

SPOTLIGHT
CAN TURKIYE, SYRIA
TURN THE PAGE ON
A DECADE-LONG
HOSTILITY?
Page 3



OPINION
FRESH APPROACH
NEEDED IF DAESH IS
TO BE DEFEATED
By Hafed Al-Ghwell
Page 10



SPORT
REGIONAL UNDER-13 FOOTBALL
CHAMPIONSHIP IN TAIF Page 15

& FINALLY
CYNTHIA
KHALIFEH
CARVES OUT
A PATH IN
HOLLYWOOD
Page 16



MONDAY, July 22, 2024
Muharram 16, 1446
www.arabnews.com

ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

SINCE 1975

US ELECTION 2024

Joe Biden quits presidential race, endorses Kamala Harris

He will remain in his role as president and commander-in-chief until his term ends

AP, Reuters Washington

US President Joe Biden ended his reelection campaign on Sunday after fellow Democrats lost faith in his ability to beat Donald Trump. He endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris to replace him as the party's candidate.

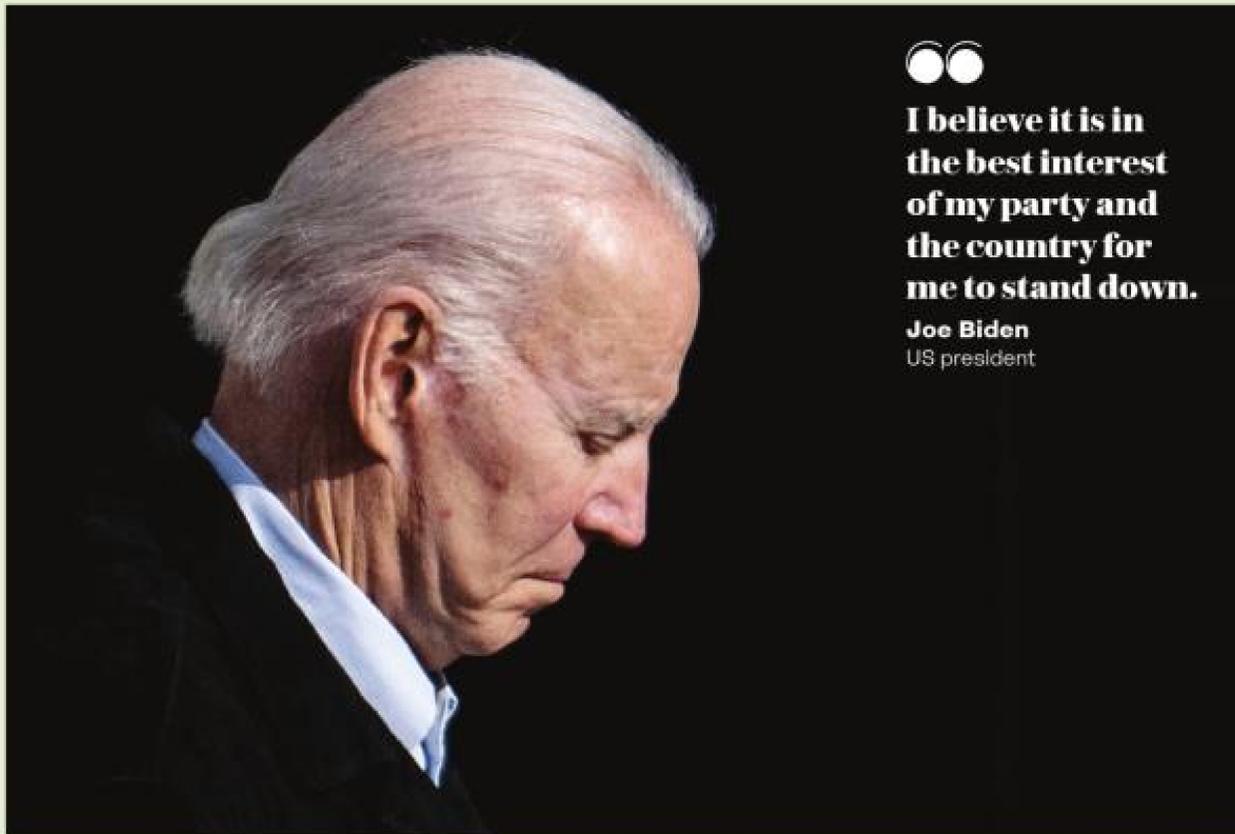
Biden, 81, in a post on X, said he will remain in his role as president and commander-in-chief until his term ends in January 2025 and will address the nation this week.

"It has been the greatest honor of my life to serve as your President. And while it has been my intention to seek reelection, I believe it is in the best interest of my party and the country for me to stand down and to focus solely on fulfilling my duties as President for the remainder of my term," Biden wrote.

His initial statement had not included an endorsement of Harris, but he followed up a few minutes later with an expression of support.

Harris, 59, would become the first Black woman to run at the top of a major-party ticket in the country's history.

Republican presidential candidate Trump told CNN that he thinks Harris will be easier to defeat in November's election than Biden. A CNN reporter said on X that Trump made the comments to the network shortly after Biden announced his decision.



I believe it is in the best interest of my party and the country for me to stand down.

Joe Biden
US president

Biden plans to serve the remainder of his term in office, which ends at noon on Jan. 20, 2025.

The announcement is the latest jolt to a campaign for the White House that both political parties see as the most consequential election in generations, coming just days after the assassination attempt on Trump at a Pennsylvania rally.

A party's presumptive presidential nominee has never stepped out of the race so close to the election.

The closest parallel would be President Lyndon Johnson, who, besieged by the Vietnam War, announced in March 1968 that he would not seek another term.

The decision marks a swift and stunning end to Biden's 52

years in electoral politics, as donors, lawmakers, and even aides expressed their doubts that he could convince voters that he could plausibly handle the job for another four years.

Biden won the vast majority of delegates and every contest but one, which would have made his nomination a formality. Now that he has dropped out, those

delegates will be free to support another candidate. According to federal campaign finance rules, Harris, 59, appeared to be the natural successor, largely because she is the only candidate who can directly tap into the Biden campaign's war chest.

Opinion by Dr. Majid Rafizadeh & Dalila Al-Aqidi Page 9

MIDDLE EAST WAR

Kingdom urges 'maximum restraint' after Israeli attack on Hodeidah

Arab News Jeddah

Saudi Arabia urged restraint on Sunday in the wake of an Israeli strike that the Houthis said killed six people as regional fallout widens from months of war in Gaza.

The Israeli attack which hit the Houthi-controlled city of Hodeidah, "aggravates the current tension in the region and halts the ongoing efforts to end the war in Gaza," the Saudi Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

It "called on all parties to exercise maximum restraint and to distance the region and its people from the dangers of war."

The statement affirmed the Kingdom's "continuous support for peace efforts in Yemen to spare its people more suffering."

Saudi Arabia is not linked to or participating in targeting Hodeidah in Yemen, Ministry of Defense spokesperson Turki Al-Malki said earlier.

The Kingdom will not allow its airspace to be infiltrated by any party, he added.

Houthis, meanwhile, promised a "huge" retaliation against Israel following the deadly strike.

Abdul Malik Al-Houthi, chief of the group, said the strikes on Hodeida would lead to "further escalation and more attacks targeting Israel."

Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree said earlier that the militia's "response to the Israeli aggression against our country is inevitably coming and will be huge."

The Brief

TANWEEN HONOR

Three projects from Saudi Arabia were selected as recipients of the annual Tanween Challenge, hosted by Ithra. **P4**

BAHRAIN FINDING

Bahraini and British archeologists have discovered what is believed to be the first Christian structure in the Gulf, dating back to the 4th century. **P7**

COURT RULING

Bangladesh's Supreme Court scrapped most of the quotas on government jobs that had sparked nationwide unrest. **P8**

RICH HERITAGE

AlUla showcased as world's 'largest living museum'

Royal Commission builds on deep-rooted partnership that exists between Saudi Arabia and China

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia and China have deepened their cultural ties after the Royal Commission for AlUla participated in key global forums in Istanbul and Luoyang.

The RCU attended the Silk Road Dialogue and the International Ancient Capitals Forum to enhance collaboration and showcase AlUla as the world's "largest living museum."

The events underscored AlUla's prominent role within the International Tourism Alliance of Silk

Road Cities, a network connecting 63 destinations across 28 countries along ancient trade routes.

The forums were instrumental in expanding Saudi-China cultural partnerships and organizing official visits to AlUla. Saudi Arabia's strategic focus on tourism, centered around AlUla's rich heritage, has become a cornerstone in deepening cultural and economic ties with China, showcasing the Kingdom's commitment to leveraging its historic assets to foster international partnerships.



Discussions at the International Ancient Capitals Forum included high-level meetings with Luoyang's officials on tourism, agriculture, conservation, and urban development, exploring new areas of cooperation between the two nations.

"The Royal Commission for AlUla continues to build on the deep-rooted foundations of cultural partnership that exist between China, the Kingdom, and northwest Arabia," said an RCU spokesperson.

"The Silk Road Dialogue and

International Ancient Capitals Forum events represented exciting opportunities to develop new avenues of collaboration."

Detailed report Page 13

2 Riyals • Vol. XLIX
No. 229 • 16 pages



During my visit to Baha, I reviewed the Tourism Development Fund's projects in the region which provide tourists with an enriching experience of nature and heritage.

Ahmed Al-Khateeb
Saudi tourism minister



Radar

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.



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.



Riyadh Perfumes exhibit

An exhibition to discover all things scents and the history that led to the Arabian Peninsula becoming one of the most popular places in the world for perfumes. Until Sept. 14, book through saudievents.sa.



Dhahran Idea Lab

Join the monthly gathering of Ithra Center's Idea Lab, where creatives share their knowledge and experiences with like-minded individuals in fields such as art, design and technology. The next meeting is on July 30. Visit the Ithra app for more details.

The Register

THE PICTURES THAT MARK THE DAY



Saudi Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Waleed Elkhareiji met with Ambassador of Gambia to the Kingdom Omar Jibril Sala in Riyadh on Sunday.

During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations and various topics of common interest, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

Meanwhile, Saudi Minister of Human Resources and Social

Development Ahmed Al-Rajhi received Guinea's Minister of Labor and Civil Service Faya Francois Bourouno in Riyadh.

They discussed cooperation in the labor market.

Today's Number

89.5k

According to the Saudi Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture, the Kingdom has achieved a self-sufficiency rate of 68 percent in mango production, exceeding 89,500 tonnes annually, Saudi Press Agency reported on Sunday.

Review

Katsu Sando

WAAD HUSSAIN

Nestled in the bustling heart of Riyadh, Katsu Sando offers an authentic slice of Japan right in the Kingdom's capital. This cozy eatery, with its minimalist yet elegant decor, beautifully marries traditional Japanese elements with modern touches, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere.

Katsu Sando specializes in Japanese sandwiches, presenting a diverse menu perfect for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The restaurant's commitment to cleanliness is evident in every detail, from the meticulous packaging to the tasteful decoration, ensuring a casual yet refined dining experience.



A standout on the breakfast menu is the tuna onigiri. This delightful dish strikes the perfect balance of flavor and texture, making it an ideal light start to your day. For those with a sweet tooth, the fruit sando is a must-try; it combines fresh fruit with soft, pillowy Japanese bread, offering a refreshing and satisfying treat. For lunch, Katsu Sando's bento delight is a great option. It features donburi chicken with rice, crab onigiri, a pumpkin slice, and a Coca-Cola, providing a well-rounded and delicious meal that's sure to satisfy. The restaurant's menu is diverse, catering to various tastes and preferences.

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



'REAL INSPIRATION' Ray Reardon

Six-time world snooker champion Ray Reardon has died at the age of 91 after a short illness.

According to World Snooker Tour, the Welshman passed away on Friday shortly after being given a cancer diagnosis.

Tributes for Reardon poured in from friends and other snooker champions, including his compatriot and three-times world champion Mark Williams, who said in a statement: "Ray is one of the best sports people ever from Wales and the best snooker player ... a real inspiration."

James White, who lost to Reardon in the 1983 International Masters, wrote on X: "Gutted to hear my very good friend Ray Reardon has passed away. A total class act and very kind to me when I was making my way in the game. A giant of the game. Rest in Peace mate."

HARROWING TALE

Erin Molan

Australian radio and television personality Erin Molan has opened up about her past experience with domestic violence.

In an exclusive interview with the Sunday Telegraph, Molan revealed she was abused by one of her former partners and lived in constant fear for her life.

"He came in drunk and dragged me out of bed and started stamping his foot into my head, over and over and over," she said.

"I was lying on the floor screaming and normally if I screamed really loudly he would stop because neighbors would hear," she continued. "But that time he just kept going and going and it felt like my skull was going to crack open."

Molan also revealed other horrifying moments, including when he smashed a bottle over her head and when she feared he would throw her "off a balcony."

"Another time he covered my face with a pillow so

I couldn't breathe. I was crying for my mom. I really thought he would kill me," she said.

Molan said that she kept this experience a secret and did not discuss it with the public until now because she did not want her father, the late Senator Jim Molan, to be heartbroken over what his daughter had gone through.

She also said that she can speak about it now but would not ask others to share their stories, as she understands that these issues are deeply personal, but she wants other women to know that they are not alone, and they can ask for help at any time.

"Could my experience have made these beautiful, innocent women feel less alone, less ashamed, less scared and could that have been the tiny thing that may have empowered them to ask for help, the thing that might have helped to save their lives?" she wondered, wishing for things to change for the better for her and the coming generations.



TheRegion

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Jeddah

- Moonwalk through a night of unparalleled performances, stunning visuals, and nostalgic moments as everyone celebrates the life and artistry of the global phenomenon Michael Jackson on July 24 at the historic Citadel in Amman, Jordan. Secure your tickets through the calendar.jo. Doors

open at 6:30 p.m., and the show starts at 8 p.m. and ends at 10 p.m.

- The Qatar Toy Festival is back at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center, promising fun for the whole family. Children can meet their favorite characters, shop for the coolest new toys, and spend the day enjoying great food and live shows. The

festival will run until Aug. 14. For more details, visit decc.qa.

- The Badaro Farmers Market at College Saint Sauveur in Beirut is the opportunity to purchase locally grown produce and relax with friends over coffee. The market will run every Sunday until Dec. 29. More details on lebtivity.com.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

July 22	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghreb	Isha
Makkah	4:26	5:49	12:28	3:43	7:05	8:35
Madinah	4:18	5:44	12:28	3:52	7:11	8:41
Riyadh	3:49	5:16	12:00	3:24	6:43	8:13
Abha	4:23	5:44	12:17	3:32	6:49	8:19
Dammam	3:30	4:59	11:47	3:15	6:33	8:03

Spotlight



Assad has a precondition before any meeting can take place: that all Turkish military forces leave Syria.

