



SAUDI ARABIA
SAUDI HEAVY METAL BAND MAKES HISTORY AT GERMAN FESTIVAL Page 5

OPINION
THE RISE OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE NORTH
By Hafed Al-Ghwell
Page 9



SPORT
ESPORTS WORLD CUP DRAWS UNPRECEDENTED VIEWERSHIP, SELLOUT CROWDS
Page 15



& FINALLY
TIMBERLAKE PLEADS NOT GUILTY TO DRUNK DRIVING CHARGE
Page 16



SUNDAY, August 4, 2024
Muharram 29, 1446
www.arabnews.com

ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

SINCE 1975

MIDDLE EAST WAR

Israeli strikes kill 15 in Gaza, 9 in West Bank

US boosts military presence in region

Arab News Jeddah

An Israeli airstrike on a school sheltering displaced persons in Gaza City killed at least 15 Palestinians on Saturday, hours after two strikes in the occupied West Bank killed nine militants including a local Hamas commander.

The first of two West Bank airstrikes hit a vehicle in a town near the city of Tulkarm, targeting a militant cell the Israeli military said was on its way to carry out an attack.

Hamas said one of those killed was a commander of its Tulkarm brigades, while its ally Islamic Jihad claimed the other four men who died in the strike as its fighters.

Hours later, a second airstrike in the area targeted another group of fighters during an Israeli raid in Tulkarm. Four people died in that strike, and Hamas said all nine of those killed in the two Israeli attacks in the West Bank were fighters.

In the Gaza Strip, at least 15 people were killed in the Israeli strike on a school sheltering displaced persons in Gaza City's Sheikh Radwan neighborhood.

Earlier, Israeli strikes in the

enclave killed six people in a house in Rafah and two others in Gaza City.

At least 39,550 Palestinians have been killed in the Israeli military campaign in Gaza.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said Hamas' leader Ismail Haniyeh was slain in Tehran by a short-range projectile with a warhead of about 7 kg, and vowed severe revenge.

The Pentagon said it was bolstering its military presence

INSIDE

- **Spotlight** Page 3
- **Opinion: Yossi Mekelberg** Page 9
- **Related reports** Page 6

in the Middle East to protect US personnel and defend Israel.

An aircraft carrier strike group led by the USS Abraham Lincoln will replace one led by the USS Theodore Roosevelt, the Pentagon said.

The US Embassy in Lebanon encouraged citizens who wish to leave to "book any ticket available."

The British government called on its citizens in Lebanon to "leave now."

Baby joy for Jordan crown prince, Princess Rajwa

Princess Rajwa Al-Hussein of Jordan and Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah welcomed their first child, a baby girl on Saturday. King Abdullah said the arrival of his granddaughter has 'enlightened the family.' Queen Rania congratulated the couple.

Instagram

Report
Page 16



SOMALIA CARNAGE

37 dead as Al-Shabab attacks busy beach

Survivors in Mogadishu say suicide bomber, gunmen 'intended to kill everyone'

AFP Mogadishu

An Al-Shabab suicide bomber and gunmen attacked a busy beach in the Somali capital Mogadishu killing 37 people and wounding scores more, officials said on Saturday, in one of the deadliest strikes in the East African country in months.

The Al-Qaeda-linked terrorists have been waging an insurgency against the internationally

backed federal government for more than 17 years and have previously targeted the Lido beach area, popular with business people and government members.

Survivors of Friday's assault described how following the blast gunmen stormed onto the beach intending to "kill everyone they could," with graphic video shared online immediately after showing bloodied bodies on the sand.

"The overall number of the dead people we confirmed is 37," Somali Health Minister Ali Hajji Adam said.

Eleven people are in intensive care units, a further 64 people remain in hospital with wounds, while 137 people with light injuries had been discharged after receiving treatment, he said.

The assault, for which Al-Shabab claimed responsibility

in a post on a pro-Shabab website, began late on Friday when a suicide bomber detonated a device and gunmen stormed the area.

Officer Mohamed Omar said that members of the group had "shot civilians randomly."

He said security forces had ended the attack and killed five gunmen, while a sixth member of the group "blew himself (up) at the beach."

The Brief

DATE FESTIVAL

The popular Buraidah Dates Carnival is keeping its momentum, with constant purchasing and marketing of more than 50 date varieties. **P4**

AFGHAN GIRLS

Barred from schools, some Afghan girls turned to online classes, but they know remote learning is not the real deal. **P8**

ARAMCO STRATEGY

Aramco's robust integrated expansion strategy is helping to drive forward the Saudi Vision 2030 diversification plan. **P11**

GLAMOUR

Saudi beauty influencer inspiring men to sparkle

Ali Majed has almost 600,000 followers on TikTok and is an ambassador for Sephora

Rahaf Jambi Riyadh

A Saudi makeup artist with a gift for glamour is using his growing social media presence to inspire people across the region.

Ali Majed has almost 600,000 followers on TikTok and is an ambassador for French beauty products retailer Sephora.

"I've always had a passion for beauty, for as long as I can remember," he told Arab News.

"Even when I didn't quite realize it fully, because I was

so young, I knew there was something about this world of creativity and glamour that was calling out to me."

Majed is one of a number of Saudi men who are making waves in the beauty industry. His interest was piqued by the boom in social media coverage that started around seven or eight years ago.

"That was the time where makeup content had made its way onto mainstream social

These days, Majed is a beauty leader in his own right, with many other content creators complimenting him and citing him as an inspiration. Though his newfound fame still leaves him a little surprised.



media, planting its feet firmly into the ground, announcing that it was here to stay," he said.

"I have observed and learned from Bassam Fattouh, Fady Khataya, Issam Majed, Mohammed Hindash and many more," he said.

Now working on his own beauty range, Majed said he was amazed at the impact his content had had on people.

"A fan recognized me and asked for a picture. I was thrilled that someone wanted to

take a selfie with me, as I didn't realize that was something that could happen."

Detailed report Page 5

2 Riyals • Vol. XLIX
No. 242 • 16 pages



As a member of the International Olympic Committee and the women and gender committee, I am a firm supporter of the protection and safeguarding of women in sport.
Princess Reema bint Bandar
 Saudi ambassador to the US



Radars

KSA today



Riyadh Kingdom of art

The annual Prince Faisal bin Fahd Arts Hall exhibition features works from 28 Saudi and Saudi-based artists that explore the Kingdom's evolving visual landscapes and the dynamic relationship between people and their urban environments. More details on miskartinstitute.org.



Jeddah Marriage story

A young couple (Shorouk and Farouk) exposed to a crisis and a counselor with an interest in AI — "Artificial Marriage" is the new play that leaves audiences with plenty to think about. Book tickets at enjoy.sa.



AlUla Zip line adventure

The AlUla Stairway will take thrill-seekers up a 45-meter suspended ladder that ends with a 150-meter zip line descent into the canyon below. For more details, visit experiencealula.com.



Abha Abseiling

Husaak's abseiling adventure, which is guided by experienced instructors, is located 2,610 meters above sea level in the Tanomah Mountains. For more details, visit the Saudi Events app.

The Register

THE PICTURES THAT MARK THE DAY



Saudi Minister of Islamic Affairs, Dawah, and Guidance Dr. Abdullahif bin Abdulaziz Al-Sheikh chaired the 14th executive council meeting of the Conference of Endowments and Islamic Affairs in the Islamic World in Makkah on Saturday.

Attendees unanimously approved the agenda for the three-day 9th Conference of Ministers of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in the countries of the Islamic world, which runs until Aug. 5, Saudi Press Agency reported. The conference title is: "The role of

the Ministries of Islamic Affairs and Awqaf in promoting the principles of moderation and consolidating the values of moderation." The council also accepted an invitation to hold its 15th meeting in Morocco.

Today's Number

150

Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen's "Access to Education in Rural Areas" project will enable 150 women to obtain a diploma of education in five rural areas of Yemen and expand the pool of qualified female teachers, the SDRPY reported on X on Saturday.

Who's Who



Dr. Mohammad Al-Suliman

Dr. Mohammad Al-Suliman is the chief executive officer of the National Real Estate Registration Services Co.

He has experience across numerous leadership positions spanning various sectors, including telecom, banking and finance, and investment operations.

Al-Suliman specializes in organizational transformation and change management and has achieved full strategy and business model overhauls throughout his career.

Prior to his new role, Al-Suliman served as CEO of Najm for Insurance Services, leading the company's transformation and digitalization journey.

He also served as vice president of corporate development at the Saudi Telecom Group. He previously held several leadership positions, including vice president of the operations and support services division at Arabian Securities; director of business systems development at Jadwa Investment; head of investment group systems at Arab National Bank; and several other senior-level positions in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the US.

Al-Suliman was awarded the 2020 Silicon Valley organization (SVUS Awards) bronze medal for CEO of the year category in the insurance sector, and best CEO in the insurance sector award by International Business Magazine in 2020.

What's Trending Today's hot topics explained by Afshan Aziz



'DISHEARTENING' Billie Eilish

Finneas O'Connell has defended his sister, Billie Eilish, after a TikTok user accused her of singing a "predatory" verse on Charli XCX's remix of "Guess."

The dispute ignited online when the TikTok user criticized the lyrics, leading to a wave of controversy.

Finneas addressed the accusation directly by saying: "It's disheartening to see my sister being misinterpreted in such a way. Billie's verse on the remix was crafted with creativity and artistic intent, not malice."

Eilish has yet to comment publicly on the issue. The situation underscores ongoing discussions about lyrical interpretation and artistic expression in music.

'A TRUE WARRIOR' Imane Khelif

Italian boxer Angela Carini, who quit her Olympic bout against Algeria's Imane Khelif in less than a minute, has publicly apologized to her opponent.

Carini's statements post-fight fueled misinformation and conspiracy theories about Khelif's gender identity and ignited right-wing outrage over the inclusion of transgender athletes in competitive sports.

In an interview with the Italian publication Gazzetta dello Sport, Carini said: "I apologize to her and to everyone. I was angry, because my games had already gone up in smoke. I have nothing against Khelif and on the contrary if I happened to meet her again I would give her a hug."

The Algerian Olympic Committee has denounced the criticism directed at Khelif, labeling the attacks as "baseless" and "unethical."

Khelif's determination to compete at the highest level despite the adversity has garnered support from vari-

ous quarters. "Imane is a true warrior," said a representative from the Algerian Olympic Committee. "She has shown remarkable resilience and strength, and we stand by her."

The Palestinian Olympic Committee issued a statement expressing solidarity with the boxer, saying they "strongly condemn the unethical behavior targeting the distinguished Algerian champion, Imane Khelif, by certain media outlets with false propaganda."

Saudi social activist Muna AbuSulayman also expressed support for Imane Khelif saying: "The inspirational story of how Imane, who comes from a rural and poor background, fought so hard

to get to where she is, overcoming huge cultural and religious challenges, only to be humiliated by Western commentators who are using her to fight their own gender battles, has been infuriating for many of us." To many, Khelif's journey represents a major breakthrough for women's sports in Algeria.



TheRegion

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Jeddah

- Enjoy the thrill of a dune buggy safari at Nujum Desert Camp in Abu Dhabi, where you can speed across the sands and take in stunning desert views. Afterward, indulge in a delicious dinner featuring Emirati dishes at the camp, blending adventure and culinary delights for an unforgettable jour-

ney. The meeting point for the desert camp is the Andaz Capital Gate Hotel, with the trip running from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. For more details check visitabudhabi.ae.

- The inaugural Jordan International Food Festival features a diverse array of events daily, catering to foodies, families, and friend groups alike. From

world-renowned chefs presenting their signature dishes to food writers sharing their insights and culinary experts demonstrating innovative techniques, the festival is a celebration of all things food. Held at a site between King Hussein Business Park and the King Hussein Medical City until Aug. 11. For more information visit jiff.jo.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

	Aug. 4	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghreb	Isha
Makkah	4:33	5:54	12:27	3:47	6:59	8:29	
Madinah	4:26	6:50	12:28	3:54	7:05	8:35	
Riyadh	3:58	5:22	12:00	3:26	6:37	8:07	
Abha	4:29	5:48	12:17	3:28	6:44	8:14	
Dammam	3:40	5:06	11:46	3:18	6:26	7:56	

Social media platforms have not been very good at avoiding censorship or curbing hate speech and disinformation about the war on Gaza.

Nadim Nashif
Founder and director of 7amleh



Spotlight

RESEARCH & STUDIES
THE MIDDLE EAST, BETTER EXPLAINED

ARAB NEWS

GAZA CONFLICT

Social media under fire

Meta, TikTok, X and Telegram promise a less toxic online environment — but the process lacks transparency

Gabriele Malviel London

Tech giant Meta recently announced it would start removing social media posts that use the term “Zionist” in contexts where it refers to Jewish people and Israelis rather than representing supporters of the political movement, in an effort to curb antisemitism on its platforms.

Facebook and Instagram’s parent company previously said it would lift its blanket ban on the single most moderated term across all of Meta’s platforms — “shaheed,” or “martyr” in English — after a year-long review by its oversight board found the approach was “overbroad.”

Similarly, TikTok, X, and Telegram have long promised to step up efforts to curb hate speech and the spread of disinformation on their platforms against the backdrop of the ongoing war in Gaza.

These initiatives are intended to create a safer, less toxic online environment. However, as experts have consistently pointed out, these efforts often fall short, resulting in empty promises and a worrying trend toward censorship.

“In short, social media platforms have not been very good at avoiding censorship or curbing hate speech and disinformation about the war on Gaza,” Nadim Nashif, founder and director of 7amleh, a digital rights and human rights activist group for Palestinians, told Arab News.

“Throughout the conflict, censorship and account takedowns have jeopardized efforts to document on-the-ground human rights violations as well.”

Nashif says hate speech and incitement to violence remain “rampant,” particularly on Meta’s platforms and X, where antisemitic and Islamophobic content continues “to spread widely.”

Since the Oct. 7 Hamas-led attack that sparked the conflict in Gaza, social media has been inundated with content related to the war. In many instances it has served as a window into the events unfolding in the region and has become a vital source of real-time news and accountability.

Despite this flood of content, none of the social media platforms have publicly outlined policies designed to mitigate hate speech and incitement to violence in relation to the conflict.

