

SAUDI ARABIA

DIVE INTO THE DARK AT JEDDAH SEASON'S HAUNTED PIRATES EXPERIENCE

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OPINION

FRENCH SHIFT HIGHLIGHTS MOROCCO'S GROWING ROLE IN AFRICA

By Zaid M. Belbagi
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KINGDOM UPDATES LAW TO ATTRACT FOREIGN INVESTORS Page 11

& FINALLY

LINDSAY LOHAN REVEALS 'FREAKY FRIDAY 2' TITLE

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MONDAY August 12, 2024
Safar 8, 1446
www.arabnews.com

ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

SINCE 1975

MIDDLE EAST WAR

Gazans flee as Israelis push into Khan Younis

Army widens evacuation orders

Arab News Riyadh

Palestinians fled southern Gaza's main city on Sunday as the Israeli military ordered more evacuations, a day after one of the deadliest reported strikes in more than 10 months of war.

The fighting in the besieged Gaza Strip between Israeli forces and Hamas has sent tensions soaring across the region, including in the occupied West Bank, where medics said an Israeli man was killed on Sunday in a shooting.

Intense diplomacy in recent days sought to avert a wider war in the Middle East following the killings of militant leaders, while international mediators invited Israel and Hamas to resume stalled talks toward a long-sought Gaza truce and hostage-release deal.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a phone call on Sunday that "an end to the war in Gaza would be a decisive step toward a regional de-escalation."

Hundreds of Palestinians fled northern neighborhoods of Khan Younis, southern Gaza's main city, already ravaged by months of bombardment and battles after

Israel issued fresh evacuation orders in the early morning.

The military dropped leaflets and sent mobile phone messages warning of "dangerous combat" in Al-Jalaa district and telling Palestinian residents to leave the area, which until Sunday was designated a humanitarian safe zone.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said that "just in the past few days, more than 75,000 people have been displaced in southwest Gaza."

Families gathered their meager belongings as crowds left Al-Jalaa, some loading mattresses, clothing, and cooking utensils into pick-up trucks. Others took to the road on foot.

Umm Sami Shahada, a 55-year-old displaced Palestinian, said she had "fled Gaza City at the start of the war for Khan Younis," hoping to find shelter.

Hamas, in a statement, called Arab and Muslim nations to "take effective decisions" to stop the war and demanded an urgent UN Security Council meeting to force Israel "to stop the aggression and genocide."

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● **Opinion:** Dr. Danla Koleilat Khatib & Dr. Majid Rafizadeh Page 9



People inspect the damage in Gaza City's Sheikh Radwan neighborhood following Sunday's Israeli bombardment. AFP

TALKS WITH ENVOY

Yemen leader seeks urgent aid to help flood victims

Saeed Al-Batati Al-Mukala

The Yemeni government on Sunday reiterated its call to the international community to assist the country's thousands of flood victims, unblock highways, and restore services in four Yemeni provinces.

Rashad Al-Alimi, chairman of Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council, said at a meeting with Steven H. Fagin, the US ambassador to Yemen, that the country needs immediate humanitarian help to deal with the damage caused by floods and raids in the provinces of Hajjah, Hodeidah, Taiz and Marib.

FASTFACT

Four internally displaced people were killed and many others were injured on Sunday in Yemen's central province of Marib when torrential rains and high winds pounded their tents.

Yemen's National Center of Meteorology on Sunday reaffirmed its warnings to Yemenis throughout the country against driving into or staying in watercourses, forecasting heavy rainfall, floods, and strong winds in Yemen's highlands and western and southern regions.

Four internally displaced people were killed, and many others were injured on Sunday in Yemen's central province of Marib when torrential rains and high winds pounded their tents.

The four deaths take to 61 the toll in Yemen reported by the UN since late July.

The Brief

LEATHER ARTISANS

The ancient art of leather crafting, a symbol of local cultural heritage, is experiencing a renaissance in the heart Najran. P5

IRAN MINISTER

Abbas Araqchi was nominated as Iran's foreign minister by President Masoud Pezeshkian, Iran's parliament speaker said. P6

OLYMPIC GLORY

Ethiopian-born Dutch athlete Sifan Hassan's endurance gamble at the Paris Games finally paid off after she sprinted away for Olympic marathon gold on Sunday. P15

INSPIRATION

Saudi calligraffiti artist showcases Arabic's 'richness and versatility'

Inspired by Arabic calligraphy, Ahmed Al-Sulaimani aims to bring bold art form to the global stage

Rahaf Jambi Riyadh

Saudi artist Ahmed Al-Sulaimani is redefining the boundaries of traditional art forms by blending Arabic calligraphy and graffiti-inspired techniques.