Sinan Ciddi

Non-resident senior fellow at FDD



Protesters in opposition-held Idlib and the Aleppo countryside wave flags of the Syrian revolution and hold signs that read: 'If you want to get closer to Assad, congratulations, the curse of history is upon you.' AN photo by Ali Al

ANALYSIS

A farewell to animosity?

Initial reactions of Syrians to possible Ankara-Damascus normalization range from disapproval to outright opposition

Lucas Chapman Athens
Ali Ali Qamishli, Syria

Since 2022, senior Syrian and Turkish officials have periodically met in Moscow for talks mediated by Russia. But those meetings have failed to result in a thaw in their icy relations.

It is a different matter now, however, with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announcing his desire to restore formal ties with his Syrian counterpart, Bashar Assad. He said earlier this month that he could invite Assad to Türkiye "at any moment," to which the Syrian leader responded that any meeting would depend on the "content."

Ankara and Damascus severed diplomatic ties in 2011 following the eruption of Syria's civil war. Relations have remained hostile ever since, particularly as Türkiye continues to support rebel groups resisting the Assad regime.

What, then, is the motivation for changing course now? And what are the likely consequences of a rapprochement?

Syrian writer and political researcher Shosh Darwish believes Ankara is pursuing normalization for two reasons. "The first is preparation for the possibility of the arrival of a new American

administration led by Donald Trump, which means the possibility of a return to the policy of (a US) withdrawal from Syria," Darwish told Arab News.

"Erdogan will therefore need to cooperate with Assad and Russia."

The second reason, Darwish says, is Erdogan's desire to get closer to Syrian regime ally Russia after Türkiye's drift towards the US following the outbreak of war in Ukraine, which has complicated Türkiye's balanced approach to its ties with Washington and Moscow.

"Ankara's cooperation with Moscow is difficult in terms of the Ukrainian issue," said Darwish. "As a result of the significant Western

interference in this issue, their cooperation in Syria represents a meeting point through which Erdogan wants to highlight his friendship with Putin and Moscow's interests in the Middle East."

Those in Syria's opposition-held northwest, which is backed by Türkiye, see an Assad-Erdogan rapprochement as a betrayal.

Abdulkarim Omar, a political activist from Idlib, told Arab News: "Western Syria, Idlib, the Aleppo countryside, and all areas belonging to the opposition completely reject this behavior because it is only in the interest of the Syrian regime."

"The Syrian people



Since the civil war erupted in 2011, Türkiye has supported armed Syrian factions, bottom, in their fight against the regime of President Bashar Assad, left. AFP

came out 13 years ago and rose up in their revolution demanding freedom, dignity, and the building of a civil, democratic state for all Syrians. This can only be achieved by overthrowing the tyrannical Syrian regime represented by Bashar Assad. They still cling to this principle and these slogans and cannot abandon them."

Those living in areas controlled by the Kurdish-led and US-backed Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, or AANES, which holds much of Syria's territory east of the Euphrates River, are also wary of the consequences of normalization.

"There are fears among the population that reconciliation may be a prelude to punishing the Syrian Kurds for their political choices," said Omar.

But just how likely is a rapprochement between Erdogan and Assad? Not very, according to conflict analyst

and UNHRC delegate Thoreau Redcrow. "I find the prospects of an Erdogan and Assad detente very unlikely," he told Arab News.

Assad has made it clear in public statements that a meeting between him and Erdogan would only occur on the condition of a Turkish withdrawal from Syrian territory. Redcrow believes Türkiye has no intention of leaving.

"I cannot see Damascus being interested in being manipulated for a photo-op," he said. "The Syrian government is far more prideful than some of the other regional actors who are happy to be one of Türkiye's 'neo-Ottoman Vilayets.'"

As for the view from the US, Redcrow believes "the current status quo is far more beneficial to Washington than any reconciliation would be, as it would also endanger the northeast portions of Syria, where the US military is embedded with their most reliable military partners

against Daesh in the SDF. So, Türkiye would not be given any kind of green light to place American interests at risk."

Though there may be little chance of reconciliation succeeding at this point, the approximately 3.18 million Syrian refugees living in Türkiye view even rumors of normalization with dread.

"People are very afraid," Amal Hayat, a Syrian mother of five living in southeastern Türkiye, told Arab News. "Since the rumors (of reconciliation) started, many people don't even leave their homes. Even if they are beaten by their bosses at work, they are afraid to say anything for fear of being deported."

Turkish authorities deported more than 57,000 Syrians in 2023, according to Human Rights Watch.

"A forced return would affect us a lot," said Hayat. "For example, if a woman returns to Syria with her family, her husband may be arrested by the regime. Or if a man gets deported back to Syria and his wife and children stay in Türkiye, how will they manage?"

The fear of deportation has been compounded by waves of violence against Syrian refugees in Türkiye's south in recent weeks. Anti-Syrian sentiment in Türkiye is partially due to economic issues, where Turks see underpaid or even unpaid Syrians as a threat to their prospects of employment.





Makkah Deputy Gov. Prince Saud bin Mishal and Hajj and Umrah Minister Tawfiq Al-Rabiah during the event. SPA

SACRED TRADITION

Deputy governor of Makkah leads washing of Holy Kaaba

White cloth moistened with Zamzam and rose water is used to wipe the walls and floor of the sacred structure

Tariq Al-Thaqafi Makkah

The washing ceremony of the Holy Kaaba was carried out on Sunday by Makkah Deputy Gov. Prince Saud bin Mishal bin Abdulaziz on behalf of King Salman, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

Upon his arrival at the Grand Mosque, he was received by Dr. Tawfiq Al-Rabiah, minister of Hajj and Umrah and chairman of the board of directors of the General Authority for the Care of the Two Holy Mosques, along with Sheikh Abdulrahman Al-Sudais, president of religious affairs at the Grand Mosque and Prophet's Mosque.

Upon his arrival, the deputy governor washed the interior of the Holy Kaaba with Zamzam mixed with rose water. Afterward, he performed two rak'ahs of Tawaf.

Al-Sudais said that washing the

servicing and caring for the Two Holy Mosques and their visitors, establishing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as the leader in this noble duty.

"This occasion is cherished by Muslims and the people of our country, as God has honored the

FASTFACTS

● **'Washing the Kaaba is a great honor that the Kingdom's government performs every year.'**

● **This exceptional event is 'an unparalleled honor, showcasing the Kingdom's dedication and reverence for the holiest site on Earth.'**

Holy Kaaba is an Islamic tradition, a prophetic Sunnah, and a reflection of Saudi leadership on the global stage. He added: "God has blessed this country with the honor of

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its leadership, and its citizens with this privilege."

He expressed his gratitude to the king and crown prince on the occasion and commended their provision of comprehensive services to worshippers and Umrah pilgrims.

Dr. Fawaz Al-Dahas, history professor at Umm Al-Qura University, told Arab News that "washing the Kaaba is a great honor that the Kingdom's government performs every year. This exceptional event is an unparalleled honor, showcasing the Kingdom's dedication and reverence for the holiest site on Earth."

He explained that during this event, the outer covering, or kiswa, of the Kaaba is removed, and the inner walls are cleaned using Zamzam mixed with rose water from Taif, along with the finest perfumes. Pieces of white cloth moistened with this mixture are used to wipe the inner walls and floor.

CREATIVITY

Saudi designers win big at Tanween Challenge

Jasmine Bager Dhahran

Three projects from Saudi Arabia and one from Bahrain were selected recently as recipients of the annual Tanween Challenge, hosted by the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture, also known as Ithra.

At the six-day creative competition last week competitors displayed their final group projects at the Dhahran headquarters before a judging panel. Each project tried to solve a nature-related problem, in four categories: pavilion design; graphic design; furniture design; and fashion design. The four award-winning projects will

HIGHLIGHTS

● **At the six-day creative competition last week competitors displayed their final group projects at the Dhahran headquarters before a judging panel.**

● **Winners were selected from 80 participants who answered an open call for designers from the Middle East and North Africa.**

be developed for commercial production.

Winners were selected from 80 participants who answered an open call for designers from

the Middle East and North Africa. Tanween, Ithra's flagship program since 2019, has become an integral part of fostering the thriving creative community in the region.

Sultan Al-Badran, creative programs developer at Ithra's Ideas Lab said: "The winning projects today will receive support for the next couple of months by Tanween Challenges' production partners to further develop the winners' innovative ideas into real solutions.

"The winning projects are a reflection of the individual capabilities and talent of each of the winners, who will now take their projects to market," Al-Badran said.

TheSpace

Autistic children struggling to get rights in health and education

DR. BADER BIN SAUD



Autism diagnoses have increased significantly across the world since 1970, with some estimates suggesting as many as one in every 23 children are identified as having the condition.

The last Saudi census estimated the Saudi population at about 18.8 million, meaning the number of citizens with autism could be around 820,000.

It is necessary for the General Authority for Statistics to record the actual number of people with disabilities, as this will contribute to drawing up appropriate plans to help them — with many still struggling for help, and people with autism in particular.

The Prince Mohammed bin Salman Autism Program, in cooperation with the Cleveland Clinic in the US, has overseen the establishment of centers in the Department of Defense's military hospitals in Riyadh, Jeddah, Taif, Dhahran, Tabuk, Hafar Al-Batin, and Khamis Mushait.

However, autistic people are still suffering with regard to their basic rights in the facilities of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education. I state this from the experience of a parent who tried to enroll his autistic son in a private Saudi school, but whose request was refused on the pretext that there were no specialists or suitable facilities to serve him.

When this father offered to bring in a specialist teacher, at his own expense, they still refused.

In contrast, the British and Finnish schools in

the same city were willing to accept him.

What is more difficult with regard to the Ministry of Health is that some Saudi doctors who have a reputation in the field of autism advise their families to use traditional medicine to treat them and give them camel milk. The above behavior indicates that they are treating autism as a disease, and this happens despite its inclusion in the National Disability Project. Yet, it is a broad and ill-defined disorder that has not reached the stage of a diagnosable and treatable disease, because its symptoms

vary from one person to another, which explains why it was named Autism Spectrum Disorder in 1993.

The first recorded description of an autistic child dates back to 1799, but it was categorized as an early stage of schizophrenia.

The word autism existed in those days, taken from the Greek word "otz," meaning a person who is preoccupied with himself.

In 1981, Lorna Wing, a British doctor, simplified the characteristics of people with autism. The first of them was imagination deficit, meaning that the autistic person has trouble understanding metaphors and language with more than one meaning, does not understand illogical ideas, and does not understand banter or wordplay. The second is the difficulty in establishing relationships with others and making eye contact with them.

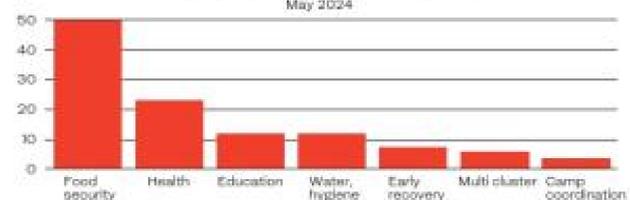
Dr. Bader bin Saud is a columnist for Al-Riyadh newspaper, a media and knowledge management researcher, and the former deputy commander of the Special Forces for Hajj and Umrah in Saudi Arabia. X: @BaderbinSaud

It is necessary for the General Authority for Statistics to record the actual number of people with disabilities.

The Day's FIGURES

KSRELIEF PROJECTS IN SOMALIA

May 2024



Source: ksrelief.org

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Mawhiba

Partnership deal signed to support talents in KSA

The Saudi Commission for Health Specialties, and the King Abdulaziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity (Mawhiba) on Sunday signed a partnership agreement to support talented individuals.

The ceremony, which was held in Riyadh, honored 18 talented men and women from several scientific fields.

Dr. Aws Al-Shamsan, secretary-general of the commission, spoke of the body's pride in supporting talent and creativity, as well as partnering with Mawhiba in exchanging expertise and knowledge in science and research, implementing innovative projects. **SPA Riyadh**

Assistance

Hygiene kits distributed in Sudan, Syria

The Saudi aid agency KSrelief has distributed hygiene kits to displaced and needy families in Sudan and Syria, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

The aid group gave out 620 kits to the needy in Sudan's Sinar region, benefiting 3,100 people. The agency also handed out 435 shelter kits to 2,175 people in River Nile State in Sudan.

In Syria, the group secured 796 hygiene kits in Idlib governorate for 4,614 individuals from 769 families affected by last year's earthquake.

Elsewhere, the agency has distributed 25,000 bags of bread in Aldkar and Miniyeih in Lebanon. **SPA Riyadh**

No to narcotics

Attempt to smuggle 160kg of qat thwarted

Eight Yemenis were arrested by Border Guard patrols in Al-Dair, Jazan for attempting to smuggle 160kg of qat into the Kingdom.

The suspects, who were apprehended for violating border security regulations, have been processed according to initial legal procedures. The alleged smugglers and the seized substances have been handed over to the appropriate authorities.

Separately, three expatriates have been accused of fraud involving expired food products from unknown sources. The suspects stored over 55 tonnes of expired chicken meat from unknown sources. **SPA Jazan**

News Saudi Arabia

LOCAL ECONOMY

Variety is the spice of life as Kingdom ushers in dining renaissance

Local eateries are nurturing a sense of community, providing valuable job opportunities to Saudis

Waad Hussain Riyadh

In the bustling heart of Saudi Arabia, a culinary revolution is unfolding.

Restaurant entrepreneurs are launching new coffee shops and fast-food restaurants that are redefining the dining landscape by offering high-quality food and drinks at accessible prices. The cherry on top? They're hiring local talent, bolstering both the community and the economy.

Imagine walking into a newly opened coffee shop or fast-food joint with modest expectations, only to be pleasantly surprised by the taste and quality of your order. This is the new norm sweeping across the nation. These establishments are quickly earning reputations for delivering great food and drinks without the hefty price tags.

"Honestly, I always look for a fair price when it comes to my coffee, and this place fits the bill perfectly," frequent customer Khalil Al-Azwari told Arab News. "This coffee shop is one of my favorites, and they serve the best V60 for only SR10 (\$2.67). It's great value for money."

The allure of these new dining spots extends beyond just offering great food and drinks. A

cornerstone of this transformation is the focus on employing local workers.