Instead, these platforms are awash with war propaganda, genocidal statements, explicit calls to violence, and racist hate speech.



Main and right: Activists accuse social media giants of censoring posts, including those providing evidence of human rights abuses in Gaza.
Getty Images



“Historically, platforms have been very bad at moderating content about Israel and Palestine,” said Nashif. “Throughout the war on Gaza, and the ongoing plausible genocide, this has simply been exacerbated.”

A report by Human Rights Watch titled “Meta’s Broken Promises,” published in December, accused the firm of “systematic online censorship” and “inconsistent and opaque application of its policies” and practices that have been silencing voices in support of Palestine and Palestinian human rights.

The report added that Meta’s behavior “fails to meet its human rights due diligence responsibilities” due to years-long failed promises to address its “overbroad crackdowns.”

Jacob Mukherjee, convenor of the political communications MA program at Goldsmiths, University of London, told Arab News: “I’m not sure to what

extent you can really even call them efforts to stop censorship.

“Meta promised to conduct various reviews — which, by the way, it has been promising for a good couple of years now since the last upsurge in the Israel-Palestine conflict in 2021 — before Oct. 7 last year.

“But as far as I can see, not a great deal has changed, substantially speaking. They have had to respond to suggestions

that they’ve been engaged in censorship, of course, but that’s mainly been a PR effort in my view.”

Between October and November 2023, Human Rights Watch documented more than 1,050 takedowns and other suppressions of content on Instagram and Facebook posted by Palestinians and their supporters, including content about human rights abuses.

Of these, 1,049 involved peaceful content in support of Palestine that was censored or otherwise unduly suppressed, while one case involved the removal of content in support of Israel.

However, censorship appears to be only part of the issue.

7amleh’s violence indicator, which monitors real-time data on violent content in Hebrew and Arabic on social media, has recorded more than 8.6 million pieces of such content since the conflict began.

Nashif says the proliferation of violent and harmful content

is largely due to insufficient investment in moderation.

This content, which has primarily targeted Palestinians on Facebook and Instagram, was used by South Africa as evidence in its case against Israel at the International Court of Justice.

Meta is not alone in bearing responsibility for what has been described by South Africa’s lawyers as the first genocide livestreamed to mobile phones, computers, and television screens.

During the first days of the Israel-Hamas war, X owner Elon Musk himself interacted with misleading videos published on his platform.

Since then, Musk has also explicitly endorsed accounts known to share false information and express

antisemitic and Islamophobic remarks, amplifying the reach of problematic content on a platform that has notoriously struggled with content moderation since his takeover in 2022.

“One of the major issues with current content moderation systems is a lack of transparency,” said Nashif.

“When it comes to AI, the platforms do not release clear and transparent information about when and how AI systems are implemented in the content moderation process. Policies are often opaque and allow a great deal of leeway for the platforms to do as they see fit.”

For Mukherjee, the issue is such moderation is happening behind a smoke screen, requiring these companies to adopt a “balanced” approach between political pressure and “managing the expectations and desires of the user base.”

He said: “These AI tools can kind of be used to insulate the real power holders, i.e. the people that run the platforms, from criticism and accountability, which is a real problem.

“These platforms are private monopolies that are essentially responsible for regulating an important part of the political public sphere.

“In other words, they’re helping to shape and regulate the arena in which conversations happen, in which people form their opinions, from which politicians feel the pressure of public opinion, and yet they are completely unaccountable.”

Although there have been examples of pro-Palestinian content being censored, as revealed by Arab News in October, these platforms made clear, well before the Gaza conflict, that it is ultimately not in their interest to take down content from their platforms.

“These platforms are not made for reasons of public interest or in order to ensure that we have an informed and educated populace that’s exposed to a range of perspectives and is equipped to properly make decisions and form opinions,” said Mukherjee.

“The fact (is) that the business models actually want there to be lots of content and if that’s getting eyeballs and engagement on the platform, and content that provokes strong sentiment, to use the industry’s terms, gets engagement, and that means data and that means money.”



Since the outbreak of war in Gaza, experts say social media platforms have failed to stem the flow of hate speech and disinformation online. AFP/Getty Images





The Buraidah Dates Carnival is expected to display the produce of more than 11.2 million palm trees. SPA

SWEET BUSINESS

Buraidah Dates Carnival in full swing

New digital platform boosts sales management

Arab News Riyadh

The popular Buraidah Dates Carnival is keeping its momentum, with constant purchasing and marketing of more than 50 date varieties.

The event has attracted a significant number of farmers and traders to this city renowned for its date production, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

Sukkari dates remain a popular choice among buyers, with prices ranging from SR30 (\$8) to SR100 for a 3 kg package. Other date varieties, including sagal, wanan, khalas, and red sukkari, are priced competitively based on quality.

The 51-day carnival, which started on Aug. 1, is expected to display the produce of more than 11.2 million palm trees.

In addition to the marketplace, the event includes a

range of cultural, awareness-raising, social and entertainment programs, starting in September.

The carnival in Buraidah will receive more than 2,000 vehicles daily, loaded with hundreds of

HIGHLIGHT

The number of palm trees in the Kingdom exceeds 34 million, distributed across all regions, with the Qassim region accounting for 11.2 million palm trees. Date production in Qassim amounts to more than 528,000 tonnes, representing about 35 percent of the Kingdom's date production of 1.6 million tonnes.

tonnes of dates. More than 4,300 young men and women will participate in various fields.

The National Center for Palms and Dates is overseeing the carnival in cooperation with the

Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture. The center and the ministry also launched a digital system to improve the quality, efficiency and sales management of the carnival.

Consisting of two sections that align with agriculture regulations and public benefit market rules, the system covers broker-farmer contracts, date supply, auctions, sales and financial settlements, as well as broker-buyer contracts, auctions, sales and payments.

The digital platform offers streamlined sales tracking, robust control, transaction security, rapid data access, transparent contract documentation, protection of the rights of farmers, brokers and buyers, innovative sales approaches, revitalized date markets, investor attraction, job creation, and the possibility to develop financial solutions in partnership with relevant agencies.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Over 300 publishers enrich visitors' experience at Madinah Book Fair

Arab News Madinah

The third Madinah Book Fair is experiencing a high turnout of visitors eager to explore Arab and international publications, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

More than 300 Arab and international publishing houses and agencies are participating in the event, which is organized by the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission, and showcases a wide range of publications over 200 pavilions.

Mohammed Alwan, CEO of the commission, emphasized the fair's significance in showcasing Madinah's cultural heritage and its contribution to culture,

enhancing the Kingdom's position in the publishing industry.

Alwan said the fair aims to foster "a culture of reading and showcase Saudi writers and creators while attracting prominent writers and publishers from around the world."

The Year of the Camel initiative

HIGHLIGHT

Visitors can attend seminars, poetry evenings, discussion groups, workshops, and activities. A dedicated area for children offers educational and skill-based activities and workshops.

highlights camels' historical and cultural significance in the Arabian Peninsula. Organized by the Ministry of Culture, the pavilion offers educational content on camels' unique characteristics, historical significance, and economic value.

The Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs is showcasing its electronic applications through smart devices. Visitors can experience Hajj and Umrah virtually using 3D technology at the ministry's booth.

The fair runs daily until Aug. 5 at the King Salman International Convention and Exhibition Center from 2 p.m. until midnight.

TheSpace

Why Saudi Arabia is gearing up for electronic games

TALAT ZAKI HAFIZ



Saudi Arabia hosted its debut Esport World Cup in Riyadh in July with a prize pool of over \$60 million — the largest in the history of electronic games. The prize was divided into four categories: game championships (\$33 million), player bounties (\$1 million), qualifiers (\$7 million), and a cross-game competitive format club championship (\$20 million).

Saudi Arabia has unveiled its National Gaming and Esports Strategy, marking the beginning of a new era toward leading the sector worldwide by making the Kingdom a global hub for esports by 2030.

Saudi Arabia's focus on electronic games aligns with its ambitious Vision 2030 goals and objectives to diversify the Kingdom's economy away from oil. It is expected that the electronic games industry will contribute SR50 billion (\$13.3 billion) to the Kingdom's non-oil GDP and create 39,000 new job opportunities for Saudi nationals by 2030.

The National Gaming and Esports Strategy includes three main objectives: to have a direct impact on Saudi citizens, the private sector, and fans and professionals of games and esports around the world. Additionally, it is expected to raise the quality of life in the Kingdom by improving player experiences, providing new entertainment opportunities, and creating a foundational environment for

developing national competencies.

Finally, the strategy aims to enhance the Kingdom's position on the international stage by producing more than 30 competitive games globally in Saudi studios and for it to become one of the top three countries for the number of professional esports players.

Saudi Arabia intends to implement the strategy through 86 initiatives covering the entire value chain, managed by more than 20 government and private entities.

Among the initiatives the strategy intends to focus on are launching business incubators, hosting major events for gaming and esports, establishing educational academies, and developing stimulating regulations to keep pace with the rapid growth in this sector.

The Saudi government recognizes the importance of esports internationally, especially electronic games, as esports in general and electronic gaming, in particular, are fast-growing industries.

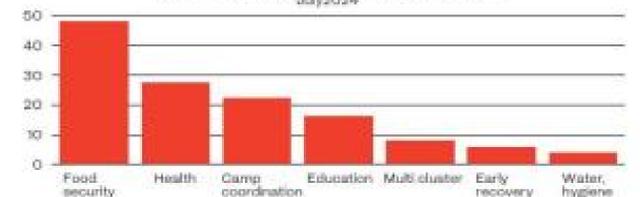
Saudi Arabia is gearing up to transform electronic games from merely a pastime to an industry that will support the Kingdom's non-oil GDP economic growth and its endeavor to diversify its economy away from oil.

The National Gaming and Esports Strategy is expected to raise the quality of life in the Kingdom by improving player experiences, providing new entertainment opportunities, and creating a foundational environment for developing national competencies.

Talat Zaki Hafiz is an economist and financial analyst. X: @TalatHafiz
For full version, log on to www.arabnews.com/the-space

The Day's FIGURES

KSRELIEF PROJECTS IN PALESTINE



Source: ksrelief.org

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Business growth

E-commerce Week to support entrepreneurs

The Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority (Monsha'at) will launch its E-commerce Week on Sunday, with more than 40 public and private entities participating.

The event aims to introduce entrepreneurs to the importance of e-commerce and its impact on small and medium enterprises. It will provide a platform for communication and exchange of experiences.

The week's activities will include meetings, panel discussions, and exhibition booths where companies can present their services and initiatives. SPA Riyadh

Border control

Kingdom arrests 21,049 illegals in one week

Saudi authorities arrested 21,049 people in one week for breaching residency, work and border security regulations.

A total of 13,209 people were arrested for violations of residency laws, while 5,177 were held over illegal border crossing attempts, and a further 2,663 for labor-related issues.

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

Humanitarian efforts

KSrelief aids families in Yemen, Jordan, Sudan

Saudi aid agency KSrelief provided shelter bags and tents to 21 families in the Al-Abr district of Hadramout governorate in Yemen.

Additionally, 1,411 food baskets were distributed in Hadibu and Qalansiyah districts of Socotra governorate, and 2,123 food baskets were given in Al-Khokha and Hays districts of Hodeidah governorate.

In Jordan, KSrelief clinics offered medical services to 2,511 people at the Zaatar camp for Syrian refugees. In Sudan, KSrelief distributed 900 food baskets to displaced families in Gedaref state. SPA Riyadh

News Saudi Arabia

CHALLENGING NORMS

Beautiful boy: Saudi influencer just wants to inspire

'I've always had a passion for beauty,' TikToker Ali Majed says

Rahaf Jambi Riyadh

A Saudi makeup artist with a gift for glamour is hoping to use his growing social media presence to inspire men and women across the region.

Ali Majed has almost 600,000 followers on TikTok and has been an ambassador for French beauty products retailer Sephora since 2022.

Despite his links to one of the giants of the industry, his online content regularly features lesser

known brands from around the region.

"I've always had a passion for beauty, for as long as I can remember," Majed told Arab News.

"Even when I didn't quite realize it fully, because I was so young, I knew there was something about this world of creativity and glamour that was calling out to me."

When he is not promoting Sephora products, Majed spends his time working on a range of his own.

"My brand came about as a result of my constant contemplation of how I could support other aspiring beauty enthusiasts, not just in the region, but globally.

"If there's anything I can do to make someone feel less alone and empower them to pursue their dreams, I'll work on that immediately."

Majed is one of a number of Saudi men who are making waves in the beauty industry. He said his interest was piqued by the boom in social media coverage that started around seven or eight years ago.

"That was the time where makeup content had made its way onto mainstream social



HIGH LIGHTS

- Ali Majed has almost 600,000 followers on TikTok and has been an ambassador for French beauty products retailer Sephora since 2022.

- Majed's interest was piqued by the boom in social media coverage that started around seven or eight years ago.

- His online content regularly features lesser known brands from around the region.

Beauty influencer Ali Majed says he wants to 'support other aspiring beauty enthusiasts.'
Supplied



media, planting its feet firmly into the ground, announcing that it was here to stay. And I enjoyed every second of it," he said.

In 2022, Majed joined the Sephora Squad, a program for beauty content creators in the Middle East.

"It's safe to say that (it) has taught me a tremendous amount of things about my job, whether it be the behind the scenes of the beauty industry or the influencer

world and how to navigate that space as well."

To those hoping to follow in his footsteps, Majed said it is all about being happy in what you do.

"Make sure this is something that you're not only passionate about, but also something that sparks joy in you," he said.

"It's one thing to be incredibly interested in a certain field, for whatever reason, but when that

interest is supplemented by a feeling of fulfillment and happiness, that is what will make you unstoppable."

Majed said he took his inspiration from the first Saudi men to put themselves forward as beauty ambassadors.

"I have observed and learned from Bassam Fattouh, Fady Khataya, Issam Majed, Mohammed Hindash and many more," he said.

"These men were each pioneers in their own way, masters of their signature techniques and also inspirations to many more like them within the region."

These days, Majed is a beauty leader in his own right, with many other content creators complimenting him and citing him as an inspiration. Though his newfound fame still leaves him a little surprised.