"Calligraffiti is a fusion of Arabic calligraphy and graffiti art," Al-Sulaimani told Arab News.

"While graffiti typically uses the English language and letters, calligraffiti combines Arabic calligraphy with graffiti techniques. I form Arabic letters

using graffiti-inspired styles and methods."

This approach has not only captured the attention of art enthusiasts but has also opened doors to remarkable opportunities, including a mural collaboration with Jeddah Municipality that marked his first foray into large-scale public art.

"This project allowed me to showcase my skills in integrating Arabic calligraphy into large-scale murals,"



Al-Sulaimani designed and produced large-scale murals in 10 cities across the Kingdom.

he said. "It caught the attention of many and inspired me to continue exploring the use of Arabic calligraphy in public art."

Following that project, Al-Sulaimani designed and produced large-scale murals in 10 cities across the Kingdom, including on bridges, towers, and public spaces.

The pinnacle of his achievements came with the opportunity to design Arabic signage for the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

Tasked with creating towering structures featuring Qur'anic phrases, Al-Sulaimani's work brought the beauty of the Arabic language to the global stage.

Detailed report Page 5

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Radar



The update to the Investment Law enhances Saudi Arabia's position as a leading global investment destination and it supports the comprehensive economic movement witnessed by the Kingdom at all levels.
Bandar Alkhorayef
 Saudi industry and mineral resources minister

KSA today



Dhahran Theater contest

Ithra's short play contest seeks to empower Saudi talent and is inviting authors, directors and actors to reveal their abilities and creativity at the Ithra Theater from Aug. 12-16. Visit the Ithra app for more details.



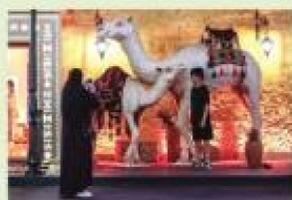
Abha Art village

Immerse yourself in local heritage at the Al-Muftaha Village Area Event, designed for visitors from both within and outside the region. For more details, visit platinumlist.net.



AlUla Art and tea

Enjoy the opportunity to paint while drinking tea and taking in the serene landscape in the heart of AlUla. Held at the Husaak Center, you can book your spot through alula.platinumlist.net.



Jeddah Camel attraction

The "Year of the Camel" is an interactive experience that explores the cultural impact of the animal while detailing its historic presence in the region. It is located at City Walk. Visit the Saudi Events app for more details.

The Register

THE PICTURES THAT MARK THE DAY



Abdullah Al-Rabeeah, the general supervisor of the Saudi aid agency KSrelief, met Saudi Ambassador to Cuba Waleed

Al-Homoodi in Riyadh on Sunday. The parties discussed issues related to relief and humanitarian affairs, the Saudi Press Agency reported. Al-Homoodi praised the Kingdom's

relief and humanitarian efforts which are carried out through KSrelief, a body which aims to alleviate the suffering of disadvantaged populations globally.

Today's Number

46.8k

Following recent floods and heavy rains in Yemen's Hajjah, Al-Hudaydah, and Taiz governorates, Saudi aid agency KSrelief distributed emergency humanitarian aid, including 5,535 food baskets, 1,580 tents, and 1,356 shelter kits, benefiting 46,825 people.

Who's Who



Dr. Shadi Badawood

Dr. Shadi Badawood, an academic and experienced communication professional in the government and private sector, was recently named Najran University's official spokesperson.

His appointment was announced by the university's president, Abdulrahman Al-Khudairi.

Badawood is an assistant professor in the marketing department at the university's Business Administration College and was appointed director of corporate communications in 2023.

In a near-two-decade career, he has held positions at the University of Business and Technology as editor-in-chief of Business Horizons magazine in 2003; been responsible for media supplements and marketing administration at Okaz newspaper; served as media consultant for Saudi students' clubs in the UK; and was chairman of the Transforming Journey Initiative for Saudi students around the world.

In addition, he has published several magazines for various institutions, including the Saudi Cultural Mission in the UK, Ebsar Foundation, and Oxford Academy in Jeddah.