"Working here has been an amazing experience," said Ahmed Saleh, a barista at a prominent coffee shop in Riyadh. "I get to work with top-notch ingredients and learn new skills. Plus, it's great to see familiar faces enjoying the coffee and food we prepare."

By prioritizing local hires, these businesses are nurturing a sense of community and providing valuable job opportunities. This approach represents a refreshing change in a country where the service industry has traditionally been dominated by foreign workers.

Local customers are equally thrilled with the shift. "I love that these new places are hiring people from our own cities," said Bashayer Mohammed, a regular patron. "It makes the experience feel more personal and connected to our community."

However, not everyone is embracing this wave of new dining options. Some local business owners are feeling the heat as these large restaurant entrepreneurs gain popularity. Many local establishments, which often have higher prices, are struggling to compete.

"It's tough," said Saad, who used to own a coffee shop in Alkhobar.



As more restaurant entrepreneurs enter the market, the competition is driving everyone to elevate their game. Instagram/sawada.ksa

Establishing a new business requires a deep and thorough study of market needs, sound management, and dedication to the business.

Talat Hafiz
Financial analyst

"We can't match the prices of these big traders, and people are noticing. We're losing customers, and it's affecting our livelihood."

Saad opened his coffee shop in

October 2021 with high hopes for success. "In the first month, the numbers were doing great," he recalled. However, as the months went by, business began to decline steadily. Despite his efforts to adapt, the situation worsened. "It was surprising because it got way worse each month," Saad said.

Determined to save his business,



Saad tried everything. "We changed the menu, collaborated with coupon companies, and partnered with delivery apps. We even invested in advertising," he explained. Despite trying every strategy he could think of, nothing seemed to work. "None of it made a difference," he admitted.

On top of these challenges, Saad faced unexpected financial burdens. "The rent was much higher than I expected, and I didn't fully account for staff salaries and insurance," he said. These expenses quickly added up, straining his finances.

The increase in costs has led most merchants to reduce expenses, cut salaries, and lay off employees. "This is a sign of failure," Saad added. "Successful merchants invest in the human element and intellect to create and innovate solutions for survival. The general public has a consumer mentality, not a problem-solving one."

Desperate, Saad even tried to sell the coffee shop to investors. "It just didn't work," he said. Ultimately, the mounting losses forced him to close the coffee

shop in 2023. "It was a huge loss for me," Saad reflected.

As more restaurant entrepreneurs enter the market, the competition is driving everyone to elevate their game. Local businesses are starting to take notice and are striving to match the quality and affordability that these new players offer, although it remains a challenging transition.

In an interview with Arab News, financial analyst Talat Hafiz emphasized the crucial role that small and medium enterprises play in the Saudi economy: "SMEs in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere around the world are the backbone of the economy and business activities."

Recognizing this, the Saudi government has been proactive in fostering the growth of these enterprises. It has made significant efforts to facilitate the growth of SMEs and enhance their contribution to the Kingdom's non-oil gross domestic product from 20 percent to 35 percent by 2030, Hafiz added.

The establishment of the General Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises, also known as Monshaat, in 2016 is a testament to these efforts. "Monshaat was created to regulate, support, and develop the SME sector in the Kingdom," Hafiz said.

TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

Hail's ancient crafts breathe new life into cultural festival



Arab News Riyadh

The third Beit Hail heritage festival, themed "Your Home Away from Home," is a vibrant display of Saudi Arabia's rich cultural heritage, with traditional craftsmanship taking center stage.

At the heart of the festival is the "Hail Wooden Door Making and Plaster Engraving" exhibit, which has drawn crowds to the Aja Park Entertainment Center where the techniques and tools used in crafting intricate designs are on show.

Abdullah Al-Khazzam, a Hail native and registered artisan with the Saudi National Handicrafts Program "Bari," began his journey into the world of intricate woodworking with a childhood fascination for mud construction, which evolved into a passionate pursuit of

mastering the art of wooden door making and engraving. Saudi Press Agency recently reported.

At the festival, Al-Khazzam showed his expertise, demonstrating the nuanced differences between regional door styles. His specialty lies in crafting the distinctive old Hail house door, traditionally made from tamarisk wood and other local timber varieties.

He highlighted the distinctive features of the Najdi door, which typically incorporates three crossbars, in contrast with the traditional Hail door's four-crossbar design.

Festivalgoers seemed captivated by Al-Khazzam's craftsmanship, marveling at the intricacy of his work, SPA reported.

Beyond door making, the booth displays a range of related crafts. Islamic plaster



Abdullah Al-Khazzam's specialty lies in crafting the distinctive old Hail house door, traditionally made from tamarisk wood and other local timber varieties. SPA

engravings, integral to Najdi architecture, adorn mock-ups of building entrances and the majlis (reception rooms).

Visitors were drawn to the elaborate engravings, patterns and motifs that offer a glimpse

into the social fabric of bygone eras. The festival has reported a surge in demand for these traditional designs, with many visitors expressing interest in buying replica doors and decorative pieces for their homes.

Al-Khazzam's repertoire extends to other traditional items, such as replicas of historical water-raising devices, an ornate camel saddle that was once a common sight in the region, and recreations of the

decorative elements that once adorned traditional mud houses.

Some of these designs incorporate Qur'anic verses, proverbs, and ornamental patterns while others incorporate motifs based on local flora.

MIDDLE EAST WAR

Fighting rages in Rafah as Israeli strikes hit central areas

Tensions are high in the region, with concerns remaining over possible spread of violence

Reuters Cairo

Israeli forces battled Palestinian fighters in the southern Gaza city of Rafah on Sunday, and struck areas in the center of the coastal enclave where thousands of Palestinians displaced from their homes have been seeking shelter.

Residents in Rafah, near the border with Egypt, said fierce battles raged between Hamas-led fighters and Israeli forces, especially in the center and in western areas where tanks advanced in the previous

two days.

The armed wings of the Islamic Jihad and Hamas militant groups said fighters confronted Israeli forces with anti-tank rockets and mortar bombs.

The Israeli military said its soldiers had killed a group of fighters who were moving toward them and destroyed ammunition, tunnel shafts, and infrastructure in Tel Al-Sultan, in the eastern part of the city.

A ceasefire effort led by Qatar and Egypt and backed by the US has so far failed because of disagreements between the combatants, who blame each other for the impasse.

Israeli strikes in the previous



Palestinians mourn the death of relatives in Khuzaa in the Gaza Strip. AFP

24 hours killed at least 64 and wounded more than 100 others, the local Health Ministry said.

At least 22 were killed by strikes on Sunday, according to

the Hamas-run Gaza government media office.

Israeli strikes in areas of central Gaza in the past week have been focused on the

FASTFACT

Israeli strikes in areas of central Gaza in the past week have been focused on the Al-Nuseirat camp, where dozens of people have been killed.

Al-Nuseirat camp, where dozens of people have been killed.

"We hear the sounds of explosions in Nuseirat, and we see the smoke rising from here in Deir Al-Balah, the last refuge you can say, and the feeling tanks are terrorizing us may roll here," said Tamer Aburakan, a resident of Gaza City, now displaced in the central area of Deir Al-Balah.

"Where should we go next? The entire Gaza Strip is under fire, and we are being hunted like deer in a forest. When is enough? When the war will ever end?" he said via a chat app.

Tensions are high in the region, with concerns remaining over a possible spread of violence.

Israel said on Tuesday it had eliminated half the leadership of Hamas' military wing and killed or captured about 14,000 fighters since the start of the war. Israel says 326 of its soldiers have been killed in Gaza.

Hamas does not release casualty figures and said Israel exaggerates its reports to give the impression of a "fake victory."

HEALTH ALERT

Israeli army vaccinating Gaza troops against polio

AFP Jerusalem

Israel has started vaccinating its troops in Gaza against polio and supplying vaccines for the Palestinian population after health agencies said the virus has been found in the territory, the military said on Sunday.

Army authorities have begun "a broad vaccination operation for all ground troops, both regular and reserves," said a military statement.

The army did not give a figure for the number of soldiers involved, but thousands of regular and reservist troops are reported to be fighting in the war, which has raged since the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks.

The statement said the order was given after the army carried out sample tests in Gaza, where most of the population is displaced. The war has decimated health and sanitary infrastructure.

UN agencies said this week that the Global Polio Laboratory Network found type-2 poliovirus

in six environmental samples collected on June 23.

Israel's Health Ministry said it had made similar findings. No human cases have been reported.

The Israeli army said it was also working with other organizations to take vaccines for the Gaza population into the territory. It said that 300,000 vaccines have so far been supplied.

The highly contagious virus is caught by drinking contaminated water or oral contact. It can cause paralysis and, in extreme cases, death.

Wastewater runs between tents in many camps for the displaced, and freshwater is increasingly scarce.

With fuel limited, aid agencies rarely send out trucks with water, and pumps at wells cannot be used.

Many people walk long distances to get safe water from points set up by volunteers.

Northern Gaza is suffering particularly badly from food



Palestinian children, carrying empty containers walk near stagnant wastewater, on their way to a food distribution point in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip. File/AFP

and water shortages after major Israeli offensives.

Ahmed Al-Shanbari, a father living in a camp in Jabalia, said the water his family has "is not suitable for drinking or cooking."

"My children suffer from kidney disease, jaundice, itching and coughing. There is no

My children suffer from kidney disease, jaundice, itching and coughing. There is no treatment in northern Gaza.

Ahmed Al-Shanbari
Jabalia resident

treatment in northern Gaza," he said.

Shanbari said the family spends four hours each day searching for a source of water.

The military said it had decided with the Health Ministry "that troops operating in the area should undergo vaccination

against the virus to maintain the health of both the soldiers and Israeli citizens."

It said vaccinations would be carried out as troops are "refreshed" in and out of Gaza.

There are about 170,000 full-time soldiers and another 300,000 reservists in the Israeli army.

EXPANSION

Iraq to import electricity from Turkiye

AFP Baghdad

Iraq said on Sunday a new power line will bring electricity from Turkiye to its northern provinces as authorities aim to diversify the country's energy sources to ease chronic power outages.

The 115-km line connects to the Kisik power station west of Mosul.

It will provide 300 MW from Turkiye to Iraq's northern

provinces of Nineveh, Salah Al-Din, and Kirkuk, according to a statement by the prime minister's office.

Prime Minister Mohamed Shia Al-Sudani said the new line was a "strategic" step to link Iraq with its neighboring countries.

"The line started operating today," said Ahmed Moussa, spokesperson for the Electricity Ministry.

Decades of war have left Iraq's infrastructure in a pitiful state, with power cuts worsening the blistering summer when temperatures often reach 50 Celsius.

Many households have just a few hours of mains electricity daily, and those who can afford it use private generators to keep fridges and air conditioners running.

Despite its vast oil reserves, Iraq remains dependent on imports to

meet its energy needs, especially from Iran, which regularly cuts supplies.

Al-Sudani has repeatedly stressed the need for Iraq to diversify energy sources to ease the chronic outages.

Baghdad has been exploring several possibilities to reduce its dependence on Iranian gas, including imports from Gulf countries.

The Iraqi government aims "to complete the connection with the GCC electric grid by the end of this year," Al-Sudani said on Sunday.

"This will enable Iraq to integrate into the regional energy system," allowing it to diversify its energy sources, he added.

In March, a 340-km power line started operating to bring electricity from Jordan to Al-Rutbah in Iraq's southwest.

News Middle East

CONCERN

EU backs ICJ ruling on 'illegal' Israeli occupation

AFP Brussels

The top UN court's ruling that Israel's 57-year occupation of Palestinian land was "illegal" is "largely consistent with EU positions," the bloc's foreign policy chief said.

The sweeping opinion by The Hague-based International Court of Justice — which called for the occupation to end as soon as possible — was immediately slammed as a "decision of lies" by Israel.

But the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs said that the bloc had taken "good note" of the court's ruling and urged further backing for the court's opinion.

"In a world of constant and increasing violations of international law, it is our moral duty to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to all ICJ decisions in a consistent manner, irrespective of the subject in question," Josep Borrell said.

He added in a statement that the opinion "will need to be analyzed more thoroughly, including in



Palestinians look at the damages at a UN-run school sheltering displaced people in Gaza City, following an Israeli strike. Reuters

view of its implications for EU policy."

The ICJ's ruling is not binding, but it comes amid mounting concern over the death toll and destruction in Israel's war against Hamas sparked by the group's brutal Oct. 7 attacks, as well as increased tensions in the West Bank.

Its intervention is likely to increase diplomatic pressure on Israel over the war in Gaza, as will the EU's backing.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu denounced the ruling.

In June 1967, Israel seized the then-Jordan-annexed West Bank and East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights from Syria, and the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt in a crushing six-day war against its Arab neighbors.

It then began to settle the 70,000 sq. km. of seized Arab territory.

The UN later declared the occupation of Palestinian territory illegal, and Cairo regained the Sinai under its 1979 peace deal with Israel.

DIPLOMACY

Turkiye ready to build Cyprus naval base 'if necessary': Erdogan

President sees no point in continuing UN-led negotiations on the Mediterranean island's future

AFP Istanbul

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that Turkiye was ready to build a Cyprus naval base "if necessary."

"If necessary, we can construct a base and naval structures in the north" of the divided island, the

official Anadolu news agency reported him as saying.

"We also have the sea," Erdogan said as he flew back to Turkiye after visiting northern Cyprus on Saturday to mark 50 years since Turkiye's invasion.

He also accused rival Greece of wanting to establish its own naval base on Cyprus, whose future both

sides remain as divided as ever.

In 1983, Turkiye installed what it calls the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, TRNC, which no other country has recognized four decades after Turkish Cypriot leaders proclaimed it.

As Greek Cypriots mourned those killed and still missing since the 1974 convulsion of violence,

Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides said on Saturday that reunification was the only option.

Cyprus joined the EU in 2004 but was still divided after the Greek Cypriots overwhelmingly rejected a UN plan to end their differences with the Turkish Cypriots.

But on the other side of the UN-patrolled buffer zone that

separates the two communities, Erdogan rejected the federal model championed by the UN on Saturday, saying he saw no point in relaunching talks on such a plan.

"Frankly, we do not think it is possible to start a new negotiation process without establishing an equation whereby both parties sit down as equals and leave the table

as equals," Erdogan said.

The last round of UN-backed talks to reunify the island collapsed in 2017.

"We are constructing the presidential building of Northern Cyprus, TRNC, and the parliament building on the island. They are constructing a military base, we are building a political base," Erdogan added.