KINGS OF ROCK

Saudi heavy metal band makes history at German festival

Saleh Fareed Jeddah

Saudi rockers Wasted Land made history on Saturday, when they became the first band from the Kingdom to appear at Wacken Open Air 2024, the world's biggest heavy metal festival.

Vocalist Emad Mujallid, guitarists Ayman Al-Ghamdi and Ahmed Khoja, bassist Mahmoud Al-Tayeb and drummer Tameem Helmi raised the Saudi flag as they took to the stage and launched into their pounding set.

Jeddah's German Consul-General Eltje Aderhold was among the crowd of thousands of headbanging metalheads from all over the world.

"Standing onstage, playing to

Saudi heavy metal band Wasted Land become nation's first to perform at Wacken Open Air in Germany over the weekend.
Supplied



a crowd of heavy metal fans (at) the biggest metal festival in the world ... and on top of that, you're officially representing Saudi Arabia ... it was really a different experience and unforgettable

moment," Al-Ghamdi told Arab News from the small town of Wacken in northern Germany.

"After 20 years, the chance to play the biggest metal festival in the world was a once-in-a-lifetime

opportunity."

The band earned the right to play after seeing off the challenge of five other groups to win Wacken Metal Battle Middle East 2024 in Jeddah

We're proud that we gave our all and represented Saudi Arabia at the biggest metal festival in the world.

Ayman Al-Ghamdi
Wasted Land guitarist

in May. Describing what it was like to perform in front of such a big crowd, Al-Ghamdi said: "It was a mix of excitement, nervousness and pride. It was overwhelming at first but once we got to the stage things got easy for us.

"We performed and enjoyed our set to the best that we could and we didn't expect the positive reactions we received from those who we didn't know.

"Many of them were very

surprised that we are from Saudi Arabia ... they really showed us their support and we're really, really grateful for that."

Saudi Arabia is not known as a hotbed for heavy metal, so to play at Wacken was an "honor" for Wasted Land and a chance to "showcase what Saudi Arabia has to offer," Al-Ghamdi said.

"After playing at Wacken Open Air, even though we didn't win, we are grateful just to have played there. We're proud that we gave our all and represented Saudi Arabia at the biggest metal festival in the world."

The 2024 festival lineup also included The Scorpions, Amon Amarth, In Extremo, Blind Guardian and Beast Black, among others.

UPROAR

Thousands of Moroccans protest after Hamas leader's killing

AFP Rabat

Thousands of Moroccans protested in Rabat on Saturday in support of Palestinians and to condemn normalization with Israel, holding portraits of killed Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, AFP journalists reported.

Hamas called for a "day of rage" on Friday for the burial of its chief Ismail Haniyeh, killed two days earlier in a strike in Iran which the Islamist movement and Tehran have blamed on Israel.

Waving Palestinian flags, and brandishing pictures of Haniyeh and a cardboard coffin adorned with his image, thousands of people marched to the parliament building with black and white keffiyeh scarves, which are symbols of the Palestinian cause, draped across their shoulders.

"Greetings from Rabat to our Gazan friends and to the Al-Qassam (Brigades)," the crowd chanted, referring to the armed wing of

Hamas.

"The people want the end of normalization," they also chanted, a message also carried on their placards, the AFP journalists reported.

Some in the crowd burnt an Israeli flag, the journalists saw.

"Ismail Haniyeh was a leader of Palestine, he is a symbol that motivates us to protest," said Halima Hilali, 64.

The war in Gaza "is a shame for humanity," she added.

Nabil Nasser, 42, who traveled from the neighboring city of Sale, said, "Demonstrating is the least we can do to help our Palestinian brothers, I think all Muslims should do it."

"We cannot have relations with a group of criminals, we want the end of relations" with Israel, he added.

The rally was organized by the National Action Group for Palestine, which brings together leftist groups and the Islamist Justice and Development Party.



Moroccan demonstrators take part in a rally in Rabat on Saturday, protesting Israel's killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Iran. AFP

Since the beginning of the Gaza war on Oct. 7, sparked by an unprecedented Hamas-led attack on southern Israel, several large demonstrations have taken place in Morocco calling for the end of normalization, while open opposition to diplomatic ties had

Ismail Haniyeh was a leader of Palestine. He is a symbol that motivates us to protest.

previously been limited.

Morocco established official ties in Israel in 2020 as part of the US-led Abraham Accords.

Morocco has officially called for "the immediate, complete and permanent halt to the Israeli war on Gaza," but has not publicly

discussed undoing normalization.

Hamas and Tehran have promised to avenge the death of Haniyeh, who was in Iran for the inauguration of the country's new president, raising fears of a flare-up in the region amid the war in the Gaza Strip.

REGIONAL TENSION

Foreign embassies in Lebanon step up security measures

Egypt FM pledges to support Lebanon in 'confronting the threats surrounding it'

Najla Houssari Beirut

Foreign embassies in Lebanon continued to take precautionary measures on Saturday amid fears of all-out war between Israel and Hezbollah.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty expressed his country's "deep concern over the dangerous escalation" in the region in a phone call with his Lebanese counterpart Abdallah Bou Habib. Abdelatty confirmed Egypt's support for Lebanon in "confronting the threats surrounding it," the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Saturday.

The Egyptian statement came as the US and UK urged their citizens in Lebanon to leave the country immediately.

Despite flight suspensions and cancellations, "commercial transportation options to leave Lebanon remain available," the US Embassy said.

British Foreign Secretary David Lammy said tensions "are high, and the situation could deteriorate rapidly."

The Swedish Embassy recently announced that it would relocate its staff to Cyprus due to security concerns.

In light of the escalating tension, several airlines have canceled or extended the



Smoke rises after an Israeli air raid in southern Lebanon. AFP

FASTFACT

Flights to Beirut by Air France and low-cost carrier Transavia France will remain suspended until at least Tuesday, but Tel Aviv-bound flights continue as normal, their parent company said.

suspension of their flights to Beirut. The Netherlands' Transavia Airlines extended the suspension of its flights to and from Beirut until Tuesday, as did Air France. Kuwait Airways

will suspend flights to and from Beirut starting Monday.

The Israeli army resumed its assassinations of Hezbollah members in southern Lebanon and on the Beirut-Damascus road on Saturday, as Israel awaits Hezbollah's response to the killing of its top military commander, Fuad Shukur, on Tuesday.

One Israeli raid targeted a residential building in Beirut's southern suburbs, killing seven civilians and an Israeli military drone targeted a car on Tyre's Al-Bazuriyya road, setting it

on fire and killing its driver. Hezbollah identified the victim as Nazih Abed Ali from the southern village of Aitit. The victim was reportedly the brother of a paramedic — Mahmoud Abed Ali — who rushed to the attack site. Videos circulating on social media showed Mahmoud at the site, a few kilometers from Aitit, saying that "crying is forbidden" and that he would collect the remains of his brother, "who is a father of three."

The Public Health Emergency Operations Center confirmed that the attack killed one person and injured two others.

A few hours later, the Syrian Observatory announced the death of a person in an Israeli raid that targeted a car on the Damascus-Beirut road.

Israel also expanded its hostilities toward the Lebanese-Syrian borders on Friday night and Saturday morning. Israeli warplanes targeted the surroundings of Al-Qusayr and the military Al-Dabaa airport.

Israeli forces also raided the Matraha crossing — an illegal crossing used by Hezbollah to transport trucks and members from Lebanon to Syria and vice versa.

Israel also targeted a truck convoy in the surroundings of the Hosh Al-Sayyid Ali area, killing a Syrian driver, according to AFP.

Israeli shelling targeting houses

in frontier villages including Rab Al-Thalathin, Houla, Tayr Harfa, Aita Al-Shaab, and Mays Al-Jabal led to destruction of property but no further casualties.

Hezbollah, meanwhile, said they had targeted Israeli military positions with missiles including "the Al-Assi site, the Al-Summaqah site in the occupied Kfarshuba Hills, a military force in the Avvim settlement, and a building used by Israeli soldiers in the Mattat settlement."

Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah vowed at Shukur's funeral to take "decisive action" and warned Israelis that they would be "left in tears instead of laughter."

Multiple security sources reported that Hezbollah had evacuated sites in the southern suburbs of Beirut, including homes inhabited by party officials, as a precautionary measure.

Since the commencement of hostilities on Oct. 8, the total number of casualties among Hezbollah, its allies, and civilians, both Lebanese and non-Lebanese, is 521.

Israeli media on Saturday reported an "unusual incident in northern Israel, specifically in the settlement of Liman in Upper Galilee, where a man attempted to infiltrate into Lebanon." The man's identity was not disclosed.

DEFIANCE

Iran 'expects Hezbollah to hit deeper inside Israel'

AFP Tehran

Iran said on Saturday it expects Lebanon's Hezbollah group to hit deeper inside Israel and no longer be confined to military targets after Israel killed the Hezbollah military commander.

Hezbollah has been exchanging near-daily fire with Israeli forces, saying it is targeting military positions over the border, since its Palestinian ally Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, sparking war in Gaza.

But a strike claimed by Israel in an overcrowded residential area of South Beirut changed the calculus, Iran's mission to the UN said.

"We expect ... Hezbollah to choose more targets and (strike) deeper in its response," said the mission quoted by the IRNA news agency.

"Secondly, that it will not limit its response to military targets."

The strike on Tuesday killed Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukur. According to Lebanon's Health Ministry, five civilians — three women and two children — also died.

Israel said Shukur was responsible for rocket fire that killed 12 youths in the annexed Golan Heights, and had directed Hezbollah's attacks on Israel since the Gaza war began.

"Hezbollah and the (Israeli) regime had observed certain lines," including limiting strikes to border areas and military targets, Iran's mission said.

News International

GRAVE SITUATION

US warns Sudan famine is on pace to be deadliest in decades

Ceasefire is the only way to reverse humanitarian catastrophe, WFP director says

AP Washington

The newly confirmed famine at one of the sprawling camps for war-displaced people in Sudan's Darfur region is growing uncontrolled as the country's combatants block aid, and it threatens to grow bigger and deadlier than the world's last major famine 13 years ago, US officials have warned.

The US Agency for International Development, the UN World Food Programme and other independent and government humanitarian agencies were intensifying calls for a ceasefire and aid access across Sudan. That's after international experts in the Famine Review Committee formally confirmed that the starvation in at least one of three giant makeshift camps, holding up to 600,000 people displaced by Sudan's more than yearlong war, had grown into a full famine.

Two US officials briefed reporters on their analysis of the crisis on Friday following the famine finding, which is only the third in the 20-year history of the Famine Review Committee.

The last major famine, in Somalia, was estimated to have killed a quarter of a million people in 2011, half of them children under 5 years old.

The blocks that Sudan's warring sides are putting on food and other aid for the civilians trapped in the Zamzam camp are realizing "the worst fears of the humanitarian community," one of the US officials said.

War in the northern African country erupted in April 2023 when two rival generals suddenly opened a deadly battle for control of Sudan's



The UN said last month that more than 10.7 million people have been displaced because of the deadly conflict in Sudan. Reuters

capital, which was then under a civilian transitional government that Sudanese had hoped would bring stability to the country. On one side, the Rapid Support Forces, or RSF, grew out of the Janjaweed militias notorious for their mass attacks, rape and forced displacement of civilians in Darfur in 2003.

As most of the world paid attention to conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza and the larger Middle East, the Sudanese war quickly grew into the world's largest humanitarian crisis.

The UN said last month that 10.7 million people were displaced because of the conflict. Unlike the earlier war, much of the country is dealing with acute hunger.

Aid workers were last able to get

BACKGROUND

The last major famine, in Somalia, was estimated to have killed a quarter of a million people in 2011, half of them children under 5 years old.

humanitarian relief to the trapped civilians at the camps in Darfur in April.

The RSF has the area under siege and is accused of attacking hospitals, camps and other civilian targets.

World Food Programme director Cindy McCain urged the international community in a statement

after the famine declaration to work for a ceasefire.

"It is the only way we will reverse a humanitarian catastrophe that is destabilizing this entire region of Africa," she said.

USAID Director Samantha Power stressed the famine was entirely man-made.

Both sides, "enabled by external patrons, are using starvation as a weapon of war," she said in a statement.

The US officials Friday pointed to Washington as the largest source of aid — the little that gets through — for Sudan.

They countered questions about why the President Joe Biden's administration was not using air

drops or any of the other direct interventions by the US military to get food to people in Darfur that they were in Gaza, saying the terrain in Sudan was different.

The two warring sides have been invited for ceasefire talks in Switzerland in August.

The RSF leader said it planned to attend, while the military-controlled Sudanese government stated that any negotiation before implementing the Jeddah Declaration "wouldn't be acceptable to the Sudanese people."

The Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect Civilians passed last year meant to end the conflict, but neither side committed to its objectives.

SECURITY THREAT

Terror group claims it has taken 2 Russians hostage in Niger

Reuters Niamey

An Al-Qaeda affiliate in West Africa's Sahel region has taken two Russian citizens hostage in Niger, according to a video released by the group.

The video from the media foundation of Jama'a Nusrat Ul-Islam wa Al-Muslimin, or JNIM, includes what appears to be on-camera statements by the two captives, who say they were working for a Russian company in southwest Niger when they were taken prisoner.

Speaking in Russian-accented English, both identified themselves as Russians and said they were taken hostage in Mbanga, an area about 60 km west of the capital Niamey. They did not say when this happened.

One called himself Yuri and said he was a geologist, the other gave his name as Greg and said he came to work in Niger a month ago.

It was not clear when the video was filmed or where. The pair spoke in front of a backdrop made out of traditional West African cloth. The video did not include a ransom demand.

Russia's Foreign Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

A security source in Niger said the pair were taken about a week ago while visiting gold mines.

Mbanga is located in the gold-rich Tillaberi region, where militants linked to Al-Qaeda and Daesh are active in insurgencies that have destabilised swathes of territory in Niger, and in neighbouring Mali and Burkina Faso.

Since seizing power in a coup last year, the Niger junta, like the military rulers in Mali and Burkina Faso, has kicked out Western forces, and forged closer military and business ties with Russia.

SURVEILLANCE

Uganda Health Ministry reports first two cases of monkeypox

AFP Kampala

Uganda has detected its first two cases of mpox (monkeypox), the Health Ministry said on Saturday, a day after the Africa Union allocated \$10.4 million in funding to combat the outbreak.