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



REST IN PEACE Susan Wojcicki

X Former YouTube CEO and longtime Google executive Susan Wojcicki has died at the age of 56.

The news was announced by Wojcicki's husband, Dennis Troper, who revealed that she died after a two-year battle with lung cancer.

"My beloved wife of 26 years and mother to our five children left us today after 2 years of living with non small cell lung cancer," he said in a post on social media.

Sheryl Sandberg, who was vice president of Google's sales and operations, was among those who paid tribute to Wojcicki in a post she shared on Facebook, saying that the late tech pioneer was her mentor in the tech business.

"She taught me the business and helped me navigate a growing, fairly chaotic organization at the beginning of my career in tech," Sandberg wrote.

'REALLY, THAT SONG?'

Celine Dion

G Celine Dion and her management expressed annoyance at Donald Trump for the unauthorized use of her song at a campaign rally.

During Trump's presidential campaign rally in Montana on Friday, event organizers played the 1997 hit song "My Heart Will Go On," which is an integral part of the soundtrack for the film "Titanic."

On Saturday, Dion's team took to X and posted a statement that read: "Today, Celine Dion's management team and her record label, Sony Music Entertainment Canada Inc., became aware of the unauthorized usage of the video, recording, musical performance, and likeness of Celine Dion singing 'My Heart Will Go On' at a Donald Trump / JD Vance campaign rally in Montana.

"In no way is this use authorized, and Celine Dion does not endorse this or any similar use," the statement adds, ending with a question directed to the Trump campaign: "... And really, THAT song?"

@RealMarty17 replied: "I have to say using the 'Titanic' theme song for the Trump campaign is very appropriate for this sinking political campaign."

@CallMeK123 quipped: "It's embarrassing when you people get upset someone played your music somewhere." To this @JeanTienChow replied: "It's a statement that the artist is not involved and does not endorse it. Nowhere does it say anyone is upset."

This is not the first time Trump has been called out by a singer for using their music without authorization.

In 2020, during his re-election campaign, the former president used the song "Fortunate Son" by John Fogerty of the band Creedence Clearwater Revival, who issued a cease-and-desist about the use of his music at the campaign event.

"I wrote this song because, as a veteran, I was disgusted that some people were allowed to be excluded from serving our country because they had access to political and financial privilege."



TheRegion

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Jeddah

• Dragon City Bahrain in Diyar Al-Muharraq, Bahrain, is holding back-to-school festivities including fantastic deals on school supplies, creative arts and crafts, whimsical face painting, and a meet-and-greet with the mascot, DiDi. Until Aug. 17. For more details, check calendar.bh.

• Children can embark on a delicious journey where expert chefs will guide them through the world of French pastry and culinary arts, fostering independence and confidence through hands-on experiences. Held at Ecole Ducasse Abu Dhabi Studio until Aug. 23. For more details, check visitabudhabi.ae.

• "House of Color" at City Centre Bahrain is a safe space for creatives to unleash their potential — and vent any stress — using paint guns and balloons. Have fun while earning a chance to win a Range Rover Velar. The experience for adults will run until Aug. 31. Visit calendar.bh for more details.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

| | Aug. 12 | Fajr | Sunrise | Dhuhr | Asr | Maghreb | Isha |
|---------|---------|------|---------|-------|------|---------|------|
| Makkah | 4:38 | 5:57 | 12:26 | 3:48 | 6:54 | 8:24 | |
| Madinah | 4:32 | 5:54 | 12:27 | 3:55 | 6:59 | 8:29 | |
| Riyadh | 4:03 | 5:26 | 11:59 | 3:27 | 6:31 | 8:01 | |
| Abha | 4:33 | 5:51 | 12:16 | 3:30 | 6:39 | 8:09 | |
| Dammam | 3:45 | 5:09 | 11:45 | 3:16 | 6:20 | 7:50 | |

The detection of polio in wastewater in Gaza is a tell-tale sign that the virus has been circulating in the community.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
WHO's director general



Spotlight

RESEARCH & STUDIES
THE MIDDLE EAST, BETTER EXPLAINED

ARAB NEWS



GAZA CONFLICT

Portents of a polio outbreak

WHO renews calls for Gaza ceasefire to help facilitate the mass vaccination of children against the deadly virus

Anan Tello London

More than 1 million children in the Gaza Strip are at risk of contracting type 2 poliovirus, a highly infectious disease that can lead to paralysis and even death, as displacement and the destruction of sanitation infrastructure leaves the population vulnerable to disease.