EXCAVATION

Archeologists in Bahrain unearth Gulf's earliest Christian structure

Arab News Dubai

Bahraini and British archeologists say they have discovered what is believed to be the first Christian structure in the Arabian Gulf, dating back to the fourth century.

Located in Samahij, in the Bahraini city of Muharraq, the unearthed structure is considered "the first material evidence of this ancient community," according to the Bahrain National Communications Center.

"While Christianity is not predominantly associated with the Gulf states today, the Church of the East, also known as the Nestorian Church, flourished in the region for centuries until the 7th century CE, coinciding with the widespread Islam amongst the communities in 610 CE," the NCC said in a statement.

Archeologists said that radio-carbon dating of the Samahij site confirmed "the building was occupied between the mid-4th and mid-8th centuries CE, likely abandoned as Islam spread among the local population."

Digging at the site commenced at a mound within the Samahij cemetery, where archeologists discovered the remains of a mosque.

Further excavation revealed a large building with eight rooms, including a kitchen, dining room, workshop, and three living quarters. It is believed that the construction of the mosque on the site contributed to the preservation of the building below, the NCC added.

The findings suggest the building may have been the residence of the bishop of the local diocese, which included Samahij.

Historical sources refer to this area as "Mishmahig" or "Mashmahig," likely variations of Samahij.

Records also indicate a connection between the region and central church authorities,

FASTFACT

Dr. Salman Al-Mahari said that the excavation, now in its final stages, is an important piece of Bahraini history, providing valuable insights into the Christian presence in the region.

with one bishop dismissed in 410 and another condemned for challenging church unity in the seventh century.

The excavation project, a collaborative effort between the Bahrain Authority for Culture

and Antiquities and a British team led by Prof. Timothy Insoll of the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at Exeter University, and Dr. Salman Al-Mahari of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities, began in 2019 and culminated in these significant findings in 2023.

This discovery is unique due to its location in the heart of a modern, densely populated town, unlike previous Christian structures found in remote areas along the Gulf coast.

Notable finds include three plaster crosses, two adorning the building's exterior and one possibly kept as a personal memento, along with wall carvings featuring a fish symbol and part of the "Chi Rho" symbol, representing "Christ."

Al-Mahari explained that the excavation, now in its final stages, is an important piece

of Bahraini history, providing valuable insights into the Christian presence in the region.

Initial studies suggested the site dated from the sixth to eighth centuries, but radio-carbon dating confirmed fourth century origins, making it one of the oldest Christian buildings in the Arabian Gulf. Recent findings include a clear Eastern cross on a plaster slab.

The excavation also revealed details about the building and its inhabitants' lives. Constructed with stone walls coated in plaster and plaster floors, the building featured sockets and holes indicating door and seat placements.

The kitchen contained built-in ovens with bases and storage areas. Artifacts suggest the inhabitants enjoyed a good standard of living, consuming meat, fish, shellfish, and various

crops. The discovery of semi-precious agate beads and broken Indian pottery indicates the occupants were involved in trade, particularly with India. Small drinking glasses and 12 copper coins suggest the use of Sasanian Empire currency. Additionally, spindle whorls and copper needles hint at the possibility of cloth production for religious purposes.

I, Sarfraz Mohamed (Given name) and Pazhoor Kochu Mohamed (Surname) holding Passport No. Z2133321 issued at Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 18/02/2016 hereby announce to change my name as Sarfraz Mohamed (Given name) and Pazhoor (Surname) for all future purposes.



In this file photo, Afghan girls attend their class at a primary school in Bati Kot district of Nangarhar province on September 18, 2023. AFP

TALIBAN'S SHENANIGANS

Ban on girls' education takes mental, financial toll on Afghan teachers

Female teachers cannot teach boys; women restricted from many workplaces

Modaser Islami Kabul

Najiba's life as an educator came to a halt after the Taliban imposed a ban on girls' education almost three years ago, a controversial policy that also forced many Afghan teachers out of the classroom.

When secondary schools for girls were suspended in September 2021 — a month after the Taliban took control of Afghanistan — it resulted in about 1.1 million girls being denied access to formal education and scores of female teachers losing their jobs, as the new policies only allowed them to teach in girls' primary schools.

"We had this fear but didn't know it would happen so soon. It was the hardest thing to know that I wouldn't be able to teach anymore," Najiba, an English teacher in Kabul, told Arab News.

"The change happened so suddenly and so quickly that it was difficult for me to cope with it. I developed very serious levels of stress and depression as a result of losing my job and my profession."

For the 37-year-old who used to teach at a local high school, the consequences on her mental health were "irreversible" not just for her, but also for her family, as she was forced to stay at home most of the time.

"I feel I am becoming illiterate because I don't study. I miss my students and colleagues every day and every moment. I feel lonely most of the time at home," she said.

When the policy went into force, all female teachers from secondary and high schools were reassigned to elementary schools "where there was a shortage of teachers," an official from the Afghan Ministry of Education told Arab News, declining to be

named because he was not authorized to speak to the press.

"In addition, some of them were assigned to mixed schools, where boys and girls study in different shifts, to teach in the girls' shift. The rest are staying at home," the official said.

"The ministry's plan is that only female teachers will teach in girls' schools and male teachers will be transferred to boys' schools. This has been successfully implemented in Kabul and other provinces."

A year after their takeover, the Taliban had eliminated 14,000 government jobs held by women, the majority of which were teaching positions, according to a report published by the US government's oversight authority on Afghanistan's reconstruction known as SIGAR.

Yet despite the increasing uncertainty over the future of education for girls in Afghanistan, Najiba is still

holding out hope.

"I really hope and pray something good happens and girls' schools reopen so we can go back to where we belong, in the classroom and school. Nothing else will make us happy and help us get back to our normal condition," she said.

For Khaperai, who used to teach at a secondary school in Jalalabad, the capital of the eastern Nangarhar province, the Taliban's policies were taking a toll on her mental health and financial situation.

The 42-year-old has tried to no avail to get transferred to a primary school as there are no vacancies in her area.

"And I couldn't leave my family. The change in my condition has not only impacted me psychologically but has posed economic challenges as well," she told Arab News, adding that her husband has also lost his job due to the ongoing economic crisis.

MERIT-BASED RECRUITMENT

Top court in Bangladesh cuts govt job quotas

Shehab Sumon Dhaka

Bangladesh's Supreme Court on Sunday scrapped most of the quotas on government jobs that had sparked nationwide unrest in the country and resulted in deadly clashes between police and student protesters that killed more than 100 people in the past week.

University students have been demonstrating on campuses since the beginning of July to demand a reformation of the quota system that reserved 30

percent of government jobs for relatives of veterans who fought in Bangladesh's 1971 liberation war.

The government abolished the quotas after student protests in 2018, but it was reinstated by Bangladesh's High Court last month, setting off a new round of demonstrations that was met with a harsh crackdown, including a curfew and a communications blackout that left the country of 170 million people cut off from the world.

Ruling on an appeal, Attorney

General AM Amin Uddin said the Supreme Court had ordered the quota reserved for veterans to be cut to 5 percent and for 93 percent of jobs to be allocated on merit. The remaining 2 percent will be reserved for members of ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.

"In the future, the government may change the ratio if needed," Amin Uddin told Arab News.

"Now, I will send a copy of the verdict to the law minister for the next steps. (I) hope a gazette will be published in this regard

within the next couple of days."

The verdict came after demonstrations spiraled into deadly clashes, prompting authorities to impose a curfew ahead of the Supreme Court hearing, which Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan told AFP will continue "until the situation improves."

The military was on patrol in the streets of Dhaka, along with riot police and thousands of Border Guard personnel as all gatherings were banned amid an increasing number of casualties.

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Making progress

Azerbaijan works toward peace with Armenia

Azerbaijan is proposing to sign a document with Armenia on the basic principles of a future peace treaty as an interim measure as they wrangle over a broader deal, a senior Azerbaijani official said on Sunday.

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan have repeatedly said they want to sign a peace treaty to end the conflict. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said on Saturday a text of a treaty was 80-90 percent ready but repeated it was impossible to sign it before Armenia amended its constitution to remove an indirect reference to Karabakh independence, which Armenia has rejected. **Reuters**

New deal

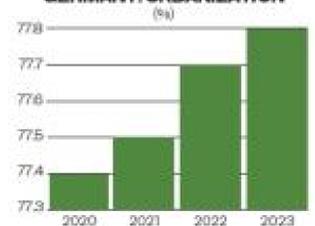
Philippines and China will avoid sea clashes

Two Philippine officials said Sunday that Manila and Beijing have reached a deal to avoid confrontations at a fiercely disputed shoal in the South China Sea, where recent clashes have sparked fears of larger conflicts that could involve the United States.

The deal was forged after a series of closed-door meetings between Philippine and Chinese diplomats in Manila and exchanges of diplomatic notes that aimed to establish a mutually acceptable arrangement at the Philippine-occupied Second Thomas Shoal, which China also claims. **AP**

The Day's FIGURES

GERMANY: URBANIZATION (%)



Source: Statista

What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

'Virtual You'

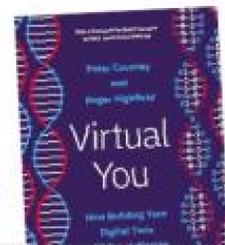
PETER COVENEY AND ROGER HIGHFIELD

In this deeply illuminating book, Peter Coveney and Roger Highfield reveal what it will take to build a virtual, functional copy of a person

in five steps. Along the way, they take you on a fantastic voyage through the complexity of the human body, describing

the latest scientific and technological advances—from multiscale modeling to extraordinary new forms of computing—

that will make "virtual you" a reality, while also considering the ethical questions inherent to realizing truly predictive medicine.



Inclement weather

China braces for twin tropical cyclones this week

Two tropical cyclones will bring gales and heavy rain to China's eastern seaboard this week, with the first expected to make landfall on Sunday, after deadly flash floods struck the country's interior over the weekend.

Prapiroon, named after a Thai rain deity, is expected to make landfall in China's southernmost island province of Hainan on Sunday night as a strong tropical storm, the first tropical cyclone to hit China this year, national forecasters said. **Reuters**

Barents Sea

Russia says it intercepted US bomber planes

Russia said Sunday that it scrambled fighter jets to prevent two US strategic bomber planes from crossing its border over the Barents Sea in the Arctic. The US military routinely carries out flights over international waters, operations that it says are conducted in neutral airspace and in accordance with international law.

But Moscow has responded more aggressively to the exercises in recent months, warning in June that US drone flights over the Black Sea risked leading to a "direct" military clash. **AFP**

نَسَلْتُكَ طَرِيقًا خَاطِئَةً...
ثُمَّ نَلَوْتُمُ الْوُجْهَةَ.
(فاطمة عبدالله)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

We choose the wrong route, and then blame the destination.

Fatimah Abdallah
(Lebanese journalist, writer and columnist)

Opinion

United Republican Party ready to deliver 'red wave'

DALIA AL-AQIDI



Dalia Al-Aqidi is executive director at the American Center for Counter Extremism.

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

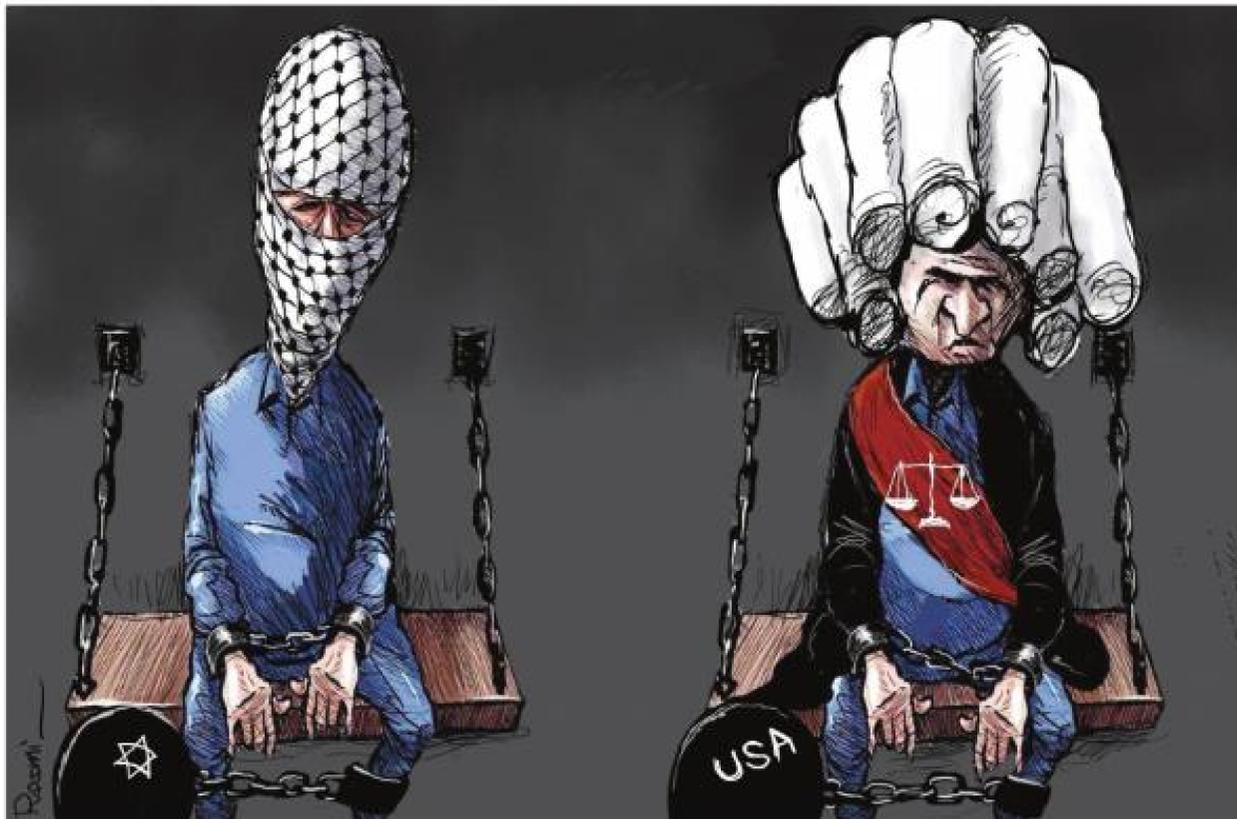
The Republican National Convention held in Milwaukee last week was a momentous occasion marked by resilience, unity and a renewed sense of purpose for the GOP. Former President Donald Trump delivered a stirring speech that not only accepted the party's presidential nomination for the third time, but also aimed to unify the party and inspire the nation. This acceptance speech, the longest in modern US history at more than 90 minutes, was a testament to Trump's enduring influence and the party's collective determination. Trump's address came just days after a harrowing assassination attempt at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, where a 20-year-old assailant, Thomas Matthew Crooks, tried to take his life. The attempt, which resulted in a bullet grazing Trump's ear and the tragic death of one attendee, underscored the volatile political climate. However, it also highlighted Trump's unwavering resolve and the bravery of Secret Service personnel,