The cases were discovered in the western border district of Kasese, in the towns of Mpondwe and nearby Bwera, said the director general of health services Henry Mwendu.

"Our findings indicate the infections did not take place in Uganda but (came) from DRC," he said of the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo. Nine people were under medical surveillance following contact with the two confirmed cases, he added.

Kenya and Burundi report one and three cases of mpox respectively last month. On July 20, the DRC reported more than 11,000 suspected cases, including around 450 deaths.

The African Union said on Friday it had "urgently approved \$10.4 million from COVID-19 funds to support Africa CDC's efforts to continue to combat the Mpox outbreak across the continent."

The funding for the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, will also boost government and partners' actions, the 55-nation AU said.

It will help increase monitoring, laboratory testing, regional and national data collection, case and infection management, and access to vaccines, it added.

AFP Tunis

Tunisian politician Abir Moussi, a vocal critic of President Kais Saied and party leader who has been jailed since October, on Saturday registered her candidacy in upcoming elections via her lawyers, local media reported.

Radio station Mosaique FM said six members of Moussi's legal team filed the registration forms on her behalf for the Oct. 6 presidential ballot.

Candidate registration, which began on Monday, is due to close at 5 p.m. on Tuesday.

Experts say presidential hopefuls face significant constraints in their bid to challenge the incumbent Saied, who was democratically

CHALLENGE

Jailed Tunisian politician enters presidency race



Tunisians stage a demonstration to show their support to President Kais Saied. File/Reuters

elected in 2019 but expanded his powers in 2021 and is now seeking another term in office.

To be listed on the ballot, candidates are required to present a list

of signatures from 10,000 registered voters, with at least 500 voter signatures per constituency — "an enormous number" according to political analyst Amine Kharrat

— or secure endorsements from lawmakers or local officials.

Moussi, 49, head of the Free Destourian Party and a former parliament member, was arrested on Oct. 3 in front of the presidential palace, where according to her party she came to file appeals against decrees issued by Saied and used to dramatically reshape the political system.

She is accused of serious crimes including "attacks that aim to change the form of government."

An outspoken critic of both Saied and Ennahdha, Moussi is accused by her detractors of wanting to return to the authoritarianism of former President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, overthrown in 2011.

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Barred from school, Afghan girls find temporary relief in online classes

Those who pursue training through internet have no illusion it could substitute real schools and universities

Modaser Islami Kabul

Ahmadullah Faizi was glad when his 16-year-old daughter found a way to continue learning after the Taliban closed her school in Kabul three years ago.

She took online classes in graphics and design, and while virtual learning was not exactly what the girl had planned for herself — she wanted to study computer science after graduating from high school — it offered some temporary relief.

"She is very creative ... The online learning program helped her gain new skills," Faizi said.

"She's very happy and always offers everyone in the family help with designing tasks. She designs brand names and logos and works with different videos that



It is not clear how many girls and women are involved in online learning in the country. Reuters

she clicks with her phone."

Faizi's daughter is one of around 1.1 million girls who have been denied access to formal education since September 2021 — a month after the Taliban took control of Afghanistan and suspended secondary schools for them.

Neither appeals at home nor international pressure have since helped to lift the ban, which Taliban authorities have repeatedly said was an "internal matter," as they later extended the ban to universities, with more than 100,000 female students blocked from finishing their degrees.

With the only public educational institutions allowed for girls being madrasas — Islamic schools that focus on religious training — online classes have been the sole available option to access modern education.

It is not clear how many girls and women are involved in online learning in a country where less than 20 percent of the population has access to the internet.

One of the main organizations offering online courses, the Afghan chapter of Women in Tech International — a global

NGO promoting and supporting the achievements of women in technology — has registered thousands of users since starting its digital training programs two years ago.

"Many of them have been able to grow their networks with experts from different countries and remote work opportunities, and some have started their advanced degrees online. These initiatives have provided them with valuable skills and a sense of empowerment and independence in a society where formal educational opportunities are restricted," Dr. Zahra Nazari, country director of Women in Tech Afghanistan, told Arab News.

"We have trained over 3,000 Afghan women through various programs, including coding, AI, data science and digital literacy."



The Students Against Discrimination group has urged their compatriots to launch an all-out non-cooperation movement. AFP

UNCERTAINTY

Bangladesh students call for civil disobedience

AFP Dhaka

Student leaders rallied Bangladeshis on Saturday for a nationwide civil disobedience campaign as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government weathered a backlash over a police crackdown on protesters.

Rallies against civil service job quotas sparked days of mayhem last month that killed more than 200 people in some of the worst unrest of Hasina's 15-year tenure.

Troop deployments briefly restored order but crowds hit the streets in huge numbers after Friday prayers in the

Muslim-majority nation, heeding a call by student leaders to press the government for more concessions.

Students Against Discrimination, the group responsible for organizing the initial protests, urged their compatriots to launch an all-out non-cooperation movement from Sunday.

"This includes non-payment of taxes and utility bills, strikes by government workers and a halt to overseas remittance payments through banks," the group's Asif Mahmud said.

Students are demanding a public

BACKGROUND

Rallies against civil service job quotas sparked days of mayhem last month that killed more than 200 people.

apology from Hasina for last month's violence and the dismissal of several of her ministers.

They have also insisted that the government reopens schools and universities around the country, all of which were shuttered at the height of the unrest.

Crowds on the street have gone

further, insisting Hasina leave office altogether.

"She must go because we don't need this authoritarian government," Nijhum Yasmin, 20, said.

"Did we liberate the country to see our brothers and sisters shot dead by this regime?"

"Now the tables have turned," Illinois State University politics professor Ali Riaz said.

"The regime's foundation has been shaken, the aura of invincibility has disappeared," he added. "The question is whether Hasina is ready to look for an exit or fight to the last."

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Violence

British police boost presence in Sunderland

British police are putting more officers on the streets amid warnings of more violent disorder this weekend and mosques have tightened security after anti-immigration protesters torched cars following the murder of three young girls.

Riots involving hundreds of people — or thousands in one protest in London — have erupted this week, after false information spread rapidly online that the suspect in the killings in the northwest town of Southport was a Muslim migrant. Police have said the suspect, Axel Rudakubana, is a 17-year-old who was born in Cardiff, Wales. Reuters

Blow to junta

Myanmar group captures regional military command

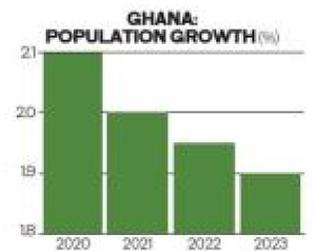
A Myanmar ethnic minority armed group said Saturday it had captured a regional military command after weeks of clashes, in what would be a major blow to the junta.

Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army fighters have "fully captured the headquarters of the northeast military command" in Lashio in northern Shan state, the group said in a statement.

Fighting has rocked Lashio, which sits on a major trade highway to China, since early July when MNDAA fighters renewed an offensive against the junta. AFP

The Day's FIGURES

Source: Statista



What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

Cambodia's Curse

JOEL BRINKLEY

A generation after the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia shows every sign of having overcome its history — the streets of Phnom Penh are paved; skyscrapers dot the skyline.

But under this

facade lies a country still haunted by its years of terror.

Joel Brinkley won a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting in Cambodia on the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime that killed one quarter of the nation's population during its years in power.



Record downpour

Moscow vows support to North Korea after floods

Russian President Vladimir Putin has offered condolences to North Korean counterpart Kim Jong Un over devastating floods that caused untold casualties and damaged thousands of homes, the Kremlin said on Saturday.

North Korea said this week it had seen a record downpour on July 27 which killed an unspecified number of people, flooded dwellings and submerged swaths of farmland in the north near China.

"I ask you to convey words of sympathy and support to all those who lost their loved ones as a result of the storm," Putin said in a telegram to Kim. AFP

Tensions

Ukrainian drones hit Russian airfield and oil depot

Ukrainian drones targeted a military airfield and oil depot in Russia, a defense source in Kyiv said on Saturday, after Moscow reported repelling the latest aerial barrage.

Kyiv has stepped up aerial attacks on Russian territory, saying it carries out the strikes in retaliation to the bombardments Ukraine has faced since Russia invaded over two years ago.

"Last night, drones from Ukraine's Security Service visited the Morozovsk airfield in the Rostov region" that stored aircraft and guided aerial bombs, the source said. AFP

تَهْوَى الْعَيْنُ مَنْ يُعْجِبُهَا، وَيَهْوَى الْعَقْلُ مَنْ
يَقْتَبِهَا، أَمَا الرُّوحُ فَلَا تَهْوَى إِلَّا مَنْ يُشَبِّهُهَا.
(شمس التبريزي)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

*The eye loves whom it admires; the mind whom
understands it; but the soul only loves who resembles it.*

Shama Al-Tabrizi
(Medieval mystic and religious instructor)

Opinion

UK's new Labour govt and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

YOSSI MEKELBERG



Yossi Mekelberg is professor of international relations and an associate fellow of the MENA Program at Chatham House.
X: @YMekelberg

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

A month after sweeping to power in the general election on July 4, the UK's new Labour government has its hands full dealing with the mess it inherited from the previous Conservative government. This includes the UK's stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the deadliest manifestation of which has been raging for the past 10 months.

While he was opposition leader, Prime Minister Keir Starmer adopted a very cautious approach to the issue, which was an extremely sensitive one as Labour emerged from the damaging era of his predecessor, Jeremy Corbyn.

At the heart of Starmer's approach at that time was a reluctance to stray too far from the Conservative government's policies on the issue, for fear of being accused of perpetuating the antisemitism his party had been tainted by under Corbyn's leadership. Labour fell into the trap, typically set by right-wing governments in

Israel, of viewing any criticism of Israel as amounting to antisemitism.

While still in opposition, it took Starmer's Labour party many — too many — months and many Palestinian lives before it finally called for a ceasefire in Gaza.

Since assuming power a month ago, there has been a change both in Labour's tone and its actual policies on a number of critical issues related to Israel and the war in Gaza. These changes represent a departure from its previous stance in the political, legal, and humanitarian spheres.

Certainly, though in the first few months after the brutal Oct. 7 attacks on Israel by Hamas the Labour Party opposed any calls for a ceasefire, and maintained this position for months even as the bodies of innocent Gazans were piling up. It did gradually begin to alter its position when it became obvious that the conflict was evolving into an open-ended war with no political way to peace.

In the legal sphere, one of the first signals of change after Labour took power was the

appointment of Richard Hermer as the new government's attorney general. Hermer, a friend and former colleague of Starmer, is a leading expert on international law and a human rights jurist. Moreover, he was one of a group of leading Jewish lawyers who wrote an open letter in the Financial Times in October last year calling for Israeli authorities to be guided by the rule of law in their response to the Hamas attacks.

Soon after he was appointed to his new role last month he flew to Israel, ahead of the government's decision on July 26 to withdraw the UK's challenge to the right of the International Criminal Court to issue arrest warrants for Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant.

The UK's decision upset and worried the Israeli government and also sent a signal to the US that the new British government is prepared, on this issue at least, to stand at odds with the Biden administration and closer to some of its European allies in adhering to international legal obligations.

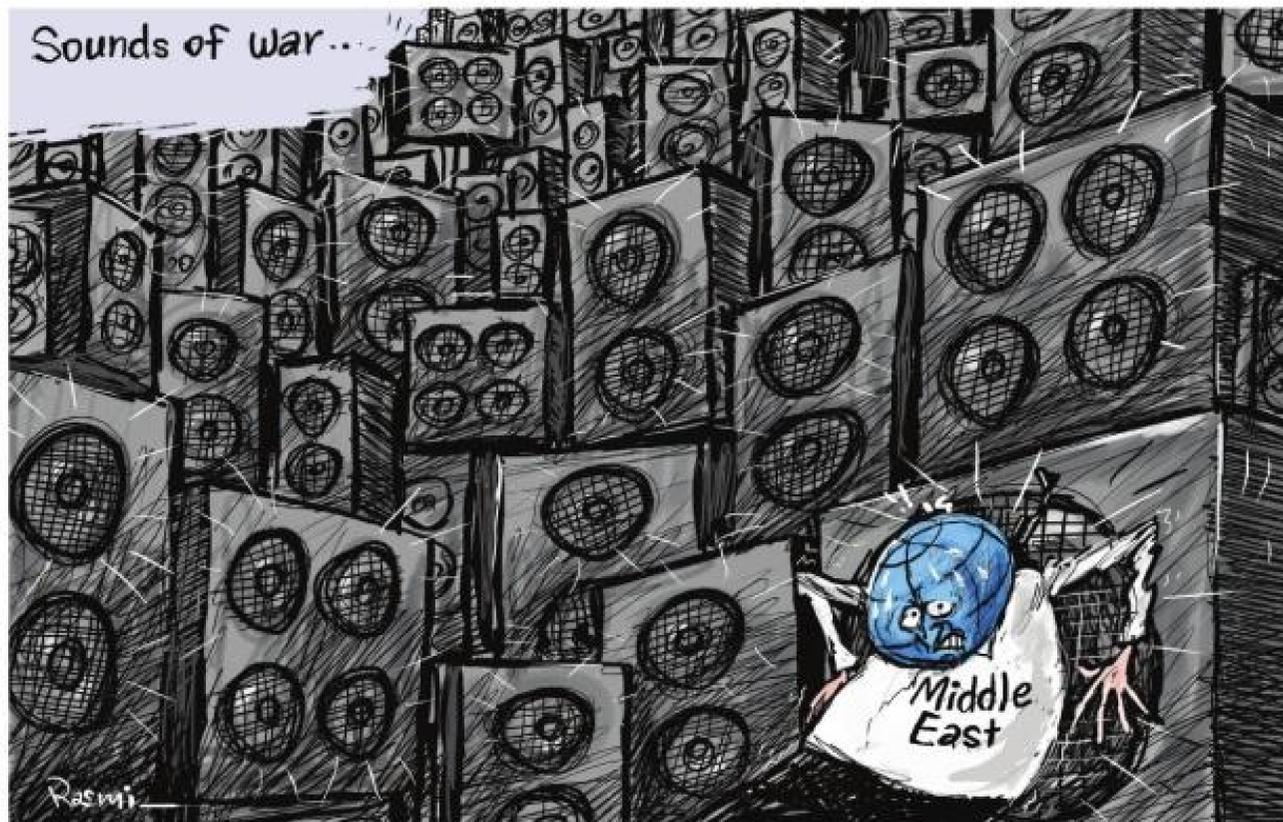
In the humanitarian sphere, one of the

most immediate, practical and welcome changes implemented by Labour was the announcement by the new foreign secretary, David Lammy, that the UK will resume its funding of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, which will help ensure aid reaches those in Gaza who need it as quickly as possible.