The World Health Organization has announced plans to send 1.2 million polio vaccines to Gaza after the virus was detected in wastewater samples taken last month from displacement camps in the northern governorates of Khan Younis and Deir Al-Balah.

Although no clinical cases of polio have been diagnosed so far, Hanan Balkhy, the WHO's regional director, warned that the virus could "spread further, including across borders" unless agencies acted quickly to vaccinate the population.

However, any mass polio immunization campaign in Gaza, targeting 600,000 children under the age of 8, would face a host of challenges, chief among them the absence of a ceasefire which would allow medics to safely access displaced communities.

"We need a ceasefire, even a temporary ceasefire, to successfully undertake these campaigns," Balkhy said at a press briefing on Wednesday.

Children under the age of 5, and especially infants, are most at risk from polio, as many missed out on the regular vaccination campaigns that had taken place in Gaza before the conflict began on Oct. 7.

The virus, which spreads through contact with the feces, saliva or nasal mucus of an



Children under the age of 5, main and far left, are most at risk from polio amid the conflict, bottom, which has devastated Gaza's health system, left. AFP

movement of families in Gaza has made it difficult for aid agencies, which are already short of funds and struggling to reach affected populations, to locate and identify unvaccinated children.

The WHO's polio specialist Jafari warned that the virus could have been circulating in Gaza since September, as the enclave offered "ideal conditions" for its transmission.

Before Oct. 7, polio vaccine coverage in the Occupied Palestinian Territories was estimated at 89 percent, according to the WHO.

Even if the planned 1.2 million vaccines are successfully brought into Gaza, it will be a "huge logistical challenge" to ensure their successful deployment, WHO official Andrea King told the BBC.

The vaccines must be stored within a limited temperature range from the moment they are manufactured until they are administered. Bringing these chilled vaccines into Gaza and keeping them at the required temperature would be a difficult undertaking at the best of times.

The WHO's Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Wednesday that a ceasefire or at least a few days of calm was essential to protect Gaza's children.

As of July 7, the WHO has recorded a surge in infectious diseases, including 1 million cases of acute respiratory infections, 577,000 of acute watery diarrhea, 107,000 of acute jaundice syndrome, and 12,000 of bloody diarrhea.

It says this is primarily due to a lack of clean drinking water and the destruction of a critical water facility in Rafah, southern Gaza.

IN NUMBERS

1.2m

Polio vaccines the WHO plans to send to Gaza to prevent outbreak.

70%

Proportion of Gaza's sanitation facilities damaged or destroyed.

1.9m

Palestinians in Gaza displaced multiple times since the conflict began.

infected individual, attacks nerves in the spinal cord and the brain stem, leading to partial or total paralysis within hours.

It can also immobilize chest muscles, causing trouble breathing, even leading to death.

In Gaza, overcrowding, a lack of clean water and hygiene materials, a deteriorating health system, and the destruction of

sanitation plants have all contributed to the reemergence of type 2, according to Hamid Jafari, the WHO's director of polio eradication, speaking at Wednesday's press briefing.

The UN estimates at least 70 percent of Gaza's water and sanitation plants, including wastewater treatment facilities and sewage pumping stations, have been damaged or destroyed since the start of the conflict.

In late July, Gaza's health authority declared the enclave a "polio epidemic zone," blaming the resurgence of the virus on Israel's bombing campaign and the ensuing damage this had caused to the healthcare system.

The Israeli military began its bombardment of the Gaza Strip in retaliation for the Oct. 7 Hamas-led attack on southern Israel. Although the Israeli military insists it does not target civilian infrastructure, schools, hospitals, and utilities have suffered major damage.

Despite calls from the WHO and other aid bodies for the warring parties in Gaza to allow "absolute freedom of movement" so that medics can roll out a vaccination campaign, the possibility of a ceasefire appears no closer.

On Wednesday, the Israeli military issued new evacuation orders for several parts of northern Gaza, including Beit Hanoun, Manshiyya and Sheikh Zayed.

Avichay Adraee, the Israeli army's spokesperson, posted the evacuation orders on the social media platform X. He instructed the residents of Beit Hanoun to "relocate immediately" to Deir Al-Balah and Zawayda.