who acted swiftly to neutralize the threat. "Bullets were continuing to fly," Trump recounted, praising the "brave" Secret Service agents who "rushed to the stage ... these are great people, at great risk, let me tell you." Rather than dampening his spirit, the incident seems to have galvanized him and his supporters, underscoring a sense of shared destiny and resilience. Trump's speech at the Fiserv Forum was a call for unity and a vision for America's future. He emphasized the critical juncture at which the nation stands, stating: "Just a few short days ago, my journey with you nearly ended. And yet, here we are tonight, united in our vision for the future, promise and renewal of America. We live in a world of miracles." The former president's message was one of ambition and high expectations. Trump spoke directly to the younger generations, acknowledging their pivotal role in shaping the future. Republicans see an opportunity with Gen Z voters, who do not feel

especially beholden to either major party. J.D. Vance, at 39, is the first millennial on a major party presidential ticket, while Vivek Ramaswamy, 38, a former rival for the Republican nomination, addressed millennials and Gen Z directly. The convention also showcased a strong message of unity within the GOP. Former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley, who posed a solid challenge to Trump earlier this year, offered a robust endorsement. "For the sake of our nation, we have to go with Donald Trump," she declared. Her endorsement was met with a standing ovation from Trump. Trump's speech culminated in a call to action, urging his supporters to come out in droves in November to "whisk him back into the White House." He promised to launch a new era of safety, prosperity and freedom for all citizens, emphasizing that "the discord and division in our society must be healed, we must heal it quickly." He assured the crowd that his resolve was unbroken and his purpose was unchanged: to deliver a government

that serves the American people. As the convention ended, the energy and enthusiasm were palpable. Republican candidates across the nation are now more energized and ready to win. This unity and determination could lead to the "red wave" the GOP envisioned in 2022. The party stands united, invigorated by a shared vision and ready to seize the future. It is clear that the GOP has reached a pivotal moment. The emphasis on unity, ambition and high expectations sets a powerful tone for the upcoming election. Trump's call for a new era of safety, prosperity and freedom resonates deeply with the party's core values and the aspirations of its supporters. As the nation moves closer to the November elections, the GOP's renewed sense of purpose and unity will be crucial in mobilizing voters and achieving electoral success. The convention has demonstrated that the party is ready to embrace the challenges ahead and work toward a brighter future for all Americans.

Trump's call for a new era of safety, prosperity and freedom resonates deeply with the party's core values



COURTESY: AMALIO RAZMI/ASHARQ AL-AWQAT

By the time Trump left the White House, the Iranian government was facing severe political and financial difficulties

How Iran's leaders view US presidential election

DR. MAJID RAFIZADEH



Dr. Majid Rafizadeh is a Harvard-educated Iranian American political scientist. X: @Dr_Rafizadeh

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

Iran's leaders are closely monitoring the US presidential election campaign due to its significant implications for their country. The outcome of the election is expected to have a direct impact on Iran's political and economic landscape. As a result, recent presidential debates and political discussions within Iran have increasingly centered on the US elections, with particular emphasis on the potential of Donald Trump securing another term in office. This heightened focus reflects the considerable interest in how the election result might influence US-Iranian relations and broader geopolitical dynamics. The leaders in Tehran generally prefer it when Democrats win US elections due to the range of favorable policies and diplomatic approaches typically associated with the Democratic Party. Historically, Democratic administrations have shown a greater inclination toward negotiating and engaging in dialogue with Iran, rather than adopting a confrontational stance. This diplomatic

engagement often includes a more lenient approach toward sanctions, which can alleviate some of the economic pressures faced by Iran. Such policies can create a more favorable environment for Iran's economy and international relations. For example, in the first quarter of 2024, Iranian oil exports saw a dramatic increase, reaching 1.82 million barrels per day — a level not seen since October 2018. Moreover, Democrats have been more open to reentering or renegotiating agreements that aim to address the Iran nuclear program. For instance, the Obama administration's negotiation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was a significant step in this direction, providing Iran with sanctions relief. In contrast, Republican administrations have been known for their hard-line policies, including Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA and the reimposition of severe sanctions. This approach increases the economic strain on Iran and heightens

tensions. Therefore, Iranian leaders often view a potential Democratic victory as more advantageous, as it could lead to reduced sanctions, increased opportunities for negotiation and a less restrictive approach toward Iran's nuclear ambitions, ultimately benefiting its strategic and economic interests. For instance, during President Trump's tenure, the situation was starkly different to today. By the time Trump left the White House, the Iranian government was facing severe political and financial difficulties. Tehran's economy was nearing collapse, with inflation and unemployment reaching unprecedented levels. In addition, Iran was in survival mode and desperately needed cash to maintain its power, as oil exports dwindled under the Trump administration. Under the Trump administration, sanctions exerted substantial pressure on the Iranian government, forcing its leaders to cut funding to militias, allies and terror groups. Militants reportedly did not receive

their salaries or benefits, making it challenging for them to continue fighting on behalf of Tehran. In conclusion, Iran's leaders favor the election of a Democratic president due to the historical tendencies of the party's administrations to engage diplomatically and offer more lenient policies toward Iran. From their perspective, the potential for renewed negotiations, eased sanctions and a less restrictive approach to Iran's nuclear program represents a much better scenario for Tehran's economic and strategic interests. This is in stark contrast to the more robust stance typically associated with Republican administrations, particularly that of Trump, whose presidency was marked by America's withdrawal from the JCPOA and the imposition of severe sanctions. Therefore, a Democratic victory is seen by the Iranian leaders as offering a more favorable environment compared to the challenges posed by a potential return to power of Trump.

Opinion

Fresh approach needed if Daesh is to be defeated

HAFED AL-GHWELL

It has been 10 years since Daesh emerged on the global stage and announced itself as a caliphate. Despite suffering major territorial defeats at the hands of a global coalition, the group remains a persistent and evolving threat.

At its peak, between 2015 and 2017, Daesh ruled a swath of land larger than Great Britain, had tens of thousands of fighters and conducted audacious attacks in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and European cities, including Paris and Brussels.

Although its conventional capabilities have been significantly degraded since 2019, its capacity for asymmetric warfare has only grown and become more persistent, defying conventional strategies for countering threats.

Its evolution into a decentralized network of regional branches displays a tenacious knack for survival and adaptability in the face of catastrophic territorial losses and a more experienced counter-Daesh coalition.

Moreover, whether through high-profile terrorist attacks orchestrated by affiliates in Moscow or sporadic guerrilla operations in Iraq and Syria, Daesh's ability to exploit instability remains a potent threat. Five years after losing its last significant stronghold in Baghouz, Syria, Daesh continues to assert its influence in ungoverned, unstable regions by leveraging a sprawling network

of affiliates and local insurgencies that span continents.

Across the world, countries and entire subregions find themselves increasingly buffeted by emboldened splinter groups that operate with impunity while the global coalition races to catch up.

The Middle East, particularly Iraq and Syria, remains Daesh's main area of focus but recent shifts in its strategy, and the evolving dynamics in this part of the world, have led to an evolution of the group's

operations.

Beyond the Middle East, Daesh's global reach has been reinvigorated through alliances with and support for local affiliates in parts of Africa and Asia.

Daesh's affiliate in Western Africa has broadened its operational scope, indiscriminately targeting military installations and civilian populations alike.

This pattern extends to Mozambique, where splinter cells have destabilized the Cabo Delgado region, demonstrating an ability to adapt to local conflict dynamics and exploit regional vulnerabilities.

Worryingly, the establishment of new provincial structures, such as its General Directorate of Provinces, reveals that an increasingly confident Daesh is rapidly consolidating its new model in preparation for an organized expansion and even deeper integration in the



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

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

changing global security environment.

Unfortunately, global attention to Daesh continues to wane in the face of other emergent conflicts and geopolitical rifts and this reduced scrutiny is inadvertently aiding the reorganization and expansion of the group.

As the international focus pivots toward management of ongoing conflicts or the prevention of new ones, Daesh looks more poised than ever to exploit these distractions, emboldened by fragmented responses as regional powers fixate on countering localized threats from a group sustained by sophisticated, globe-spanning networks.

In Iraq and Syria, coalition activities extend to the bolstering of local security and military forces through intensive training programs and robust intelligence-sharing initiatives. These collaborations are vital in efforts to prevent Daesh from reclaiming territories or establishing new strongholds.

In Africa, the coalition concentrates on efforts to enhance the capacity of regional counterterrorism forces and foster cross-border cooperation to tackle the transnational, pan-provincial nature of Daesh affiliates.

On the financial front, the group's revenue streams now include diversified methods that extend beyond extortion and

oil smuggling. International cooperation is essential in operations to disrupt these networks by tracking and blocking illicit financial flows. Such multifaceted strategies, executed in concert, are designed to comprehensively weaken Daesh's structural and operational prowess.

Initiatives designed to bolster local governance, along with targeted development programs, can disrupt recruitment pipelines, while sustained international collaboration will be vital for monitoring

and neutralizing the group's transnational links. Without such a holistic approach, the ideological appeal of Daesh and its sharpened operational capabilities will continue to find fertile ground amid rising geopolitical instability.

Ensuring the enduring defeat of Daesh will take more than military might

and security-focused approaches. As we mark a decade since the emergence of Daesh, a transition of global strategies from dismissal of the group as a persistent threat to a mobilization for its enduring defeat will be complex and fraught with challenges.

However, global coordination, sustained attention and multifaceted approaches will be indispensable in the efforts to dismantle Daesh's global network and prevent the group from capitalizing on the world's geopolitical distractions.

Its evolution into a decentralized network of regional branches displays a tenacious knack for survival

An increasingly confident Daesh is rapidly consolidating its new model in preparation for an organized expansion

UK politics may be at a turning point

ANDREW HAMMOND

Much media attention has focused on the July 4 UK election won by Labour with a landslide that ranks alongside the party's other major victories in 1997 and 1945. However, there may be a bigger, long-term reason historians come to regard 2024 as a pivotal political moment — that is, the increasing fragmentation of the UK political landscape. Alongside Labour's huge win, seats were also gained by the Liberal Democrats, Reform, the Welsh nationalist Plaid Cymru party and the Greens. Meanwhile, the Scottish National Party continues to compete for prominence with the formerly ruling Conservatives.

To gauge why this could be so significant, it is necessary to look at the last time the UK experienced back-to-back landslides, in opposite directions, as seen in 2019, with a big Conservative win, and the 2024 Labour victory. Remarkably, this was more than a century ago, in 1900, with a huge Conservative victory, and in 1906, with an overwhelming Liberal win.

The 1900 and 1906 elections are

historically huge, as they helped catalyze an era-defining realignment that led to the modern UK electoral system. Indeed, the 1906 win was the last time that the Liberals won an absolute majority in the House of Commons, while it was also the last general election in which neither Labour nor the Conservatives won the popular vote.

Almost 120 years on from 1906, the UK political system is again showing significant signs of disequilibrium. Most notably, the collective share of the vote won on July 4 by Labour and the Conservatives was the lowest since the end of the First World War.

The decline of the traditional two-party dominance is not new. From 1945 to 1970, Labour and the Conservatives collectively averaged more than 90 percent of the vote, and also seats won, in

the eight UK general elections held in this period. Yet, the average share of the vote won by the two parties fell significantly in the subsequent nine UK general elections.

It is the Liberal Democrats, which gained more than 60 seats on July 4, that have probably done more to date to break the hold of the two major parties. From 1974 to 2005, the party's average share of the vote



Andrew Hammond is an Associate at LSE IDEAS at the London School of Economics.

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

in general elections, including the Liberal/Social Democratic alliance from 1983 to 1987, was just below 20 percent, although the party slumped in the polls after forming a coalition government with the Conservatives from 2010 to 2015.

While the Liberals have long taken votes from both major parties, the overall political impact has probably been greatest on Labour. The success of the Liberal/SDP alliance was one factor that helped contribute to Labour's long period in opposition from 1979 to 1997, when it endured four consecutive general election defeats before Tony Blair's premiership.

Several other parties have come to prominence, too, including the SNP, which currently governs in the Edinburgh-based devolved parliament, Reform, the Greens and Plaid Cymru. Reform's predecessor, the UK Independence Party, or UKIP, won the European Parliament vote in the UK in 2014, thus becoming the first party other than the Conservatives or Labour to win a UK national election in more than 100 years.

Driven in part by UKIP's appeal, David Cameron, the prime minister at the time,

promised in 2014 that, if he won a majority in the 2015 general election, he would hold an "in or out" referendum on the UK staying part of the EU. So, UKIP had a profound influence on Britain, with the 2016 referendum resulting in a victory for the Leave campaign.

The decline of the Labour-Conservative two-party system may make the outlook for UK politics more unpredictable, since

it is harder for any single party to secure a majority government. This is despite the first-past-the-post voting system that tends to result in the leading party gaining a significantly larger number of seats in the House of Commons than would be the case under a more proportionate electoral system — a situation that also benefited

Labour on July 4.

So, the UK's long-standing two-party system may be giving way to a significantly more unpredictable political landscape. Despite Labour's landslide, fragmentation is growing, with the Liberal Democrats, Reform, the SNP, Plaid Cymru and the Greens increasingly competing for prominence.