This change of course in British policy on Israel and the war in Gaza is significant but hardly surprising, as it will allow the UK to meet its obligations under international law, restore its moral credibility by signaling a refusal to tolerate the suffering of so many innocent civilians as punishment for the crimes committed by others, and to position itself as a political player that could help mediate and resolve the conflict rather than fuel it.

The onus is now on Israel to change course and prove that it is prepared to end the war, resolve the conflict with the Palestinians, and protect its own democracy. Then it will find in the UK, as ever, a close and trusted friend.

The apparent change of course in British policy on Israel and the war in Gaza is significant



Western policymakers continue to oversimplify the diversity that exists within the Global South

The rise of the Global South and what it means for the North

HAFED AL-GHWELL



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

The Global South Summit, which will convene in India on Aug. 17, comes at a moment in which nations historically marginalized in global governance are beginning to assert renewed demands for a reshaping of the international order.

This ambition to recalibrate the global hierarchy is deeply rooted in decades of activism aimed at disentangling themselves from Western dominance.

From the Non-Aligned Movement of the mid-20th century to the economic alliances of today, the growing drive for a redistribution of power is both a reflection of past struggles and a strategic vision for future equity.

The timing of the summit, amid growing debates about economic dependency and geopolitical realignments, is testament to the rising influence of the South on the world stage.

In recent years, the Global South has experienced average annual gross domestic

product growth of 4.7 percent, far outpacing the 2.1 percent in the Global North. This reflects not only the aspirational rhetoric but tangible shifts in economic clout.

Continuing to ignore the core issues and concerns raised by these Global South countries — including inequitable trade practices, the effects of climate change, and geopolitical marginalization — risks perpetuating a fractured global order. Acknowledging and engaging with the outcomes of this month's summit will be crucial if the North is to foster cooperative international relations and address shared global challenges effectively.

Historically, the Global North's interest in non-Western perspectives has broadened gradually since the end of the Cold War, as developing nations have adopted varying degrees of Western political and economic frameworks.

Despite this, many in the Global South perceive the continuing dominance of Western powers and their institutions as

remnants of colonial hierarchies. Countries such as India and Brazil have sought to reconfigure the global economic order to reflect a more equitable distribution of power.

The motivations for this recalibration are multifaceted: a desire for enhanced economic dividends, more fair representation in international institutions, and greater autonomy in setting regional and global agendas.

Recent multilateral initiatives, such as the G77 and the Non-Aligned Movement, demonstrate a persistent, albeit complex, effort among developing nations to negotiate as cohesive units, seeking to elevate their collective bargaining power on the world stage. This underlying unity, despite divergent national interests, exemplifies a strategic intent to redefine the role of the Global South and its influence on global governance.

Unfortunately, North-South dynamics remain compromised by a fundamental issue: Despite its broad utility, the term

Global South remains conceptually ambiguous. It encompasses a diverse array of countries, from G20 powers such as Brazil and Indonesia to less-developed nations such as Sierra Leone. These countries all share common historical experiences and objectives but they possess divergent interests, values, and perspectives.

However, Western policymakers continue to oversimplify the diversity that exists within the Global South and fixate on one-size-fits-all prescriptions. Policies focused narrowly on countries such as Brazil and India neglect the unique challenges faced by smaller and mid-sized states, such as unsustainable debt, domestic instability, the effects of climate change, and persistent conflict.

Policymakers in countries north of the Brandt Line must remain proactive in this new reality, because failing to do so risks perpetuating a North-South divide that carries with it significant implications for international cooperation.

Opinion

The world needs to do more to achieve sustainable aviation

RANVIR S. NAYAR



This week, national carrier Air New Zealand became the latest airline to step back from its target for reductions in carbon emissions by 2030. The airline blamed its decision on the poor availability of sustainable aviation fuel, delays in the delivery of new, more fuel-efficient aircraft, and a challenging regulatory framework.

It was a dramatic turnaround from as recently as 2022, when the company heralded the fact that it was the second carrier in the world to have its plans validated by the UN's Science Based Targets initiative aviation framework. At the time, Air New Zealand pledged to reduce missions by 28.9 percent by 2030.

The airline is not the first carrier to abandon its plans to curb emissions. It joins a list that includes some of the biggest airlines in the world, most notably United Airlines, Lufthansa, Japan Airlines, LATAM Airlines Chile, and Easyjet.

As 2030 approaches, the number of airlines reversing commitments or failing to meet targets is only going to increase dramatically as they come up against the same hurdles that Air New Zealand listed. In fact, it is likely that many of them have already privately accepted the near

impossibility of their missions but are reluctant to say so publicly for the fear of the negative publicity and backlash such a move is likely to draw from travelers and ecologists worldwide.

To be fair to the aviation industry, the challenges are indeed immense and certainly not all of them are within its control. In fact, at the moment it looks like the airlines have little control over any of the steps they need to take to start cutting carbon emissions. They are fully dependent on third parties and so are more victims than villains of the piece.

Take sustainable aviation fuel for starters. Leaving aside the fact that it is not really sustainable — it only reduces emissions and is far from being emissions-free — the production of sustainable aviation fuel is managed by oil companies, big and small, and none of

the producers currently has the capacity to meet demand.

This year, the total capacity for production of sustainable aviation fuel worldwide will increase to 1.6 billion liters. This represents threefold growth compared with the capacity in 2023, but it is still only a measly 0.53 percent of all fuel burned by airlines. Producers will therefore continue to struggle to meet the demand for sustainable aviation fuel for the foreseeable future.

The other major hurdle airlines face in efforts to cut emissions is the state of the aircraft-manufacturing industry, in which companies are struggling to deliver new, more fuel efficient models on schedule.

Over the past six years, for example, Boeing has been going through the worst period in the company's history, with repeated crashes and other safety-related incidents forcing it to go back to the drawing board, thereby delaying the production and delivery of new aircraft.

As if Boeing's woes were not enough, European rival Airbus has also faced challenges in meeting its delivery schedules, resulting in a severe shortage of new aircraft that is forcing carriers to continue using older planes, many of which are immense fuel guzzlers.

The seriousness of the situation has so far largely remained under the radar, as governments, aviation regulators, and even climate change negotiators have failed to treat the issue with the seriousness it deserves.

Aviation accounts for 2.5 percent of all carbon emissions and is by far the most polluting mode of transport. The industry is growing rapidly and could be four times bigger by 2050, which would further increase the share of emissions it contributes to the global total.

Such a disastrous scenario calls for

concerted and serious action by several stakeholders. Firstly, governments around the world need to wake up to the impending crisis and provide incentives, or simply oblige, fuel producers not only to significantly ramp up production of sustainable aviation fuel but also to make it available at a price that is more affordable for airlines; currently it is almost three times as expensive as traditional jet fuel.

Resolving the issues related to the manufacture and delivery of new aircraft is more tricky but governments and aviation regulators can help by encouraging greater competition, for example by creating better conditions that might give newcomers, such as Chinese aircraft manufacturer COMAC, the opportunity to break the duopoly that Airbus and Boeing

have enjoyed for decades. But all such efforts will require concerted actions at a global level, and for individual countries, most notably the US and China, to set aside bilateral tensions.

The UN Climate Change Conference in Azerbaijan in November presents the perfect opportunity to open serious discussions on the issue. The alternative to taking proactive and concerted global action is not something that the world should be keen to discover.

Producers will continue to struggle to meet the demand for sustainable aviation fuel for the foreseeable future

To be fair to the aviation industry, the challenges are indeed immense and certainly not all of them are within its control

UK government defines battleground for reelection

ANDREW HAMMOND



Political differences abound between the Labour government that was elected on July 4 and its Conservative predecessor which gained power in May 2010. However, one common challenge that each faced on day one was that of a troubled economic inheritance.

The new chancellor of the exchequer, Rachel Reeves, claimed she inherited from the Conservatives the worst economic situation in British post-war history. On July 29 she released a Treasury dossier that revealed a "£22 billion (\$28 billion) black hole" in this year's budget.

In this sense, there are some parallels with the situation in 2010 when the Conservatives regained power from Labour. The chancellor at the time, George Osborne, said: "This government faces the worst economic inheritance in modern history."

As Prime Minister David Cameron's government pursued a controversial strategy of national austerity, this economic issue framed the next half-decade of UK public life. At the next election, in 2015, the Conservatives emerged victorious with a narrow majority.

Fast forward to 2024, and a troubled

economy inherited by a new government is once again likely to frame the current Parliament, and potentially prove to be a key issue at the next election, which is likely to take place in 2028 or 2029. The Labour Cabinet will be hoping it can convince the public of the merit of its policies, in the same way the Conservatives managed to do in the years immediately after May 2010.

One big factor that helped the Conservatives frame the political debate at that time was the fact that not only did Labour lose its majority in the House of Commons, but several key frontbenchers immediately moved to the backbenches, including defeated Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

Now it is the Labour Party that hopes to frame the debates over whether its governing agenda for rejuvenating the economy, after years of sub-par growth, is the correct next step for the nation.

Average annual growth rates in the UK have more than halved since the international financial crisis of 2007-08. Labour often highlights the fact that had per capita gross domestic product grown as rapidly in the 15 years after 2007 as it did in the 27 years after 1980, every person in

the country would be more than £10,000 better off in real terms, according to International Monetary Fund data.

In making its case, Labour has slammed the economic record of the Conservatives between 2010 and 2024. Meanwhile, the Conservatives are locked in a leadership contest that will not conclude until Nov. 2, just a few days before the US presidential election.

In the months until this happens, Labour will therefore seek to dominate the political space vacated by the Conservatives as a result of their leadership contest.

One key element of Labour's agenda, following the twin shocks of the pandemic and war in Ukraine, is its plan to try to position the UK as a clean-energy superpower, in part by setting up Great British Energy. This new organization, funded by a windfall tax on fossil fuel firms, will be publicly owned and its headquarters will be in Scotland. Its goal is to enhance UK energy security, and it will manage and operate clean power projects such as wind farms.

One of the other big economic announcements by Labour so far is a new National Wealth Fund that will be used to invest in the industries of the

future. It will include contributions from overseas investors from the Middle East and beyond. Efforts have already begun to align the work of the UK Infrastructure Bank with that of the British Business Bank, and the government has assembled a task force that includes Mark Carney, a former governor of the Bank of England.

Under the government's plan, the wealth fund will bring together key institutions to offer a compelling proposition for investors, which it believes will mobilize billions of pounds in additional private investment and generate a healthy return for taxpayers.

About £7.3 billion of funding will be allocated to the plan through the UK Infrastructure Bank, in addition to existing funding it provides, so that investments can begin straight away, with a focus on priority sectors and efforts to catalyze private investment on an even greater scale.

Taking all of this together, Labour's goal is therefore to shape and steer the public debate about the economy. If economic growth recovers to levels above the trend following the 2007-08 financial crisis, this would significantly bolster the party's reelection prospects.

Labour's goal is to shape and steer the public debate about the economy

Labour will seek to dominate the space vacated by the Conservatives

srmq
Saudi Research & Media Group

Established in 1987 by
Prince Ahmad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz

CEO
Jomana Raahid Alraahid

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

Founded in 1979 by
Hisham & Muhammad Ali Hafiz

Editor-in-Chief
Faisal J. Abbas

Deputy Editor-in-Chief
Noor Osama Nugall

ARAB NEWS WELCOMES
FEEDBACK FROM READERS

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

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

TOLL FREE NUMBER: 8002440076

PRINTED AT: HALA PRINTING CO., RIYADH

Bahrain 200 Fils; Iran 200 R; Egypt LE 3;
India 12 Rs; Indonesia 2000 R; Japan 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)263-0200,
Fax: (966-12)263-6228. 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-
2896, (202-3)338-8654, Fax: (202-3)749-2884,
(202-3)749-2855. MOROCCO: Tel: (212-537)262-
618, Fax: (212-537)683-918. JORDAN: Tel:
(962-6)553-7101, (962-6)551-7102, (962-6)553-
9409, Fax: (962-6)553-7103. LONDON: Tel: (44-
20)7631-8181, Fax: (44-20)7631-2310.

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

DISTRIBUTION AGENT
TOLL FREE: (866)800-244-0076
Head Office: (Riyadh): P.O. Box 82116, Riyadh 11585
Tel: (966-11)4419933, Fax: (966-11)2121774
E-mail: info@saudi-distribution.com
Western Region: Tel: (866-12)653-0909
Eastern Region: Tel: (866-13)847-3569
Southern Region: Tel: (866-17)221-8693
Northern Region: Tel: (866-16)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)483-4778,
Manama: Tel: (973-1)761770

SUBSCRIPTION
Head Office: (Riyadh):
P.O. Box 22304, Riyadh 11495
Tel: (966-11)4419933 Fax: (966-11)4429555
TOLL FREE: +866-800-244-0076
Email: info@arabmediaco
Web: www.arabmediaco.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)4708526
www.halaprintpack.com

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

“Aramco's expansion business strategy is deeply designed and thought out to add value.”
Talat Hafiz
Economist



Business

TRANSFORMATION

Saudi Aramco's expansion strategy providing fuel for Vision 2030

Energy giant is mirroring the Kingdom's diversification goals while pursuing a greener future

Miguel Hadchity Riyadh

Saudi oil giant Aramco's robust integrated expansion strategy is helping to drive forward the Kingdom's Vision 2030 economic diversification plan while it balances sustainability concerns, experts have told Arab News.

Situated at the heart of Saudi Arabia's energy sector transformation, the state-owned firm has been focused on creating new market opportunities and increasing integration across various areas.

Economists have told Arab News that Aramco is not just focused on adding to Saudi Arabia's bottom line, but is also developing technological innovation to help deliver on ambitious environmental goals.

These include a special \$1.5 billion fund created to invest in technology that can help lower fossil fuel use — underlining the company's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and driving energy efficiency.