"Beit Hanoun area is still considered a dangerous combat zone,"

he added. Despite assurances that these areas would be treated as safe zones in which civilians could shelter, both Deir Al-Balah and Zawayda have come under regular Israeli attack in recent months.

The UN reported that while nowhere in Gaza is safe, 86 percent of the besieged Palestinian enclave is under Israeli evacuation orders. About 1.9 million of Gaza's 2.1 million population have been displaced multiple times since Oct. 7.

"Nowhere is safe. Everywhere is a potential killing zone," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said at the opening of the UNRWA Pledging Conference on July 12. The continuous



RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS

Saudi development program boosts health sector in Yemen

More than 4.4m helped by Saudi-driven healthcare projects

Arab News Riyadh

The Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen has had a significant impact on Yemen's healthcare system, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Sunday.

The Kingdom aims to achieve sustainable development in the healthcare sector by implementing numerous projects and initiatives.

Key projects include the construction and equipping of hospitals and medical centers, along with the training of healthcare professionals.

The King Salman Medical and Educational City in Al-Mahra Governorate is a prime example



Initiatives have helped some 4,486,847 beneficiaries and supported 26 medical facilities across nine Yemeni governorates. SPA

of such an initiative, offering a 110-bed hospital, outpatient clinics and operating rooms within a complex of 1 million sq. meters.

The Prince Mohammed bin Salman Hospital in Aden — which boasts a 270-bed capacity, 14 specialized clinics and a heart

center — provided more than 1.3 million medical consultations, 8,700 surgeries, and 440 heart operations from January 2023 to June 2024.

Projects such as the Taiz Cancer Treatment Center, the Hadramout University Hospital and Cancer Treatment Center, and the Aden

Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children have been established to address specific needs.

In addition, Al-Mahra's Kidney Dialysis Center and the region's Operations and Intensive Care Center have been created to improve care for patients with kidney disease.

The program has also upgraded existing facilities at Marib's General Authority Hospital and the 26th of September Hospital, along with Aden General Hospital.

Initiatives have helped some 4,486,847 beneficiaries and supported 26 medical facilities across nine Yemeni governorates, demonstrating the Kingdom's commitment to improving the health and well-being of the country's people.

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Creative growth

New training to enhance skills in art, culture

The Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with the National eLearning Center, has introduced a new training pathways initiative in culture and arts, aligning with the cultural development strategy.

This scheme offers a range of training options across various cultural and artistic domains, and fosters a culture of continuous learning and growth, inspiring national talent in the cultural field.

Enthusiasts and professionals can enroll in courses to refine their skills and contribute to the cultural sector. To sign up, visit the National eLearning Platform "FutureX" via the link: <https://forms.nelc.gov.sa/ar/moc.page>.

As part of the training, the ministry provides fully funded learning opportunities and the chance for participants to receive training from renowned global institutions.

The scheme includes 30 pathways with almost 150 training programs covering culinary arts, theater, libraries, film, fashion, heritage, visual arts, literature, publishing and translation. SPA Riyadh

Natural artistry

Rock arches in Tabuk showcase geological wonders

Rock arches stand out as exceptional geological and natural marvels, captivating explorers and prompting contemplation on the temporal and spatial dimensions of various landscapes.

Within the Hisma Desert, which is located in the western part of the Tabuk region, numerous rock arches adorn both the core and periphery of the desert. These structures attract tourists and spark curiosity with their circular shapes and intricate patterns.

Scientific studies attribute the formation of these arches to the combined effect of wind and the underlying geological composition. The wind, as a primary agent, propels sand particles along the incline of the fossilized terrain, leading to their accumulation on the leeward side.

This cyclical process molds the distinctive rock arches over time, with factors like wind velocity, sediment availability, and geological composition influencing their size, configuration, and evolution. SPA Riyadh



Visitors to the horror zone are immersed in excitement and suspense as they venture into the haunted lair of the pirate world. Supplied

ENTERTAINMENT

Dive into the dark at Jeddah Season's Haunted Pirates experience

Arab News Jeddah

Visitors to Jeddah Season's City Walk zone have been enjoying the Haunted Pirates attraction, which offers an adrenaline-pumping journey through a world of horror and interactive puzzle-solving for all age groups.

The event features pirate-themed areas, interactive performances, a pirate ship, and The Lost Treasure puzzle game. As visitors solve the puzzles they progress through the stages for

an entertaining experience.