The collective share of the vote won by Labour and the Conservatives was the lowest since the end of the First World War

The decline of the Labour-Conservative two-party system may make the outlook for UK politics more unpredictable

srmg
Saudi Research & Media Group

Established in 1987 by
Prince Ahmad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz

CEO
Jomana Raashid Alraahid

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

Founded in 1979 by
Hisham & Muhammad Ali Hafiz

Editor-in-Chief
Faisal J. Abbas

Deputy Editor-in-Chief
Noor Osama Nugall

ARAB NEWS WELCOMES
FEEDBACK FROM READERS

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

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

TOLL FREE NUMBER: 8002440076

PRINTED AT: HALA PRINTING CO., RIYADH

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

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

SRPC AND AFFILIATED AGENCIES

JEDDAH: Tel: (966-12)283-0200, Fax: (966-12)283-6228. RIYADH: Tel: (966-11)212-8000, Fax: (966-11)442-9094. DAMMAM: Tel: (966-13)835-3838, Fax: (966-13)834-0489. ABU DHABI: Tel: (971-2)681-5999, Fax: (971-2)681-7595. CAIRO: Tel: (202-3)749-2775, (202-3)749-2996, (202-3)338-8654, Fax: (202-3)749-2884, (202-3)749-2855. MOROCCO: Tel: (212-537)262-618, Fax: (212-537)883-919. JORDAN: Tel: (962-6)553-7101, (962-6)551-7102, (962-6)553-9409, Fax: (962-6)553-7103. LONDON: Tel: (44-20)7631-8181, Fax: (44-20)7631-2310.

ADVERTISING:
SAUDI RESEARCH AND MEDIA GROUP
KSA: +966-11-294-0500
UAE: +971 4 3918500
E-mail: revenue@srmg.com
Website: www.srmg.com

DISTRIBUTION AGENT
TOLL FREE: (866)800-244-0076
Head Office: (Riyadh): P.O. Box 8216, Riyadh 11588
Tel: (966-11)4419933, Fax: (966-11)2121774
E-mail: info@saudi-distribution.com
Western Region: Tel: (966-12)653-0909
Eastern Region: Tel: (966-13)847-3569
Southern Region: Tel: (966-17)221-8693
Northern Region: Tel: (966-16)324-3070
Dubai: Tel: (971-4)381-6503, Fax: (971-4)381-6554
Abu Dhabi: Tel: (971-2)673-3555, Fax: (971-2)673-3384
Kuwait: Tel: (965)483-4822, Fax: (965)483-4719
Manama: Tel: (973-176)1770

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

PRINTING CENTER
Riyadh: P.O. Box 212
Riyadh 11383, Tel: (966-11)2657000
Fax: (966-11)2658000
Sales: Tel: (966-11)4708807
Fax: (966-11)4708520
www.halaprintpack.com

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

Business



Growth in global electricity demand this year and next is set to be among the fastest in the past two decades.

Keisuke Sadamori
IEA's director of Energy Markets and Security

POWER SURGE

Global electricity demand to grow by 4% in 2024: IEA

Expanding and reinforcing power grids is essential for ensuring a reliable electricity supply

Nirmal Narayanan Riyadh

Global electricity demand is expected to rise by around 4 percent this year, up from 2.5 percent in 2023, driven by robust economic growth, according to an analysis.

In its latest report, the International Energy Agency highlighted that intense heatwaves and the growing adoption of electricity-powered technologies, such as electric vehicles and heat pumps, are driving the increase in global electricity demand.

Many regions experienced severe heat waves in the first half of 2024, which heightened electricity needs and strained power grids. May was the hottest month of the year, marking the 12th consecutive month of record-high temperatures.

India, Mexico, Pakistan, the US, Vietnam, and several other countries experienced severe heat waves in the first half of the year, leading to surging peak loads due to increased cooling needs.

"Growth in global electricity demand this year and next is set to be among the fastest in the past two decades, highlighting the growing role of electricity in our economies as well as the impacts of severe heat waves," said Keisuke Sadamori, director of Energy Markets and Security at IEA.

The energy agency added that more households, especially in emerging economies, have started to purchase air conditioners, further driving electricity demand in these regions.

The IEA also emphasized that adopting higher efficiency standards for air conditioning is crucial to mitigate the impact of increased cooling demand on power systems.

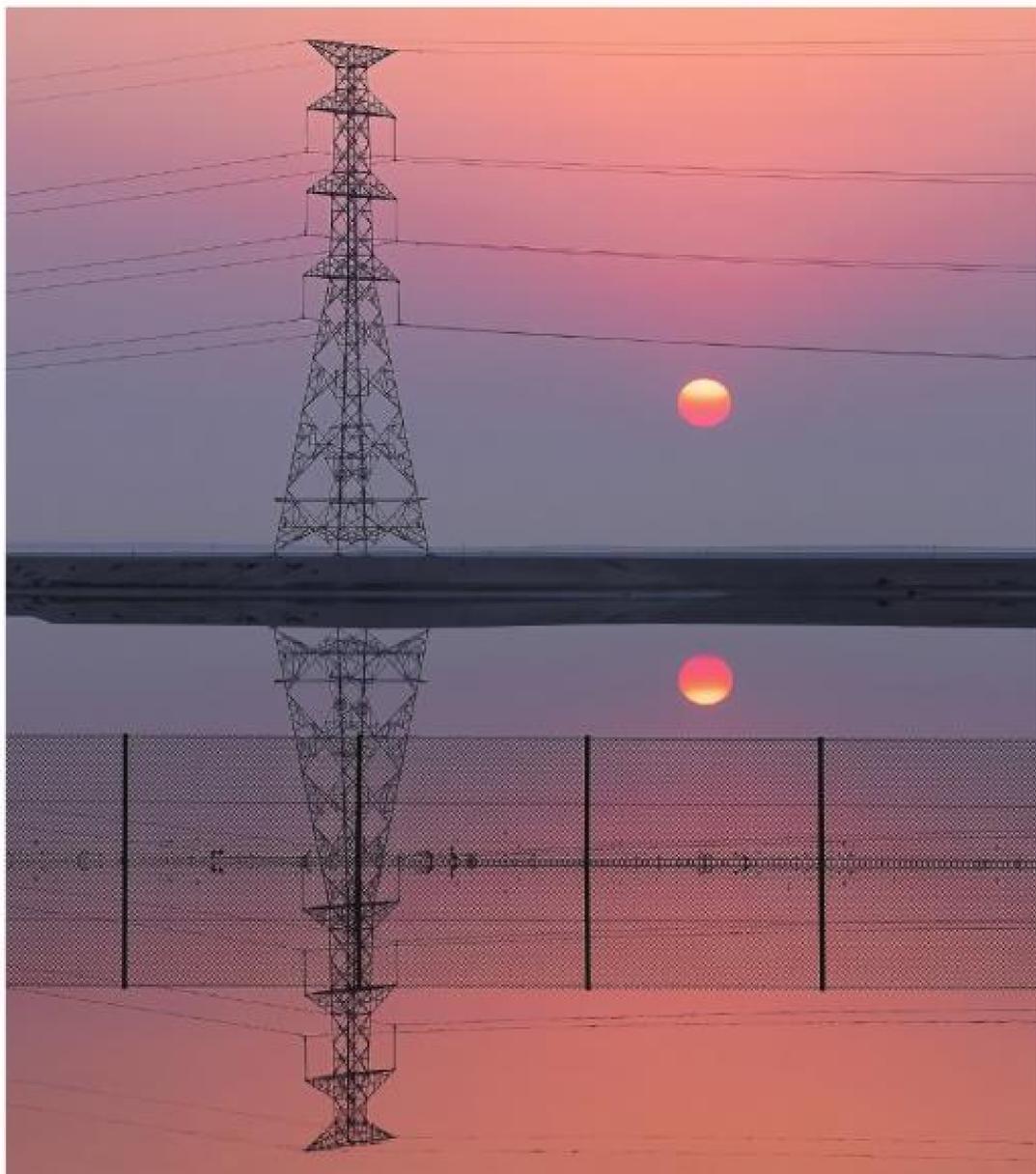
The report also highlighted that expanding and reinforcing power grids is essential for ensuring a reliable electricity supply.

The IEA noted that renewables are rapidly advancing globally, with solar photovoltaic set to achieve new records.

India and China to drive growth

The energy think tank further noted that this rise in electricity demand growth will be driven by countries like India, China, and the US.

"We expect this demand trend to continue in 2025, with growth also at 4 percent. In both 2024 and 2025, the rise in the world's electricity use is projected to be significantly higher than global GDP growth of 3.2 percent.



FAST FACT

Many regions experienced severe heat waves in the first half of 2024, which heightened electricity needs and strained power grids. May was the hottest month of the year, marking the 12th consecutive month of record-high temperatures.

Despite a sharp rise in power consumption, solar PV alone is expected to meet roughly half of the growth in global electricity demand by 2025. SPA

implement higher energy efficiency standards to reduce the impacts of increased cooling demand on power systems."

Meanwhile, Fatih Birol, IEA's executive director, said that the energy industry should urgently reduce its carbon emissions if the world wants to avoid catastrophic climate change in the coming decades, according to a press statement.

"About 80 percent of emissions that cause climate change come from fossil fuels. This is the reason there is a need to reduce emissions if we want a planet in the future that is like it is today," Birol told the Al-Attiyah Foundation in a podcast interview.

He added: "This doesn't mean that tomorrow we will not need fossil fuels, but the share of fossil fuels needs to decline. If we don't, we will face catastrophic implications like floods, heat waves, and other extreme weather events. Continuing with the current fossil fuel-based energy system is not good news for anybody — producers and consumers alike."

In the latest report, the IEA also projected that global nuclear generation is on track to reach a new high in 2025, surpassing its previous record in 2021.

According to the energy agency, nuclear generation is forecast to rise globally by 1.6 percent in 2024 and by 3.5 percent in 2025, driven by a steady increase in output by the French nuclear power fleet as maintenance works are completed.

The restarting of reactors in Japan and the arrival of new reactors in various markets, including China, India, Korea, and Europe, support the growth in nuclear power generation globally.

The report also noted that the rise of artificial intelligence has put the electricity consumption of data centers in focus, making better stocktaking more important than ever.

"In many regions, historical estimates of data centers' electricity consumption are hampered by a lack of reliable data. At the same time, future projections include a very wide range of uncertainties related to the pace of deployment, the diverse and expanding applications of AI, and the potential for energy efficiency improvements," said the IEA.

It added: "Expanding and improving the collection of electricity demand data from the sector will be crucial to identify past developments correctly and to understand future trends better."

In 2022 and 2023, electricity demand grew more slowly than GDP," the IEA added.

According to the analysis, electricity demand in China is forecast to increase by 6.5 percent in 2024, similar to its average rate between 2016 and 2019.

India will witness an 8 percent rise in electricity consumption in 2024, matching its rapid growth in 2023.

"In the first half of 2024, the country (India) grappled with heat waves of record duration, with peak load reaching a new high and putting exceptional strains on power systems. Assuming a return to average weather conditions, we expect electricity demand growth in India to ease moderately to 6.8 percent in 2025," the IEA added.

The report further highlighted that electricity demand in the US is set to rebound significantly in 2024, increasing by 3 percent year-on-year, driven by a positive economic outlook and the rising

need for air conditioning amid severe heatwaves.

In the EU, demand is expected to increase by 1.7 percent as economic difficulties ease, but uncertainty over the pace of growth remains.

"EU electricity consumption had contracted over the two previous years, with the decline in output from energy-intensive industries an important driver. Signs of a recovery in EU electricity demand emerged

The share of fossil fuels needs to decline. If we don't, we will face catastrophic implications like floods, heat waves, and other extreme weather events.

Fatih Birol
IEA's executive director



starting in the fourth quarter of 2023," said the IEA.

It added: "Growth gained further traction during the first half of 2024 as energy prices stabilized and various industries that had previously curtailed operations restarted."

Clean energy sources

According to the analysis, despite a sharp rise in power consumption, solar PV alone is expected to meet roughly half of the growth in global electricity demand by 2025.

IEA further noted that global electricity generation from solar PV and wind is expected to surpass that from hydropower in 2024.

"The global energy transition is set to achieve another significant milestone by 2025, with total renewable generation poised to overtake coal-fired electricity output. The

share of renewables in global electricity supply rose to 30 percent in 2023 and is projected to climb further to 35 percent in 2025," said the IEA.

Despite the sharp increases in renewables, global power generation from coal is unlikely to decline this year due to the strong growth in demand, especially in China and India.

The study highlighted that carbon dioxide emissions from the global power sector are plateauing, with a slight increase in 2024 followed by a decline in 2025.

"It's encouraging to see clean energy's share of the electricity mix continuing to rise, but this needs to happen at a much faster rate to meet international energy and climate goals," said Sadamori.

He added: "At the same time, it's crucial to expand and reinforce grids to provide citizens with secure and reliable electricity supply — and to

MINING DEVELOPMENT

Saudi Arabia launches competition for mineral exploration licenses

Initiative aims to accelerate exploration and development of KSA's mineral resources, valued at \$2.4 trillion

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia has unveiled its largest mineralized belts to date, spanning 4,788 sq. km and including five new exploration licenses.

Three of the permits, which were offered to local and global firms, are reserved for the Jabal Sayid site in Madinah.

It covers an area of 2,892 sq. km and entails minerals like gold, silver, copper, zinc, and lead, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources.

The remaining two licenses pertain to the Al-Hajjar Site in the Asir region, which encompasses 1,896 sq. km and also includes gold, silver, copper, zinc, and lead.

This initiative aims to accelerate the exploration and development of Saudi Arabia's mineral resources, valued at SR9.3 trillion (\$2.4 trillion).

This is in line with Saudi Arabia's ambition to transform mining into a foundational industrial pillar of the country's economy. It also aligns with the ministry's goal to further bolster the sector and contribute to ongoing developments under Saudi Vision 2030.



Over the past five years, the Kingdom has led in developing a favorable regulatory and infrastructural environment for mining, and has improved its mining licensing index. Shutterstock

The statement further outlined the competition stages, which include pre-qualification, release of the information memorandum, proposal

evaluation, and announcement of winners.

Jarrah bin Muhammad Al-Jarrah, the official spokesman for the Ministry of Industry and

Mineral Resources, noted that offering these sites will attract major international and local mining companies. This initiative is expected to contribute to

the energy transition, empower other industrial sectors, and increase exploration spending in the Kingdom.

This initiative is also expected to boost exploration spending in the Kingdom, enrich the national geological database with technical data, create new job opportunities, and foster sustainable economic growth.

According to a report by MineHutte in collaboration

HIGHLIGHT

The initiative is expected to contribute to the energy transition, empower other industrial sectors, and increase exploration spending in the Kingdom.

with the Mining Journal, the Kingdom has experienced the fastest growth in mining sector investments globally.

The report also revealed that, over the past five years, the Kingdom has led in developing a favorable regulatory and infrastructural environment for mining, and has improved its mining licensing index to become the second-best country worldwide in terms of licensing environment.

TRANSFORMATION

Govt agencies boost emerging tech adoption by 10% in 2024

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's government agencies have made significant progress in integrating new technologies, showing a 10 percent improvement from the previous year, according to an official report.