Saudi-based economist Talat Hafiz told Arab News: “Among the several features that Aramco is careful to achieve aside from growth is reaching a level of sustainable business that supports the company's growth in a very complex business environment, especially when considering the changes happening in the world energy mix and the introduction of new energy alternatives such as renewable and nuclear energies.”

Hafiz emphasized the importance of the firm's diversification strategy, saying that the firm can “easily mitigate the risks associated with any investments locally or abroad” especially when considering the successful investments that Aramco has made locally & internationally.

“Aramco's expansion business strategy is deeply designed and thought out to add value through opening new market opportunities and creating a chance for more integration, especially when considering that Aramco is a diversified energy company and not only an oil and gas producing entity,” he added.

A pivotal aspect of the company's global strategy is its venture capital arm, Aramco Ventures, which recently received a \$4 billion injection to propel the development of disruptive technologies.

This initiative underscored Aramco's dedication to diversifying its portfolio and supporting startups worldwide, aligning with its long-term objectives in



A 47,000-capacity arena, to be called the Aramco Stadium, is to be built in Alkhobar following a cooperation agreement with ROSHN Group. SPA

FASTFACT

Aramco's downstream expansion has brought significant economic benefits both locally and globally. In Saudi Arabia, it has spurred job creation across sectors like manufacturing and logistics, reducing unemployment and fostering a skilled workforce.

new energies, chemicals, and digital technologies.

Discussing Aramco's technological investments and sustainability efforts, Hafiz noted: “Aramco is a major player locally and internationally in ensuring that its business is sustainable not only financially but also to support the Kingdom's efforts to reach net-zero emissions goals by 2060. Aramco is committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2050 and has since been unveiling numerous initiatives and projects.”

Looking forward, Aramco's strategic roadmap includes further expansion into new markets, particularly in Asia and North America, and leveraging its venture capital arm to incubate disruptive technologies.

CEO Amin Nasser has long affirmed that the company is “looking at the current market status which, even though challenging, presents an excellent opportunity for growth.” This forward-thinking approach underscored the strategic vision to secure the position as a leader in the global energy landscape.

Formed in the 1930s and becoming state-owned in the 1980s, Aramco saw its global footprint expand rapidly during the 1990s.

This included downstream joint ventures established in the US and South Korea which marked the company's strategic diversification beyond upstream operations, positioning it as a key player in global energy markets.

Moving into the 21st century, key milestones included the launch of Petro Rabigh in 2009, Aramco's first petrochemical plant, followed by the formation of Sadara Chemical Co. in 2011 and the commissioning of SATORP and YASREF refineries in 2014.

The firm's global outreach extended to Europe, Asia, and the Americas, fostering collaborations with international partners and universities on

sustainable energy solutions.

By 2018, Aramco had achieved significant milestones in unconventional resource production and announced its ambitious acquisition of a majority stake in SABIC, transforming it into a major global petrochemicals producer.

Deals completed in recent months include acquiring a 50 percent stake in the Jubail-based Blue Hydrogen Industrial Gases Co., a 10 percent stake in

a thermal engines joint venture between French carmaker Renault and Chinese automaker Geely, and a 40 percent equity stake in Gas & Oil Pakistan.

Away from energy, Aramco has also been keen to boost other blossoming sectors in Saudi Arabia.

A 47,000-capacity arena, to be called the Aramco Stadium, is to be built in Alkhobar in the Eastern Province following a cooperation agreement between real estate developers ROSHN Group and the company.

As well as sponsoring the Esports World Cup held in Riyadh in July, Aramco also provided a high-end simulator zone which offered a hyper-realistic experience akin to driving a Formula 1 car.

The company's diversification efforts echo those of Saudi Arabia in general, and economist and policy adviser Mahmoud Khairy said Aramco and the Kingdom are able to pursue these endeavors as the business generates “substantial revenue” for the country.

“This income allows the government to invest in various sectors, promoting a more balanced economic structure,” he said, adding: “Aramco's

investments in non-oil sectors, including petrochemicals, refining, and renewable energy, are designed to create a more diversified economic structure and reduce the Kingdom's reliance on crude oil exports.”

As well as financial rewards, the company is benefiting from working with some of the best and brightest in the world.

“Aramco's strategic partnerships and acquisitions abroad have not only expanded its global footprint but also brought in foreign expertise and technology to Saudi Arabia. These global engagements help transfer knowledge and best practices to the Kingdom, aiding in its economic modernization,” Khairy added.

Aramco's downstream expansion has brought significant economic benefits both locally and globally. In Saudi Arabia, it has spurred job creation across sectors like manufacturing and logistics, reducing unemployment and fostering a skilled workforce, according to Khairy.

“Globally, Aramco ensures stable supplies of refined products and petrochemicals, supporting industries worldwide. Its efficient operations enable competitive pricing, benefiting global consumers and enhancing economic efficiency,” he added.

Regarding the economic and policy incentives to encourage Aramco's investment in new energy technologies, Khairy suggested: “Providing tax credits or exemptions tailored to investments in renewable energy and clean technologies, subsidies, grants, and low-interest loans specifically designed for renewable energy projects can mitigate initial investment costs and promote quicker adoption of new technologies.”

Regulatory support, including feed-in tariffs, clear and stable regulatory frameworks, and streamlined permitting processes, are essential to reduce risks and uncertainties, according to the expert.

Hafiz emphasized the importance of Aramco's commitment to sustainability: “Aramco is a major player locally and internationally in ensuring that its business is sustainable not only financially but also to support the Kingdom's efforts to reach net-zero emissions goals by 2060.”

He noted that Aramco is committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2050 and has since been unveiling numerous initiatives and projects.

“Aramco is committed to investing in blue and green hydrogen and carbon capturing,” said Hafiz.



Aramco's strategic partnerships and acquisitions abroad have not only expanded its global footprint but also brought in foreign expertise and technology to Saudi Arabia.

Mahmoud Khairy
Economist and policy adviser



Qiddiya is one of several large-scale entertainment projects in the Kingdom, dubbed the 'Capital of Entertainment, Sports, and the Arts.' There is no doubting its importance as one of the cornerstones of the sector. Supplied

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Qiddiya giga-project set to propel KSA's entertainment sector

Theme park has huge 'disruptive potential' across global industry

Room Waïd Riyadh

The cultural landscape of Saudi Arabia is being enriched as the entertainment sector undergoes significant expansion.

The ambitious Saudi Vision 2030, which strives to diversify the economy and increase global engagement, is the driving force behind this broader cultural transformation.

One prime example of the Kingdom's initiatives aimed at propelling the entertainment sector is the Qiddiya giga-project.

Launched in 2018 under the leadership of King Salman bin Abdulaziz, Qiddiya is an emerging capital for entertainment, sports and culture that aims to build destinations, programs and initiatives based on the power of play that will enhance the quality of life of visitors and residents.

Qiddiya's role in propelling the Kingdom's entertainment sector

Qiddiya is just one of several large-scale entertainment projects in the Kingdom but, dubbed the "Capital of Entertainment, Sports, and the Arts," there is no doubting its importance as one of the cornerstones of the sector.

Canadian company AtkinsRéalis is the lead design

consultancy for the project, and the firm's Global Director of Creative, Theming and Show Design Bradley Caruk set out his vision for Qiddiya to Arab News.

"Having worked in the global entertainment industry for the past 25 years, I have learnt we are all the same. Everyone wants to have fun. With major innovative parks like Six Flags Qiddiya City, we have the unexpected — a fully immersive story-driven theme park experience," he said.

Caruk added that the attraction will have "the world's tallest, longest, fastest rides," and said: "We even support the storyline further by including original music compositions."

Sector expert Jamie Ryder, a partner at Entertainment & Media Industry Group at law firm Reed Smith, told Arab News that Qiddiya has a huge amount of "disruptive potential."

He said: "In terms of Qiddiya's disruptive potential, this is immediately clear when considering the sheer scale of the development. When complete, Qiddiya will be home to over 600,000 residents and aims to attract 48 million visits per year."

Ryder continued: "In addition to the specific, innovative — and in the case of Dragon Ball theme park — world's first attractions Qiddiya will host, the focus on 'play' throughout the development, and the



With major innovative parks like Six Flags Qiddiya City, we have the unexpected — a fully immersive story-driven theme park experience.

Bradley Caruk
AtkinsRéalis Global Director of Creative, Theming and Show Design



When complete, Qiddiya will be home to over 600,000 residents and aims to attract 48 million visits per year.

Jamie Ryder
Partner at Entertainment & Media Industry Group at Reed Smith

ability to host major sporting and entertainment events in cutting edge venues means that Qiddiya's disruptive potential is significant."

Partnerships that Qiddiya has established with local or international entities

Of those collaborations and partnerships that have been announced so far, it is very easy to quickly see the alignment with various elements of the Vision 2030 as well as reflecting the fact that Saudi society is a young, connected and vibrant population.

Ryder highlighted the Dragon Ball theme park — based on the popular Japanese animated series — as something that will appeal directly to young people in the Kingdom and beyond.

"Anime is incredibly popular in KSA with Saudi reported as having the largest share of anime viewers worldwide," he said, adding: "With the UAE second in the world rankings for anime viewership, this promises to be a popular attraction enticing tourists from across the region."

Ryder also cited the Six Flags theme park being the first outside of the Americas appealing to both Saudi youth and visitors.

He said one of the jewels in the crown of Qiddiya will be the Speed Park Track, which garnered significant attention in

the motor racing world when the design was unveiled. The attraction comes as the popularity of Formula 1 in the region grows.

"Add to this mix the cutting-edge mixed-use Prince Mohammed Bin Salman Stadium, and dedicated gaming and esports neighborhood, and it is clear to see how Qiddiya will offer world-class attractions and experiences to locals and tourists," he said

Firms' roles in supporting the Saudi's vision of developing a world-class entertainment experience

Several firms in the industry recognize Saudi Arabia's vision of developing top attractions and world-class entertainment destinations in line with the high bar set from the big parks that have been around for over 50 years.

From AtkinsRéalis' point of view, Caruk emphasized that the company's multi-disciplinary teams understand guests' expectations and work towards exceeding those expectations.

"We work as one team, but there are hundreds of us taking a concept and turning it into a reality — all with a common goal to make experiences memorable and timely," he said.

"When we hear the phrase 'That was awesome, can we go back there again' that's when we know we've done something right. Nothing like witnessing

guests leaving our designed theme park with a sense of awe and a desire to return. We expect to hear a lot of these reactions in the years to come," Caruk added.

He was keen to emphasize the pride his firm has in working on the project, saying: "Our commitment to Saudi's Vision 2030 is unwavering, and we value our partnership with Qiddiya, where we contribute to creating unparalleled fun."

Qiddiya's alignment with Saudi Vision 2030

There is no doubt that Qiddiya plays a major role in Saudi Arabia's 2030 vision, aiming to become a leading destination for entertainment, work, sports and daily life.

While economic diversification is at the heart of Vision 2030, promoting culture and entertainment in the Kingdom was included as one of the key goals for Vision 2030 when it was first announced in 2016.

A vibrant society, thriving economy, and an ambitious nation are three key pillars of the Vision.

From Reed Smith's viewpoint, Ryder said: "As such, the role of Qiddiya is not just about economic diversification but, like so many of the projects in KSA, it is about enhancing the quality of life for Saudi citizens and tourists alike with Quality of Life also being one of the Vision 2023 key Vision Realization Programs."



EDIX is the one-stop shop for organizations needing AI capabilities to enhance productivity without worrying about the AI skills shortage.

Anas Al-Faris Intelmatix CEO



Intelmatix provides accessible AI and advanced analytics to improve operations, productivity, growth, and sustainability. SPA

STARTUP WRAP

AI investments flourish across the region

Shorooq Partners fuels Intelmatix's \$20 million series A round

Nour El-Shaerl Cairo

Increased awareness about the implications of artificial intelligence across the public and private sector is evident in Saudi Arabia as startups continue to raise large sums.

The latest AI funding round in the Kingdom was bolstered by Abu Dhabi's venture capital firm Shorooq Partners to fuel Saudi-based Intelmatix's \$20 million series A round.

Several Saudi firms also joined in with state-owned Saudi Venture Capital Co. participating in the investment alongside Saudi Technology Ventures, Olayan Financing Co., and Sultan Holdings, as well as Rwa Growth Fund, and Kuwait's Zain Ventures.

This investment reflects growing confidence in Intelmatix's potential, aligning with Saudi Arabia's strategic focus on AI, underscored by the launch of a \$40 billion fund dedicated to the sector earlier this year.

The fund aims to establish Saudi Arabia as the world's largest AI investor, promoting economic diversification beyond oil.

Founded in 2021 by Massachusetts Institute of Technology scientists Anas Al-Faris, Almaha Al-Malki, and Ahmad Alabdulkareem, Intelmatix provides both public and private sectors with accessible AI and advanced analytics to improve operations, productivity, growth, and sustainability.

The platform addresses the regional AI gap with its Enterprise Decision Intelligence Platform, and is designed to be user-friendly for a wide range of enterprise

users —maximizing impact and adoption while bypassing the need for advanced AI skills.

"EDIX is the one-stop shop for organizations needing AI capabilities to enhance productivity without worrying about the AI skills shortage," Al-Faris, the company's CEO, said.

The company claims it is one of the first to be supported by Saudi Arabia's National Technology Development Program, which aims to empower AI startups and foster AI talent development in the country.

Synapse Analytics raises \$2m to expand AI solutions

Egypt-based Synapse Analytics, a startup focused on AI-driven decision-making solutions, has raised \$2 million in a funding round led by Silicon Badia and Hub7L.

This investment aims to expand Synapse's AI technologies across the Gulf region and Africa, particularly targeting the financial sector.

The company, part of Hub7L's tech ecosystem, addresses financial inclusion by offering AI tools for credit scoring, cross-selling, and dynamic pricing, among other applications.

In a press release, Synapse Analytics CEO Ahmed Abaza

emphasized the transformative potential of AI, stating that it is a catalyst for making financial inclusion a reality in the MEA region.

Synapse Analytics offers solutions such as Konan, a machine learning operations platform for integrating AI into financial institutions' workflows, and Doxter, a document extraction and process automation platform.