There is also a Pirate Island game for children, which allows them to enjoy sand and movement games while promoting interaction among different age groups.

Visitors to the horror zone are immersed in excitement and suspense as they venture into the haunted lair of the pirate world. The atmosphere is charged with fear and tension, heightened by captivating dance performances.

Haunted Pirates unfolds across

HIGHLIGHT

The Haunted Pirates event features pirate-themed areas, interactive performances, a pirate ship, and The Lost Treasure puzzle game.

three distinct areas. The first plunges visitors into a harrowing experience on a pirate ship where they face off against ghostly pirates, testing their courage and spirit of adventure.

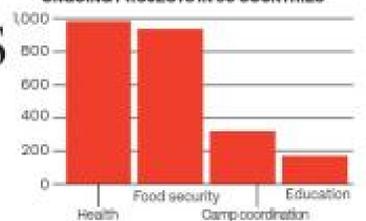
The second area presents the puzzle-solving game The Lost Treasure, which comprises eight stages to challenge players to unravel mysteries before progressing.

The third area, specifically for children, introduces Pirate Island, which features a sandy playground and movement games to foster shared memories of joy and fun.

The Haunted Pirates experience is open daily from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. until Aug. 17.

The Day's FIGURES

KSRELIEF LARGEST COMPLETED AND ONGOING PROJECTS IN 99 COUNTRIES



Source: ksrelief.org

Culinary gathering

Qassim farmers' market to boost local agriculture

Saudi Arabia's Culinary Arts Commission in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, will host a farmers' market at Al-Nakheel Avenue in Unaizah from Aug. 15-17 and Aug. 22-24.

The market will also be held at Aseeb Farm in Buraidah from April 29-31, 2025, to support farmers and the culinary sector by promoting local crops, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

The market will feature platforms displaying Qassim's well-known crops, including agricultural seedlings, dates, vegetables and leafy greens.

There will also be a section for families to present popular regional dishes and beverages made from local produce.

Visitors can enjoy various activities, including live music and children's events such as face painting. SPA Riyadh

Humanitarian mission

Saudi project clears 720 Houthi mines in Yemen

Members of Saudi Arabia's Project Masam removed 720 explosive devices from various regions of Yemen last week.

The total included three anti-personnel mines, 56 anti-tank mines, 647 unexploded ordnances and 14 explosive devices, according to a report.

Ousama Al-Gosaibi, the initiative's managing director, said a total of 454,688 mines had been cleared since its inception in 2018.

The explosives were planted indiscriminately and posed a threat to civilians, including children, women and the elderly. The demining operations took place in Marib, Aden, Jouf, Shabwa, Taiz, Hodeidah, Lahij, Sanaa, Al-Bayda, Al-Dhale and Saada.

Teams are tasked with clearing villages, roads and schools to facilitate safe movement for civilians and the delivery of aid. SPA Riyadh

News Saudi Arabia

CONTEMPORARY TWIST

Saudi calligraffiti artist rewrites tradition using bold strokes

Ahmed Al-Sulaimani's works are shining a light on the rich cultural heritage of the Kingdom

Rahaf Jambi Riyadh

Saudi artist Ahmed Al-Sulaimani is redefining the boundaries of traditional art forms by blending Arabic calligraphy and graffiti-inspired techniques.

The Riyadh-based artist's journey into the realm of calligraffiti began during an Arabic calligraphy course in school where he discovered his passion for the intricate art.

Inspired by the expressive potential of the written word, Al-Sulaimani began experimenting, blending this ancient art form with bold and dynamic graffiti.

"Calligraffiti is a fusion of Arabic calligraphy and graffiti art," Al-Sulaimani told Arab News. "While graffiti typically uses the English language and letters, calligraffiti combines Arabic calligraphy with graffiti techniques. I form Arabic letters using graffiti-inspired styles and methods."

This approach has not only captured the attention of art enthusiasts but has also opened doors to remarkable opportunities, including a mural collaboration with Jeddah municipality that marked his first foray into large-scale public art.

"This project allowed me to showcase my skills in integrating Arabic calligraphy into large-scale murals," he said. "It caught the attention of many and inspired me to continue exploring the use of Arabic calligraphy in public art."

Following that project, the ministry selected Al-Sulaimani to design and produce large-scale murals in 10 cities across the Kingdom, including on bridges, towers, and public spaces.



I aim to bring this unique art form to the forefront and showcase the richness and versatility of the Arabic language.