The Emerging Technology Adoption Readiness Index, which measures the progress of government entities in implementing new solutions, increased from 60.35 percent in 2023 to 70.70 percent in 2024. This improvement is accompanied by a rise in participating agencies, which grew from 13 last year to 35 in 2024, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

The annual report published by the Digital Government Authority underscores the Kingdom's enhanced capacity for adopting emerging technologies. This progress is a key element of Saudi Arabia's broader transformation strategy, aimed at leveraging advanced systems to improve services for citizens, residents, and visitors.



The index helps organizations and policymakers identify areas for growth and development. SPA

their technological advancement and identify areas for growth and development — an essential component of Saudi Arabia's objectives.

The report highlighted progress in adopting emerging technologies, with research capability reaching 72.04 percent and communication capability reaching 71.88 percent.

According to the report, the integration field achieved a score of 67.93 percent, while the proof capability field recorded 70.84

percent, reflecting advanced levels of development.

Drones have improved aerial photography and real estate imaging, boosting operational efficiency by 80 percent and significantly reducing time and effort.

Digital twinning has enabled precise asset inventory for 22 out of 36 industrial cities. Additionally, Ameen, the digital human assistant, now serves over 36,000 customers monthly.

Augmented and virtual reality technologies have further improved digital accessibility for individuals with special needs, expanding their access to digital services.

The Anaam Shain app has streamlined the secure management of livestock data across the Kingdom, while firefighting robots have reduced physical losses by up to 50 percent.

In 2023, Saudi Arabia topped the Government Strategy Index for Artificial Intelligence, as ranked by Tortoise Intelligence, which evaluates over 60 countries.

CLOSING BELL

Saudi main index closes in green at 12,195

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's Tadawul All Share Index rose on Sunday, gaining 6.73 points, or 0.06 percent, to close at 12,195.05.

The total trading turnover of the benchmark index was SR6.12 billion (\$1.63 billion), as 74 of the listed stocks advanced, while 154 retreated.

The MSCI Tadawul Index also closed in green, gaining 2.46 points, or 0.16 percent, to close at 1,529.46.

The Kingdom's parallel market Nomu rose 67.8 points, or 0.26 percent, to close at 25,770.14. This comes as 27 of the listed stocks advanced while as many as 34 retreated.

The best-performing stock of the day was Saudi Manpower Solutions Co., whose share price surged 9.88 percent to SR10.34.

Other top performers include Maharah Human Resources Co. as well as Al-Baha Investment and Development Co., whose share prices soared by 8.35 percent and 8.33 percent,

to stand at SR6.88 and SR0.13, respectively.

The worst performer was Electrical Industries Co., whose share price dropped by 5.51 percent to SR6.00.

Other notable declines included Alinma Hospitality REIT Fund and The Mediterranean and Gulf Insurance and Reinsurance Co., with share

HIGHLIGHT

The total trading turnover of the benchmark index was SR6.12 billion (\$1.63 billion), as 74 of the listed stocks advanced, while 154 retreated.

prices falling 3.38 percent to SR8.29 and 3.25 percent to SR29.80, respectively.

On the announcement front, Saudi Tadawul Holding Co. reported a profit increase to SR146 million for the second quarter of 2024, reflecting a 55 percent rise from SR105.2 million in the same period last year.

Business News



The key global forums, held from June 27 to 30, underscored AIUla's prominent role within the International Tourism Alliance of Silk Road Cities. SPA

COLLABORATION

AIUla role in global forums boosts Saudi-China ties

RCU builds on deep-rooted foundations of cultural partnership

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia and China have deepened their cultural ties as the Royal Commission for AlUla participated in key global forums in Istanbul and Luoyang.

The RCU attended the Silk Road Dialogue and the International Ancient Capitals Forum to enhance collaboration and showcase AlUla as the world's "largest living museum."

The events, held from June 27 to 30, underscored AIUla's prominent role within the International Tourism Alliance of Silk Road Cities, a network connecting 63 destinations across 28 countries along ancient trade routes.

The forums were instrumental in expanding Saudi-China

cultural partnerships and organizing official visits to AlUla.

Saudi Arabia's strategic focus on tourism, centered around AIUla's rich heritage, has become a cornerstone in deepening cultural and economic ties with China, showcasing the Kingdom's commitment to leveraging its historical assets to foster international partnerships.

Discussions at the International Ancient Capitals Forum included high-level meetings with Luoyang officials on tourism, agriculture, conservation, and urban development, exploring new areas of cooperation between the two nations.

"The Royal Commission for AlUla continues to build on the deep-rooted foundations of cultural partnership that exists between China, the Kingdom,

and northwest Arabia," said an RCU spokesperson in a statement.

The spokesperson added: "The Silk Road Dialogue and International Ancient Capitals Forum

FASTFACT

The RCU attended the Silk Road Dialogue and the International Ancient Capitals Forum to enhance collaboration and showcase AIUla as the world's 'largest living museum.'

events represented exciting opportunities to develop new avenues of collaboration, with a focus on expanding knowledge exchange and promoting tourism, with diverse initiatives built upon our shared status as ancient destinations and rapidly

developing landmarks for human heritage."

The forum was launched to foster dialogue and collaboration between cities with a millennia-long history. It also facilitates an agreement signed earlier this year between AIUla and its Chinese partners at the Henan Provincial Administration of Cultural Heritage.

The partnership seeks to enhance knowledge and shared resources, focusing on archeology, preserving cultural heritage and museums and research collaboration as well as talent development, tourism and other cultural exchanges.

It also includes establishing a technology-driven archeological laboratory, conducting excavation activities, engaging in research and fostering connections between heritage sites in AIUla and Henan.

EXPANSION

Alandalus starts \$222m commercial center project in Makkah

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi holy city Makkah is set to see a boost in its commercial infrastructure with Alandalus Property Co. commencing construction on an SR831 million (\$222 million) project.

In a statement to Tadawul,

the Saudi-based real estate firm announced the start of work on a new commercial center in the Makkah Al-Mukarramah region, spanning over 50,650 sq. m.

The center is designed to include 350 rental units, such as showrooms, retail spaces, hypermarkets, entertainment areas, and dining options. It will also feature parking facilities for 1,800 vehicles.

Alandalus' move underscores its commitment to enhancing Makkah's commercial capabilities. This project follows recent expansions by UAE-based Lulu Group, which launched two new projects in Makkah and Madinah earlier this year.

"According to the developer's report, the optimal final engineering design for the project was chosen from a group

HIGHLIGHT

Alandalus' move underscores its commitment to enhancing Makkah's commercial capabilities. This project follows recent expansions by UAE-based Lulu Group, which launched two new projects in Makkah and Madinah earlier this year.

of designs prepared by the most skilled engineering offices in the Kingdom," said Alandalus in the Tadawul statement.

It added that construction is underway with all necessary municipal permits secured, and the center is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2027. The project is being developed by Masat Property Co., a joint venture between Alandalus

and Buroj International, with Hamat Holding Co., in which Alandalus holds a 25 percent stake, overseeing construction.

Funding for the project will be primarily sourced from bank loans, with supplementary contributions from the partners' own resources.

The ongoing development projects are set to significantly enhance infrastructure in Makkah and Madinah, supporting their transformation into leading hubs for business and tourism.

In December 2023, the Makkah Chamber of Commerce, Madinah Chamber of Commerce, and the Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture signed the Manafea agreement, aimed at transforming these holy cities into pivotal financial and business hubs in the Islamic world.

BizBriefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Exit strategy

ExxonMobil selling Malaysia oil and gas assets

Exxon Mobil Corp. has agreed to sell its Malaysian oil and gas assets to state energy firm Petronas.

The US major, which last year marked its 130th year in Malaysia, has been trying to sell its aging upstream assets in the country since 2020, Malaysian media have reported, part of a shift in its strategy to focus on oil production in the Americas.

Petronas has taken over operations of Exxon's assets, including the country's flagship Tapis oilfield in Terengganu which began production in 1978. **Reuters**

Startups

Eve rolls out prototype of flying taxi

Electric aircraft maker Eve has showcased for the first time the full-scale prototype of its "flying taxi," achieving a milestone as the company aims to obtain certification and enter service in 2026.

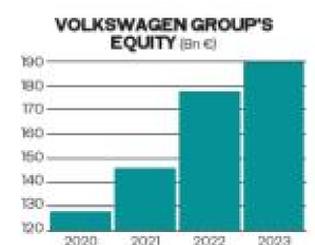
Eve, controlled by Embraer, rolled out its electric vertical take-off and landing aircraft prototype at its Gaviao Peixoto plant on July 3.

The company is one of a bevy of startups worldwide developing battery-powered aircraft that can take off and land vertically to ferry travelers on short city trips, allowing them to beat traffic. **Reuters**

Chart of THE DAY

Volkswagen's equity stood at around €190bn in the 2023 fiscal year.

Source: alalalalalalalalalal



What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

Do I Know You?

SADIE DINGFELD

Sadie Dingfeld's "Do I Know You?" tells of her discovery that she's faceblind and investigates the neuroscience of sight, memory, and imagination — while solving some long-running mysteries about her own life.



A lively blend of personal narrative and popular science, the book is the story of one unusual mind's attempt to understand itself — and a fascinating exploration of the remarkable breadth of human experience.

Trade rule breach

EU tariffs on China EVs 'must be corrected'

EU tariffs on electric vehicles built in China breach global trading rules and must be corrected, an industry body representing 12 Chinese automakers told the European Commission in a hearing this week.

The China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products presented its view that the EU's preliminary assessment is incompatible with EU and World Trade Organization rules.

"We urge the commission to correct these unlawful findings," CCCME Vice President Shi Yonghong said. **Reuters**

Growth scheme

UK launches review of pensions system

Britain's new Labour government is reviewing the pensions system to look at ways to shift more investment into productive assets with the aim of boosting economic growth and improving retirement incomes, it said on Saturday.

The government announced last week a new Pensions Schemes Bill which would seek to encourage consolidation of smaller pension schemes.

"The review we are announcing is the latest in a 'big bang' of reforms to unlock growth, boost investment and deliver savings," Finance Minister Rachel Reeves said. **Reuters**

We prioritize diversity and inclusion as part of our core values and support societal integration for all segments.

Loluwah Al-Nowaiser
EVP of Human Resources at Zain KSA



Corporate

PRESS RELEASES FROM THE WORLD OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE

ROBUST ALLIANCE

Emirates Steel and Eversendai partner for NEOM project

Emirates Steel, part of Emirates Steel Arkan Group, one of the largest publicly traded steel and building materials manufacturers in the region, is partnering with Eversendai, a global powerhouse in steel construction, solidifying their collaboration for the prestigious NEOM Trojena Ski Village project in the heart of NEOM, Saudi Arabia's most ambitious giga-project.

The strategic partnership marks a significant milestone in the steel industry, highlighting the two companies' joint commitment to delivering excellence in sustainable innovation across the wider GCC region. Emirates Steel will supply premium steel beams renowned for their sustainability, regionally record-setting low carbon emissions, and exceptional durability for the construction of the NEOM Trojena Ski Village.

The partnership agreement was formalized during an official ceremony, signifying the commencement of a robust alliance aimed at setting new benchmarks in construction excellence. The collaboration will not only enhance Emirates Steel's position within the wider GCC market, but also highlights its pivotal role in shaping iconic projects in the region.



Seated from left, Narishnath Nathan, deputy group managing director of Eversendai, and Saeed Alghafri, CEO of Emirates Steel, at the signing ceremony.

Saeed Alghafri, CEO of Emirates Steel, said: "We are delighted to partner with Eversendai on this significant project which promises to be a staple of NEOM in Saudi Arabia. Emirates Steel is committed to supplying benchmark sustainable steel solutions that meet the stringent demands of innovative construction projects. This collaboration exemplifies our dedication to driving sustainable growth across the GCC and

HIGHLIGHT

Emirates Steel will supply premium steel beams renowned for their sustainability, regionally record-setting low carbon emissions, and exceptional durability for the construction of the NEOM Trojena Ski Village.

delivering value to our partners and stakeholders."

Narishnath Nathan, deputy group managing director of Eversendai, said: "Eversendai is proud to collaborate with Emirates Steel on the NEOM Trojena Ski Village, a landmark project that will showcase our collective capabilities in delivering world-class steel construction solutions. This partnership highlights our commitment to pushing the

boundaries of engineering and construction."

The NEOM Trojena Ski Village is poised to become a premier global destination, offering unparalleled recreational experiences in the region. Emirates Steel's advanced steel beams will play a crucial role in the structural integrity and sustainability of the resort, ensuring it meets global standards for quality and safety.

Corporate Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Network Security 48% KSA firms report disparity in cyber protection

According to the latest Kaspersky study, more than half of geo-distributed businesses (48 percent) in the Kingdom identified a disparity between the levels of cyber protection across all sites: 30 percent of these companies admitted this problem but did not think it was critical, the remaining 18 percent stated their branches required much more cybersecurity measures to be implemented. However, Kaspersky's experts are warning multi-site businesses that such a disparity can endanger the whole organization.

According to the recent Kaspersky report "Managing geographically distributed businesses: challenges and solutions," only 52 percent of respondents in Saudi Arabia were confident that the protection from cyberthreats in their head office was equally effective as in local offices.

Global Recognition Krohne wins sustainability award

Krohne, a global leader in measurement technology, has announced that its EcoMATE emissions monitoring solution has been awarded the Outstanding Sustainability Initiative in the Shipping category at the MEA Business Awards 2024.

The MEA Business Awards celebrate innovation and excellence across various industries in the Middle East and Africa, recognizing companies that demonstrate a commitment to advancing business practices and achieving significant positive impacts in their sectors. Krohne's EcoMATE solution has been recognized for its groundbreaking contributions to sustainability in the shipping industry.

AI Solutions

Juniper launches first Ops4AI lab

Juniper Networks, a leader in secure, AI-native networking, announced the first and most comprehensive multivendor lab for validating end-to-end automated AI data center solutions and automated operations with switching, routing, storage and compute solutions from leading vendors, as well as new Juniper Validated Designs that accelerate the time-to-value in deploying AI clusters.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

New Zain KSA initiative to empower the visually impaired

Zain has announced a strategic partnership with "Be My Eyes," the largest and fastest-growing app for assisting the blind and visually impaired community worldwide. Through this initiative, the first-of-its-kind in the region, Zain is expanding its volunteerism scope to engage its community, connect with visually impaired groups, and integrate advanced technology.