Co-founder Galal El-Beshbishy highlighted the company's focus on integrating AI seamlessly with existing systems to improve decision-making processes.

Synapse claims it has established partnerships with major banking product providers like Amazon Web Services and Crealogix, positioning itself as a key player in the region's AI-driven transformation.

The company said its efforts have been recognized globally, including being named among the top 100 companies leading the fourth industrial revolution by the World Economic Forum.

Educatly secures \$2.5m funding round to expand operations

Egyptian network for higher education Educatly has raised \$2.5 million in a funding round led by TLcom Capital and Plus VC, with participation from Egypt Venture and the HBAN syndicate.

This investment supports Educatly's mission to help students navigate educational opportunities worldwide, utilizing advanced AI and language models to provide accurate information about schools, universities, programs, and scholarships.

Since its launch in 2020, Educatly has grown its presence

across the Middle East and Africa, featuring over 1,100 universities in 90 countries.

"Our aim was to bridge the gap between students' educational needs and available opportunities. This investment reaffirms our commitment to continue working towards our vision and strategic goals," CEO and co-founder Mohammed El-Sonbaty, said.

The platform plans to expand operations in key markets and enhance services to reach more students globally.

Co-founder Abdelrahman Ayman emphasized the platform's focus on helping students choose fields of study, find ideal programs, and connect with peers worldwide.

Educatly claims it has already reached over 3 million students and aims to increase this number to 7 million by the end of 2024.

Cartona secures \$8.1m series A extension to boost growth

Cartona, a business-to-business platform digitizing Egypt's traditional trade market, has completed an \$8.1 million series A extension.

The round was led by Algebra Ventures, with participation from existing investors Silicon Badia and the SANAD Fund for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. This extension follows Cartona's \$12 million series A round led by Silicon Badia, leaving the company in a strong cash position.

The new equity capital of \$5.6 million is allocated to accelerate growth across various verticals, including fast-moving consumer goods and hotels, restaurants, cafes, and catering, as well as expanding market share, and exploring regional expansion opportunities in the Middle East and North Africa region.



Synapse Analytics addresses financial inclusion with AI tools. Supplied

BizBriefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Red indices Stocks fall over US recession fears

Global stocks closed the week on a downcast note Friday after poor US jobs data stoked recession fears while Japan's Nikkei tumbled on a resurgent yen.

The US economy added 114,000 jobs last month, a drop from the prior month and fewer than expected, while the jobless rate rose to 4.3 percent, the highest level since October 2021.

The report added to recession fears following lackluster manufacturing data on Thursday, pushing major US indices into the red for the entire day after a down session in Europe. **AFP**

Record profit Berkshire's cash hits \$277bn

Warren Buffett appears to have soured on stocks, letting cash at Berkshire Hathaway soar to nearly \$277 billion and selling a large chunk of its stake in Apple, even as the conglomerate posted a record quarterly operating profit.

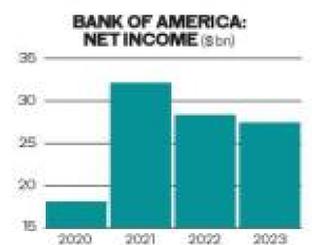
Berkshire sold about 390 million Apple shares in the second quarter, on top of 115 million shares from January to March.

Second quarter profit from Berkshire's dozens of businesses rose 15 percent to \$11.6 billion, or about \$8,073 per Class A share, from \$10.04 billion a year earlier. **Reuters**

Chart of THE DAY

In 2023, the net income of Bank of America amounted to around \$27 billion.

Source: Statista



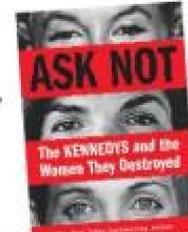
What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

Ask Not

MAUREEN CALLAHAN

Maureen Callahan's "Ask Not" reveals the Kennedys' hidden history of violence and exploitation, laying bare their unrepentant sexism and rampant depravity while also restoring these women and girls



to their rightful place at the center of the dynasty's story. Callahan redirects the spotlight to the women in the Kennedys' orbit, paying homage to those who freed themselves and giving voice to those who, through no fault of their own, could not.

Dividends Intel shares slump 26 percent

Intel shares sank 26 percent on Friday in their worst day since 1974 after the chip manufacturer suspended its dividend and slashed its workforce to fund a costly turnaround after losing its once-dominant global position.

The company lost more than \$30 billion in market value after it gave a disappointing forecast and said it would cut 15 percent of its workforce, deepening worries about its ability to catch up with Taiwan's TSMC and other chipmakers. The stock ended the day at \$21.48, its lowest since 2013. **Reuters**

EV adoption Uttar Pradesh asked to drop hybrid support

Hyundai, Kia Motors, Tata and Mahindra are lobbying India's most populous state not to offer incentives for hybrid cars, saying the move — set to help rivals Toyota and Maruti Suzuki — would hit targets on adopting electric cars.

Four separate company letters to Uttar Pradesh highlight the rivalry between automakers in a country where taxation is skewed in favor of EVs.

In a major lobbying win for Toyota, Uttar Pradesh waived registration taxes on some hybrid cars last month, making them 10 percent cheaper. **Reuters**

It gives me great pleasure to announce the opening of the VFS Global Japan Visa Application Centre here in Dubai.

Imanishi Jun

Consul General of Japan to Dubai and Northern Emirates



PRESS RELEASES FROM THE WORLD OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE

INAUGURAL EVENT

24 Fintech to host govt officials, global finance leaders

As a new era of fintech advancement and adoption unfolds across Saudi Arabia, the inaugural edition of 24 Fintech — the country's new financial services-focused summit and exhibition — will offer a stage to senior government officials and global leaders in the finance sector to address critical topics impacting transformation of the Kingdom's finance industry.

Taking place from Sept.3-5 at Riyadh Front Exhibition & Conference Center, the landmark debut of 24 Fintech aims to solidify Saudi Arabia's position as a global fintech leader.

The event will be hosted by the Financial Sector Development Program, Saudi Central Bank, Capital Market Authority, Insurance Authority, and is co-organized by Fintech Saudi and Tahaluf, a joint venture between Informa PLC, the Saudi Federation for Cybersecurity, Programming and Drones, and the Events Investment Fund.

With less than six weeks until the debut event, several high-level speakers are confirmed to discuss trending themes influencing the industry.

Mohammed Al-Jadaan, chairman of FSDP, has been confirmed as a speaker at 24 Fintech.

Throughout the three-day summit, attendees will hear from high-ranking government officials, including Mohammed Elkwaiz, chairman of the Capital Market Authority; Abdulaziz AlBoug, chairman of the Insurance Authority; Eng. Najj Al-Faisal Al-Tamimi, CEO, Insurance Authority; Yazeed Alnajjan, deputy governor of



The inaugural summit to address fintech regulation and governance, embedded finance, contactless payments, sustainability and green finance, and big data.

financial innovation at the Saudi Central Bank; Yazeed AlDemaigi, deputy of strategy, research & international affairs, Capital Market Authority; and Nezar AlHaidar, CEO of Fintech Saudi.

Expected to attract over 26,000 attendees, 300 exhibitors, and 200 investors, 24 Fintech will feature 175 hours of expert-led content, positioning itself as one of the world's leading fintech conferences.

Key topics include governance, risk and policy, cybersecurity, global interoperability,

and innovation in payments.

24 Fintech will feature four stages hosting an array of keynotes, panel discussions, and industry announcements exploring investment opportunities, startups, technology, and academia.

The Futures Forum Stage will be a hub for academic and interactive discussions on blue-sky thinking, while the Fintech Fusion Stage will converge investment and innovation, providing a platform for founders and investors to share experiences.

The 24 Trends Stage will explore the latest trends and technologies reshaping finance.

Elsewhere, Startup Zone is a dynamic space for networking, pitching sessions, competitions, and demo showcases that will run parallel to the Investor Program — a venue for unearthing opportunities and making connections with visionary entrepreneurs.

"Fintech Saudi is thrilled to co-organize 24 Fintech, a pivotal event aimed at cementing Saudi Arabia's position at the

forefront of global financial services discussions. 24 Fintech is an important milestone in advancing the Saudi fintech industry and is consistent with our vision to position the Kingdom as a leading global Fintech hub," said Alhaidar.

A major driving force in Saudi Arabia's non-oil and digital-first economy, the fintech sector now accounts for nearly 20 percent of all venture investments into the Kingdom, explained Annabelle Mander, senior vice president of Tahaluf.

Corporate Briefs

THE BEST OF THE BEST

Terminal 2

Dubai Airports gets a new luggage facility

Dubai Airports has introduced a new facility combining left luggage and mishandled baggage services, to enhance the guest experience at Dubai International's Terminal 2. Now open, the Baggage Service Centre is a one-stop shop for all baggage-related services conveniently located to ensure guests can easily store and reclaim their bags around the clock. The new facility seamlessly and securely connects publicly accessible areas with the secured areas of the terminal, allowing guests to claim their luggage without the need to go through additional screening processes.

Milestone

Abdul Latif Jameel Motors clinches gold

Abdul Latif Jameel Motors, the authorized distributor of Toyota vehicles in Saudi Arabia since 1955, has been awarded the prestigious Gold Award for the 13th consecutive year in the 2023 Distributor Award Program by Toyota Motor Corporation.

Hassan Jameel, chairman of the board of managers of Abdul Latif Jameel Motors, said: "Winning the prestigious 2023 Distributor Award for the 13th year in a row is yet another milestone that reflects the team's outstanding efforts and passion for understanding the guests' needs while meeting and exceeding their expectations."

EFFICIENCY

King's College Hospital London improves EHR performance, security with Oracle Cloud

King's College Hospital London, in Dubai, has become one of the first UAE-based health systems to migrate its Oracle Health Electronic Health Record to Oracle Cloud Infrastructure. With OCI, KCH Dubai is improving the security, performance, and usability of the EHR resulting in a better experience for its patients and providers.

KCH Dubai is now providing more than 1,000 concurrent users across its facilities with access to more efficient workflows and improved system performance. Moving to the cloud has also provided the hospital network with the scalable foundation it needs to simplify integrations and meet its goal of innovating in critical areas such as population health.

Following its rapid migration

to OCI, KCH Dubai is seeing positive results across the hospital including cutting the time it takes to access patient information by 50 percent, a 20 percent reduction in reviewing each patient's medical chart, and a 25 percent overall reduction in time spent in the EHR due to faster screen loads and transaction response times.

The overall increased speed and responsiveness of the system is helping to streamline processes so clinicians can complete tasks more quickly and free up more time to spend with patients. The performance gains also enable more comprehensive and real-time updates to the patient record, which strengthens communication and care coordination across all caregivers to enhance patient care.

VFS Global's Japan visa application centers will accept document submission for short-term and long-term visas to Japan, by prior appointment.

Appointments will be available online at <https://visa.vfsglobal.com/are/en/jpn/> at no charge.

Speaking at the inauguration, Imanishi Jun, consul general of Japan to Dubai and the Northern Emirates said: "It gives me great pleasure to announce the opening of the VFS Global Japan Visa Application Centre here in Dubai. The government of Japan has set a target to increase the number of foreign visitors to Japan to 60 million by 2030. In recent years, partly due to the depreciation of the yen, the number of visitors to Japan has continued to increase, with more than 3 million foreigners

PARTNERSHIP

VFS Global introduces Japan visa services for UAE residents



VFS Global Japan Visa Application Centre recently opened in Dubai. Supplied

visiting Japan each month since March this year.

"The urgent task is to respond to the ever-increasing number of visa applications. The Consulate General of Japan in Dubai has therefore decided to partner with VFS Global. With the opening of the Japan Visa Application Centre, VFS Global and the Consulate General of Japan in Dubai will work closely

together on visas to encourage more people to visit Japan.

"We hope that those wishing to travel to Japan will benefit from more convenient and faster visa services and that this center will serve as a base for promoting people-to-people exchanges between Japan, the UAE and Dubai and further develop bilateral relations between our two countries."

Financials

SADAFCO reports strong second quarter results

Saudia Dairy and Foodstuff Co., the leader in the UHT (Long Life) Milk, Ice Cream and Tomato Paste market in the Kingdom reported a significantly higher net profit. The company reported net profit SR127.8 million for the quarter, a 19 percent increase in comparison to the previous year's results of SR107.6 million. Patrick Stillhart, CEO, SADAFCO said: "Our strong financial results are an outcome of sustained focus on our growth drivers and priorities. We invested in new distribution channels, such as Out of Home, export and e-commerce which all grew by 37 percent, 67 percent, and 29 percent respectively."

Zheng Qinwen claimed China's first tennis singles gold medal in Olympic history by defeating Donna Vekic of Croatia 6-2, 6-3.



Sport News

GAMING HUB

Esports World Cup draws sellout crowds in Riyadh

Contest tops 177 million hours watched as more than 1 million visitors take in gaming festival in Saudi capital

AFP Riyadh

The Esports World Cup, the world's largest esports competition and festival, has entered the second half of its competition after drawing unprecedented viewership and live attendances for its inaugural event at Boulevard Riyadh City.



During the first half of the event, more than 1 million visitors attended the on-site experience at Boulevard City in the Saudi capital. Supplied

The Esports World Cup Foundation, the nonprofit organization hosting the EWC, has announced a total of 177.5 million hours watched over the first four weeks, with a number of individual tournaments setting viewership highs. In addition, a total of \$16.5 million of the event's record-breaking \$60 million prize pool has been distributed across nine of 22 total championships. The event's daily festival has attracted more than 1 million visitors during the first half of the landmark event taking place

in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

"After four quick weeks, the Esports World Cup has already surpassed our highest expectations," said Ralf Reichert, CEO of Esports World Cup Foundation. "When we started this journey, our goal was to leapfrog the esports industry with a historic global event uniting the best games, players and clubs, and reach fans beyond the core esports enthusiasts, while tapping into the 3.4 billion gamers around the world. I'm

proud that we're well on our way to achieving that goal here in Riyadh with hundreds of millions of viewers at home, and over a million visiting onsite, shattering not only our expectations, but also a lot of 2024 esports records. The EWC has awarded more than \$16 million in life-changing prize money so far, with millions more to come, including the ultimate prize — a share of \$20 million across the Esports World Cup Club Championship at the end of August."

