empowers young women and "youth of color," and the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.), which aims to change lives by providing equine-assisted services to people with disabilities.

"We will be donating a minimum financial donation of 1 percent of all Orebella net sales to charity, as well as delivering service hours, community outreach and social promotion," Hadid wrote on social media. "I can't wait to keep growing and including even more amazing organizations. I have so many different organizations that are important to me and we will continue to roll them out."

Bella Hadid was photographed in New York as she attended the launch of her campaign with Adidas. Getty Images/Instagram



Shira Haas plays Ruth Bat-Seraph.

'CAPTAIN AMERICA'

Marvel downplays Israeli background of comic character

Arab News Dubai

Amid the hype surrounding the release of the first "Captain America: Brave New World" trailer, Marvel Studios is seeking to distance itself from the controversial roots of one of its characters.

A story published on Marvel's official website contained the following information about new character Ruth Bat-Seraph, whose inclusion in the Marvel Cinematic Universe was previously confirmed in 2022.

"New to the cast is Shira Haas, who joins as Ruth Bat-Seraph. A former Black Widow, Ruth is now a high-ranking US government official who has the trust of President Ross," said Marvel.

The description confirms some significant changes from the comics, where Ruth is originally a mutant named Sabra, an Israeli superhero and an agent of Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency. The character has long been controversial owing to her connection to the Israel-Palestine conflict — a controversy that has taken on even greater significance recently due to the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

Although the term "Sabra" refers to a Jewish person born in Israel, the name is also considered insensitive considering the Sabra and Shatila massacre of 1982.

Ruth is played by Israeli actress Shira Haas, who was first cast in the role in 2022. She has previously appeared in movies including "Asia" and "The Zookeeper's Wife," as well as the Netflix series "Bodies."

INTERVIEW

Emirati brand becomes first UAE childrenswear label at London's Harrods

Saffiya Ansari Dubai

Emirati brand Shatha Essa Kids has become the first childrenswear label from the UAE to be launched at luxury London department store Harrods, with designer Shatha Essa Al-Mulla telling Arab News the move represents a step forward in exporting Emirati creativity to the world.

Al-Mulla ventured into childrenswear last year, after launching her eponymous

womenswear label in 2016. Now, her frothy, fun line of dresses and sets has found a home at the historic store Harrods.

The designer dubbed the achievement "an immense honor and a significant milestone," adding the move "(showcases) Emirati culture and craftsmanship on a prestigious global platform ... (and) also contributes to putting Emirati childrenswear on the international map."

The line features special



The retail space is on the fourth floor of Harrods in London. Supplied

occasion looks for toddlers and girls up to the age of 14, with all the outfits designed and produced in Dubai.

"I design those dresses for my girls first then display them to the world. It is like giving everyone access to our private wardrobe at home," the designer said of the inspiration behind the brand, referring to her two daughters Hessa and Hind.

Summery butter yellows and grey, sophisticated tulle outfits mark the collection,

with rose pink embroidered double-breasted dresses and silk bow-adorned looks on show at the retail space in London.

The interactive retail space, which was designed by Al-Mulla herself, features a theater booth and dress up dolls.

"I aimed to create an ambiance reminiscent of a delightful birthday party ... allowing kids to fully immerse themselves in a whimsical magical environment and enjoy collaborative play," Al-Mulla explained.