In collaboration with Be My Eyes, Zain KSA volunteers will receive incoming calls from the app's user base, which includes more than 600,000 visually impaired users worldwide. Once the volunteer gets the video call, they will act as eyes for the caller, providing necessary support such as reading a document, identifying a medication, offering navigation guidance, and other potential scenarios.

Loluwah Al-Nowaiser, executive vice president of human resources at Zain KSA, said: "Zain KSA's commitment to innovation and growth has never been only about technological advancement, but it is rather rooted

in our responsibility to harness advanced technology in serving people and the community. While we continue to innovate to deliver the most advanced digital services and user experiences, our core goal is to unlock the potential of every member of our community. In doing so, we aim to uplift our society and support the goals of Saudi Vision 2030 and the aspirations of our visionary leadership in enhancing the quality of life. We prioritize diversity and inclusion as part of our core values and support societal integration for all segments, with a particular focus on individuals with disabilities.

"By partnering with Be My Eyes, which exclusively caters to one segment of this community, Zain KSA provides its employees with a new volunteering opportunity, expanding our impact to help create a wonderful world for people from all segments while directly engaging the Zain KSA family."



The innovative customer services training program is designed to upskill Aqualia's workforce.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Aqualia launches training program for Saudis

Aqualia, a water management company, has underlined its commitment to advancing the growth and development of the Saudi water sector by launching an innovative customer services training program designed to upskill its diverse workforce and empower Saudi talent to fulfill their potential.

The immersive training program has been rolled out across Aqualia's Northern and Southern clusters, with detailed training sessions being conducted by experienced instructors specialized in acquainting learners with all-important tools such as customer care and billing system, business intelligence, automatic meter reading, mobile device management, and workforce

management system. In total, 447 Aqualia employees will undergo 4,250 hours of training over a period of 10 months, with each staff member receiving at least 25 hours of training in each key area of the company's customer services function.

Participants will spend eight of the 10 outlined months assigned to specialist trainers to gain greater insights into each distinct area of Aqualia's customer services department. Qualified experts will also be on-hand to deliver training sessions focused on creating a better and more in-depth understanding of Aqualia's Northern and Southern clusters' business units.

Javier Díaz, country manager — Saudi Arabia, Aqualia, said: "As part of our ongoing efforts to drive

the transformation of Saudi water management services, we are fully committed to investing in the training and development of our staff. We believe that empowering the industry leaders of tomorrow is crucial to safeguarding the future — of our industry and the nation as a whole. With just short of 400 staff employed across our Northern and Southern clusters — providing a constant supply of water to a population of 5 million people, we are aware of how vital it is to ensure that each member of our team is supported to work to the best of their abilities. We have launched our customer services training program to do exactly that, with the unique offering enabling us to deliver an even higher standard of service."

The Regional Under-13 Championship is an opportunity to develop promising referees.

Manuel Navarro
President of the SAFF Referees Committee



Sport News

FOOTBALL

SAFF launches 1st edition of Regional Under-13 Championship in Taif

Arab News Taif

The Saudi Arabian Football Federation has launched the first edition of the Regional Under-13 Championship in Taif, running from July 18-30.

Currently in its third day, the 12-day tournament features 14 regional teams, showcasing top talents from academies across 14 cities, provinces, and regions.

The 14 regional teams competing in the championship are from Al-Ahsa, Jazan, Najran, Jof, Hail, Al-Qassim, the Eastern Province, Riyadh, Jeddah, Asir, Madinah, Makkah, Hafar Al-Batin, and Tabuk.

SAFF's Technical Director

The tournament is part of strategy to scout and develop over 4,000 young talents by 2025. Supplied



HIGHLIGHT

Top talents from academies across 14 cities, provinces, and regions are featuring in the tournament.

Academy, further contributing to the development of skilled officials in the sport.

Manuel Navarro, president of the SAFF Referees Committee, said: "The Regional Under-13 Championship is an opportunity to develop promising referees, especially since it will witness the participation of 32 young referees. The committee aims to increase their refereeing hours and enhance their experience."

This tournament is a significant part of SAFF's strategy to scout and develop over 4,000 young talents by 2025, supporting the growth and future of Saudi football.

Nasser Larguet said: "The championship represents the result of the significant work supported by the Saudi Arabian Football Federation, and the

outcome is the creation of the Regional Under-13 League. Clear goals and strategic plans have been set to discover and support young talents."

Additionally, the tournament will provide valuable experience for young up-and-coming referees, who have been selected from the SAFF Referees'

SWEDISH OPEN

Nadal defeated in first tour final in two years

Borges dominates Spanish star as the latter struggled to find fluency

AFP Bastad, Sweden

Rafael Nadal lost his first final in two years on Sunday as the Spaniard went down 6-3, 6-2 to Portugal's Nuno Borges at the clay-court Bastad Open.

The Spanish tennis great had shown signs of a return to form in Scandinavia as he made an impressive run to the final, just one week before tennis at the Olympic Games gets underway on the clay in Paris.

But Nadal, rather than celebrating his 64th title on the surface and first since Roland Garros 2022, was dominated by Borges as he struggled to find fluency with his serve and ground strokes.

"I don't know what to say. I think I was wishing for this moment for a while already," said Borges in his post-match interview.

"It's crazy; in tennis, it doesn't happen when you expect it sometimes. I know we all wanted Rafa to win; a part of me wished that too, but something even bigger inside of me really pushed through today ... I'm just really happy overall. I really don't know what to say, I'm very emotional."

Elsewhere, Matteo Berrettini breezed to a 6-3, 6-1 win against France's Quentin Halys in the Gstaad final, earning the Italian his second clay-court title of the year.

The sixth seed Berrettini capped off a fine week in Switzerland by needing just 59 minutes to dispatch the world No. 192 Halys.

"It feels unbelievable. It feels like it was yesterday that I won my first title here six years ago,

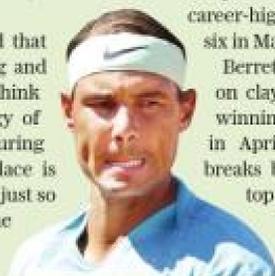


Nuno Borges in action against Rafael Nadal. The Portuguese broke Nadal serve five times on his way to victory on Monday. Reuters

but a lot of matches and a lot of things happened," said Berrettini.

"I'm just so glad that I can keep playing and enjoying, and I think I found the energy of six years ago during this week. This place is special for me. I'm just so happy," added the

Rafael Nadal



28-year-old who has struggled with injuries since reaching a career-high world number six in May 2022.

Berrettini's second title on clay this season, after winning in Marrakech in April, will ensure he breaks back into the ATP top 50 on Monday.

Currently ranked 82, Berrettini was outside of the

HIGHLIGHT

Elsewhere, Matteo Berrettini breezed to a 6-3, 6-1 win against France's Quentin Halys in the Gstaad final, earning the Italian his second clay-court title of the year.

top 150 in March but a return to fitness and a fine 16-6 record for the current season has seen the 2021 Wimbledon finalist begin to refine his best level.

Sunday's final was briefly interrupted for rain just after Berrettini secured a crucial first break in the opening set.

When the players returned 30 minutes later, the Italian won six of the next seven games to claim his second Gstaad title.

Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Probe

Liverpool U-18 team walk off in racism row

Liverpool have demanded an "urgent investigation" after their under-18s team walked off following alleged racist abuse during two youth matches in Germany.

The Reds' games in the Bundesliga Cup youth tournament against Hoffenheim on Friday and Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday were abandoned as a result of the alleged racism toward the same player.

A club statement said: "Liverpool can confirm that a member of our under-18s team reported he was racially abused by an opponent while playing in the Bundesliga Cup youth tournament at Schwabisch Hall. AFP



Challenges

'We're ready': Paris Olympics organizers

Paris Olympics supremo Tony Estanguet said Sunday that the city was "ready" for the games as he played down complaints from some residents and businesses about the impact of the event.

"We are ready as we head into the final phase," Estanguet told a press conference in Paris, five days from the opening parade next Friday. AFP

NBA

Bucks sign former Raptors guard Trent Jr.

Gary Trent Jr. has left the Toronto Raptors to join the Milwaukee Bucks' backcourt.

Trent averaged 13.7 points, 2.6 rebounds and 1.7 assists in 71 games with the Raptors last season. He shot 42.6 percent from the floor and 39.3 percent from 3-point range.

In 20 games after the All-Star break, Trent averaged 19.1 points.

Trent has career averages of 14.3 points, 2.4 rebounds and 1.5 assists with the Portland Trail Blazers (2018-21) and Raptors (2021-24). This move reunites Trent with former Trail Blazers teammate Damian Lillard. AP

Follow Arab News Briefs all through the day @ArabNews

Donald Glover, who released his newest album 'Bando Stone & the New World' under his Childish Gambino moniker, is ready to retire the persona. 'It's not fulfilling. And I just felt like I didn't need to build in this way anymore,' he told the New York Times.



Finally

The Six

Filmmakers

These Saudi directors are making a name for themselves on the international film festival circuit.



Hana Alfasi

Alfasi is currently working on her short film "When the Shelves Hymn" with Film AUla. She is an alumna of the Rawi Screenwriters Lab, which was run in collaboration with the Sundance Institute.



Maram Taibah

The filmmaker's upcoming film "Malika" is a short fantasy movie about a young girl who goes on an adventure to find her dying grandmother's lost crown.



Raneem and Dana Almohandes

The sisters "aim to have the first Saudi musical ... at Cannes very soon," they previously told Arab News.



Shahad Ameen

Ameen's 2019 film "Scales" played at the Venice Film Festival and she currently has another feature, titled "Hijra," in the works.



Fatima Al-Banawi

Al-Banawi's feature film debut "Basma" tackles mental illness and follows a 26-year-old woman as she tries to help her father, who suffers from paranoid delusions.



Tawfik Alzaidi

The director's "Norah" became the first Saudi film to appear as part of the official selection at the Cannes Film Festival in May.

CLOSE UP

Cynthia Khalifeh carves out a path in Hollywood

Raffi Boghosian Los Angeles

Lebanese actress Cynthia Khalifeh is teaming up with Lucien Laviscount from "Emily in Paris" and Laura Marano of "The Royal Treatment" for the horror-thriller "Borderline."

The former TV presenter is also eyeing future projects as she aims to achieve her Hollywood dream.

"I'm one step forward on the path to achieving my big dream since I was young, which is to act in international films. So, baby steps and I really feel like I am a bit closer," Khalifeh told Arab News in an interview.

"It was a lot of risks that I had to take, a lot of just jumping on adventures where I didn't have anything that was guaranteed."

"Borderline," a film shot in a specially constructed studio in Malta, highlights the darkest fears associated with dating apps.

"It talks about online dating and how sometimes you might go to meet someone you don't

know, and there's a certain danger," Khalifeh said.

The actress said the show is called "Borderline" because, "they meet in a place located at the border between two countries, so there is no law applied from this country or the other, so anything can happen in this place."

"The girl or I find myself stuck over there in one night, contained, in one place, trying to run away from this person but I face him at the end. I learnt a lot of fights," she added.

About her co-star Laviscount, she said: "Lucien plays a completely different role than that of the handsome sweet guy that all girls fell for in 'Emily in Paris.' Here, you will not like him at all."

Khalifeh's contributions to the screenplay led to her role as co-writer of the film. Choosing horror to launch her global career, she hopes to dominate this year's Halloween season.

"I started throwing ideas and then they told me, 'You know what? Do you want to join in?' It happened and I joined the writing team," she said.



Right: Lebanese actress Cynthia Khalifeh is set to make a name for herself in Hollywood. Getty Images

Left: Khalifeh says she made significant contributions to the script for 'Borderline.' AFP



MARVEL FILM

Reynolds dishes on nabbing Madonna song

Arab News Dubai

"Deadpool & Wolverine" stars Ryan Reynolds and Hugh Jackman knew it wasn't going to be easy to get Madonna's permission to use her 1989 hit "Like a Prayer" for the upcoming film, hitting cinema screens in the Middle East on July 25. The two actors, along with director Shawn Levy, in a recent interview on SiriusXM, said they had to visit the famous singer to ask her to license the track.

"It did involve a personal visit to Madonna, where we showed Madonna the sequence where 'Like a Prayer' would be used," Levy explained.

"Also, let's preface it with the fact that they don't license — that Madonna doesn't just license the song, particularly that song," Reynolds said. "It was a big deal to ask for it and certainly a bigger deal to use it."



Ryan Reynolds

HOLLYWOOD

Kate Hudson talks rom-com sequel

Arab News Dubai

Kate Hudson said she and Matthew McConaughey are both open to starring in a sequel to the 2003 rom-com "How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days."

During an appearance on "Watch What Happens Live," Hudson revealed that she and McConaughey have spoken about returning to the streets of Manhattan for a sequel saying, "I think they (studios) are always thinking about that."

"All that matters would be the script and if Matthew and I were into the script," Hudson said. "I think we're both totally open; it has just never happened."

INTERVIEW

Squatwolf expands in Saudi Arabia with new warehouse, fitness events

Hams Saleh Dubai

From starting as a passion project to now serving athletes in over 200 countries, Squatwolf, the gym-wear brand co-founded by Anam Khalid and Wajdan Gul, is expanding in Saudi Arabia.

The founders have opened a warehouse in the Kingdom.

"We take pride in being the first gym-wear brand in the Kingdom that is supporting Vision 2030, fueling the power of the gym as a playground of self-improvement

to all," Khalid told Arab News recently.

"Our Saudi warehouse is a demonstration to our commitment as a UAE brand to support the region and go all in."

The Saudi Arabia warehouse can process up to 30,000 orders a day and ensures same-day delivery in Riyadh and next-day delivery in Jeddah, Dammam, Alkhobar and Makkah, Gul said.

The brand plans to collaborate with retail and gym partners,



Squatwolf founders Wajdan Gul and Ana Khalid are taking their gym-wear to Saudi Arabia. Supplied

local ambassadors and organize community events to support their expansion goals.

"We're here to recognize every gym-goer, regardless of their fitness level," Khalid said.

Gul confirmed that The Squatwolf Games, a prominent fitness event in Dubai, is set to make its debut in Saudi Arabia.

"Yes, Squatwolf Games is coming to Saudi and coming in big. We're constantly evolving the games to something bigger and better."

The brand will also participate in the KSA Muscle Show, further engaging with the local fitness community.

The company was founded in 2016 by Khalid and Gul. "It all started when Gul and I realized there wasn't a gym-wear brand in the region that matched our love for the gym, its community, and the impact it has on all aspects of our life," Khalid said.

Gul believes the fitness and activewear market in the Kingdom is booming.