FASTFACTS

- The EWC has already awarded \$16.5 million in prize money across nine tournament championships and another \$450,000 in MVP awards.
- More than \$44 million in prize money will be awarded over the final four weeks of competition spanning the remaining 13 championships and the club championship.

Social highlights

Across the first four weeks of the Esports World Cup, Mobile Legends: Bang Bang registered the event's highest peak viewership with nearly 2.4 million concurrents, the largest figure for any MLBB tournament in 2024. The game's popularity extended to the MLBB Women's Invitational at EWC, recording 2.5 million hours watched over its 34-hour total broadcast. With 265,117 peak viewers, it became the fourth most-watched event

in women's esports history. Mobile games in general have exceeded viewership expectations at the EWC, with Free Fire attracting more than 441,000 peak concurrents.

On PC, two popular multiplayer online battle arena games set high watermarks for viewership at the EWC. With 55 million hours watched, the Dota 2 competition was the most-viewed tournament for the game this year, while the League of Legends competition was the largest third-party tournament for the game in the past decade, recording 53 million hours watched and 3.4 million peak viewers (including China).

The EWC has attracted high engagement from fans across social media. Its accounts have collectively recorded more than 1 billion impressions, 270 million social video views and 58 million total social engagements, a testament to the event's resonance among the global esports community and beyond.

Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Scottish Premiership Rangers held by Hearts on opening day

Rangers were forced to settle for a disappointing 0-0 draw against Hearts in the opening game of the new Scottish Premiership season on Saturday.

With Scottish champions Celtic starting their title defense at home to Kilmarnock on Sunday, Rangers had an opportunity to issue a statement of intent to their title rivals.

But Philippe Clement's side produced an erratic display at Tynecastle characterised by poor finishing and a lack of cohesion in midfield. **AFP**

Cycling

Evenepoel delivers double for Belgium

Belgium's Remco Evenepoel survived a dramatic late puncture to take Olympic road race gold Saturday, delivering a historic double for his cycling-mad country after already winning the time trial.

The double gold ensures Evenepoel's place in the pantheon of cycling greats and marks an impressive comeback four years after he plunged over a wall into a ravine during a race in Italy.

He is the only man to have ridden the Olympic double. Dutch cyclist Leontien Zijlaard completed the women's double at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney. **AFP**



Motorsports

Enea Bastianini wins British MotoGP sprint

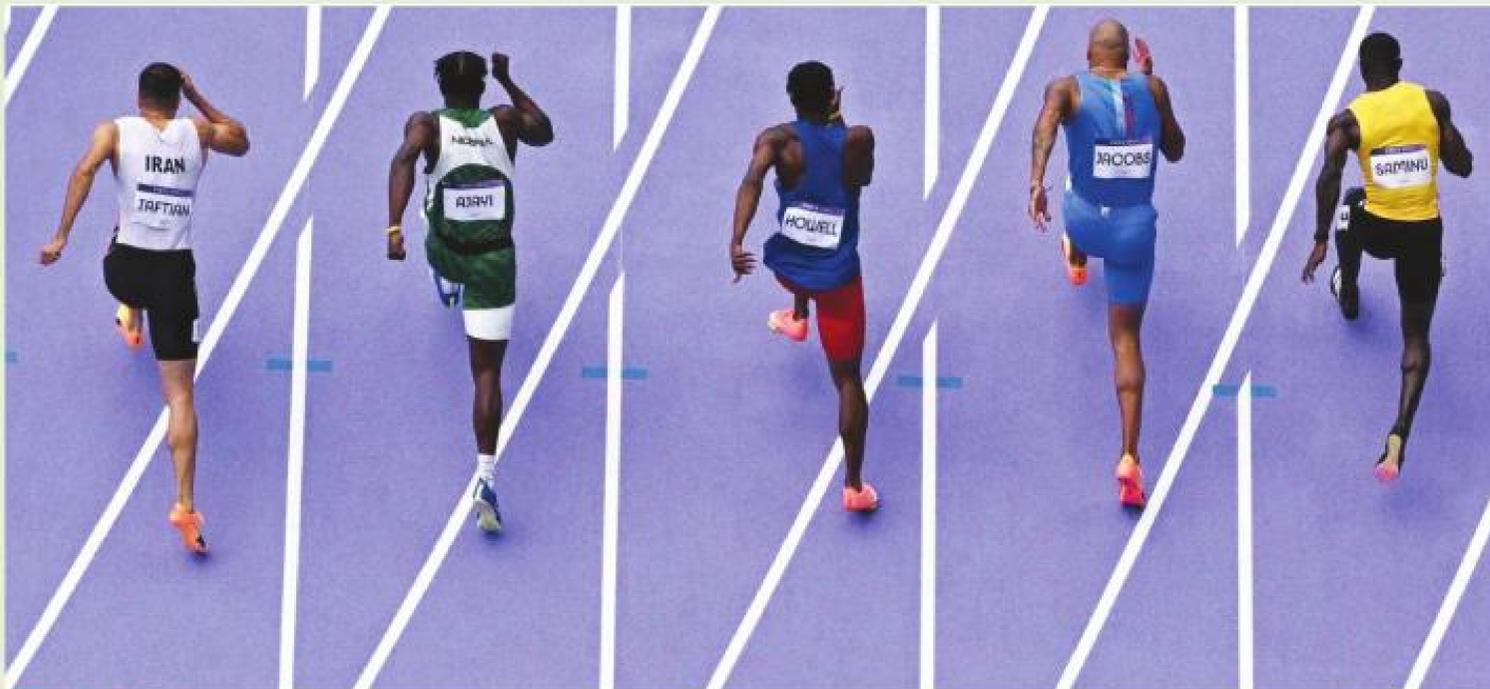
Ducati rider Enea Bastianini won the British MotoGP sprint at Silverstone on Saturday as championship leader Francesco Bagnaia crashed out on lap five.

Bastianini was followed in second by Jorge Martin (Ducati-Pramac), who now stands just one point behind Bagnaia in the overall standings ahead of Sunday's main race.

Pole-sitter Aleix Espargaro (Aprilia) finished third.

Martin was quickly on to Espargaro's tail at the start of the race, overtaking on lap one and appearing to take control. **AFP**

Follow Arab News Briefs all through the day @ArabNews



Paris Olympics An overview of men's 100m heat of the athletics event in Paris on Saturday. Nigeria's Kayinsola Ajayi won the race. In 2023, the African star won a gold medal in the 100m at the African Athletics U20 Championships in Zambia. **AFP**

HISTORY

Qinwen wins China's first Olympic tennis singles gold

AP Paris

Zheng Qinwen claimed China's first tennis singles gold medal in Olympic history by defeating Donna Vekic of Croatia 6-2, 6-3 in the 2024 Paris Games women's final Saturday.

The 21-year-old Zheng displayed the same powerful serves and groundstrokes she used to eliminate No. 1 Iga Swiatek in the semifinals and now has the biggest title of her career.

Not that Zheng hasn't shown plenty of promise already. She is

ranked No. 7, after all, and was the runner-up to Aryna Sabalenka at the hard-court Australian Open in January.

This, though, could make her a real star in her country. International Tennis Hall of Fame member Li Na is the only Chinese player to win a Grand Slam singles title — at the 2011 French Open and 2014 Australian Open — and served as inspiration for Zheng when she was a kid learning the sport.

Meanwhile, in men's double, Australia's Matthew Ebden enjoyed a golden finale to his

Olympics on Saturday just a week after being humiliated by Djokovic in a rout deemed "not a good image" for tennis.

Ebden and John Peers came back from a set and break down to defeat fourth-seeded Austin Krajicek and Rajeev Ram of the United States 6-7 (6/8), 7-6 (7/1), 10-8 in the final.

The success for the 36-year-old Ebden was in brutal contrast to his first round singles loss to Djokovic where he won just one game in a 53-minute thrashing.

"Last night I was actually

dreaming of doing an Instagram post ... like 'how it started, how it finished,'" said Ebden.

"I was thinking about that score, winning one game, and thinking, swipe right and there's a gold medal photo. Maybe I'll have to make that post at some point.

"But I didn't even dream of winning a gold medal."

Doubles specialist Ebden hadn't played a singles match for two years when he received the call-up to face Djokovic following a series of withdrawals from the tournament.

US rock band Aerosmith announced this week that they are officially retiring from touring and have canceled all remaining concert dates due to singer Steven Tyler's irreversible vocal cord injury.



& Finally

The Six

On-trend brows

From brow lamination to microblading, here are six ways methods to achieve on-trend, full and bushy eyebrows.



Brow lamination

Brow lamination is a treatment that straightens and lifts the brow hairs, making them look fuller and more uniform. Try it at Jeddah's Lash and Brow Club.



Tinting

Coloring the brow hairs, at Riyadh's Ink Brows & Beauty, will enhance the natural shade of your brows or match them with your hair color. Tinting can make the brows appear fuller and more defined.



Brow pencil

For natural-looking brows with fuller shape, try Asteri Beauty's The Archer brow pencil. It sculpts bold brows effortlessly.



Brow gel

To enhance your brows with volume, consider Noha Nabil's Feather Up brow gel. It will help you to achieve the trendy feathered or textured look.



Precision plucking

Removing stray hairs and shaping the brows with precision plucking can create a clean and defined look, emphasizing the natural arch of the brows. You can either do it yourself at home or visit The Brows Lounge in Riyadh.



Microblading

For sparse brows, consider microblading at Brau Studio, Riyadh. This semi-permanent technique fills and shapes brows with natural-looking hair strokes.



Addie Carver wins Miss Teen USA pageant Addie Carver, Miss Mississippi Teen USA, winner of Miss Teen USA 2024, poses during the 73rd Annual Miss Teen USA Pageant at Peacock Theater in Los Angeles, California.

Getty Images

COURT CASE

Justin Timberlake pleads not guilty to drunk driving charge

AFP New York

Pop singer Justin Timberlake pleaded not guilty this week to driving while intoxicated in a virtual appearance before a judge who ordered that his driver's license be suspended in New York state, US media reported.

On June 18, the singer was pulled over in the town of Sag Harbor, about 160 kilometers east of New York City, after police observed his BMW go through a stop sign and struggle to stay within road lanes.

The officer who pulled over the singer said he was in no fit state to drive. During the hearing, Judge Carl Irlace ordered that Timberlake's right to drive in New York state be suspended, which the star's lawyer Edward Burke told reporters would last for the duration of the case.



CLOSE UP

Princess Rajwa of Jordan welcomes her first child

Arab News Dubai

Princess Rajwa Al-Hussein of Jordan and Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah have welcomed their first child, a baby girl on Saturday morning.

The new parents named their bundle of joy Iman, the Royal Hashemite Court announced.

The king and queen of Jordan expressed their joy on X. King Abdullah stated the arrival of his granddaughter has "enlightened the family."

Queen Rania congratulated the couple and wished blessings

upon them and their new child.

Jordan's constitution dictates that the throne passes to male heirs, so Crown Prince Hussein and Princess Rajwa's child will enter the line of succession to the throne. Since the baby is a girl, there will be no change to the line of succession. Crown Prince Hussein is heir to the throne and is currently followed by his brother Prince Hashem.

The family's new addition will receive the titles of Her Royal Highness and princess.

The royal family announced the pregnancy in April, saying the princess, who is from Saudi

Arabia, will give birth in the summer. Princess Rajwa, who celebrated her 30th birthday in April, is the daughter of late Saudi businessman Khalid bin Musaed bin Saif bin Abdulaziz Al-Saif, who died in January this year, and his wife, Azza bint Nayef Abdulaziz Ahmad Al-Sudairi.

She is the youngest of four children — her older siblings are called Faisal, Nayef and Dana.

The princess' mother comes from the prominent Al-Sudairi family. Incidentally, Saudi Arabia's King Salman is one of the so-called "Sudairi Seven," an influential alliance of seven

full brothers born to King Abdulaziz and Hussa bint Ahmed Al-Sudairi.

After graduating from high school in Saudi Arabia, Rajwa studied at Syracuse University's School of Architecture in New York state. She also holds an Associate of Arts Professional Designation in visual communications from the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising in Los Angeles.

After a spell working at an architecture firm in Los Angeles, she returned to her native Saudi Arabia to work at the Designlab Experience design studio in Riyadh.

INTERVIEW

Pastor & Co. sets sights on Saudi Arabia's luxury market

Hams Saleh Dubai

Pastor & Co., a company known for sourcing and selling rare and luxury items from leading brands, is looking to expand its business in Saudi Arabia with moves into hospitality and tourism.

The firm built its reputation on supplying high-end watches, contemporary art, and luxury furniture, and now has its sights set on the Kingdom's

growing luxury market. Pastor & Co. rose to prominence in Saudi Arabia through its partnership with Farfetch Fashion Concierge, quickly becoming the primary supplier, thanks to its expertise in distinguishing authentic luxury items from counterfeits.

"We were able to prove ourselves on what was a huge stage, and quickly outsold the likes of Harrods and Louis Vuitton in terms of units



Pastor & Co. is co-founded by Solomon and Levi Pastor. Supplied

sold," Solomon Pastor, the company's director, told Arab News.

Originally started as Sneaker-Plug by Levi Pastor while still in high school, the business initially focused on limited sneakers and apparel for UK and US rappers and sports stars. As demand for luxury items grew, Solomon joined, expanding the firm's catalog to include timepieces, jewelry, art and luxury homeware items.

Pastor & Co.'s reputation

has attracted high-net-worth individuals, including members of Saudi Arabia's royal family. "We value their trust in us, and part of that trust is complete confidentiality," Solomon said. The firm's involvement in Saudi Arabia's Diriyah and AlUla mega-projects marks a new chapter. "We are really excited by the transition of the Kingdom and are in awe of the vision of Mohammed bin Salman," Solomon said.

FILM HUB

Zanzibar says Idris Elba to open film studio

AFP Dar es Salaam

Hollywood star Idris Elba has been allocated land in Zanzibar to set up a film studio in the Indian Ocean archipelago, a local minister said this week.

Elba, who has Sierra Leonean and Ghanaian roots, has previously spoken about his desire to develop the film industry in Africa.

"Idris Elba will be building a modern studio similar to Hollywood, Nollywood or Bollywood," Zanzibar's minister for investment Shariff Ali Shariff said on Thursday.