Ahmed Al-Sulaimani
Saudi artist

Inspired by the expressive potential of the written word, Ahmed Al-Sulaimani began experimenting, blending calligraphy with bold and dynamic graffiti.
AN photo by Huda Bashatah

The pinnacle of his achievements, however, came with the opportunity to design Arabic signage for the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. Tasked with creating towering structures featuring Qur'anic phrases, Al-Sulaimani's work brought the beauty of the Arabic language to the global stage.

"The towers, some reaching 40 meters in height, featured Qur'anic phrases that

The Riyadh-based artist designed Arabic signage for the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.
Instagram/asofficial_...

emphasized the diversity of the human experience," he added.

Beyond his mural work, Al-Sulaimani has also shared his expertise with international audiences. He has facilitated workshops teaching Arabic calligraphy to Harvard students visiting Saudi Arabia, introducing the art form to those unfamiliar with the Arabic language.

"I aim to bring this unique art form to the forefront and showcase the richness and versatility of the Arabic language," he noted.

He is also working on launching his own Arabic font

HIGH LIGHT

Ahmed Al-Sulaimani's projects include a mural collaboration with Jeddah municipality that marked his first foray into large-scale public art.

that will "combine elements from various calligraphic styles" and reflect "a distinct Saudi identity."

The artist said: "This project is a reflection of my desire to create a font that is uniquely representative of the Saudi culture. The font will be out by the end of this year and will be used digitally as well."

Al-Sulaimani noted that his works are more than just an artistic endeavor; they are a way to share the beauty and depth of Islamic culture with the world. His calligraffiti is infused with Qur'anic verses and Islamic themes that encourage viewers

to explore the meaning behind the words.

Despite the challenges he has faced, including the reluctance of established artists to mentor beginners and misconceptions about the legitimacy of his approach, Al-Sulaimani remains undeterred. He has found creative ways to overcome these obstacles, including inventing his own tools and techniques.

With unwavering dedication and innovative spirit, the Saudi artist is shining a bright light on the rich cultural heritage of the Kingdom and leaving a meaningful mark on the world of contemporary art.

TRADITIONAL CRAFT

Najran's leather artisans preserve cultural heritage

Arab News Riyadh

In the heart of Saudi Arabia's Najran region, the ancient art of leather crafting, a symbol of local cultural heritage, is experiencing a renaissance.

Each piece of leather tells a unique story of art and industry, passed down through generations of Saudi artisans.

This traditional industry is finding new life under Saudi Vision 2030, contributing to the development of manufacturing techniques and product diversification, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

Leather products include footwear, bags, accessories, clothing, furniture and car

accessories. These locally made items, known for their durability, quality and Saudi aesthetics, are popular both within the region and beyond.

In an interview with the SPA, Salem bin Ahmed, a leather craftsman, outlined the meticulous process of transforming animal hides from cattle, camels, sheep and goats into durable, flexible leather. The process involves cleaning and hair removal, pickling, tanning, drying and stretching, and finally, cutting, he said.

Ahmed added that several traditional leather products remain in use today, such as the mezab, a shoulder carry for



infants; masbat, a leather belt worn around the waist; and zamalah, a large container for storing personal items.

Modern products like fashionable bags and accessories are



Each piece of leather tells a unique story of art and industry, passed down through generations of Saudi artisans.
SPA

now part of the leather repertoire, blending tradition with contemporary design.

Maha Al-Saeed, head of the Lar Association for Productive Families in Najran, told the SPA that traditional industries in Najran represent promising opportunities for community members. "This aligns with the country's direction to promote traditional industries as national cultural heritage," she said.

The Ministry of Culture supports artisans through specialized training programs and initiatives, teaching necessary skills for leather-making and other traditional crafts, with financial support provided

in collaboration with the Social Development Bank.

Al-Saeed added that earlier this year, the association conducted a training program on leather manufacturing.

Trainees learned about key leather types, including cattle and goat hides, and acquired basic skills in leather crafting such as proper cutting, sewing, tailoring and embossing techniques.

The program also covered artistic skills like burning and drawing on leather to create attractive products, incorporating Najran's heritage by adding engravings, drawings, and depictions of historical and heritage sites on leather pieces.

DIPLOMACY

Ethiopia-Somalia to hold new talks on Monday

Discussion scheduled to start next month brought forward, Turkish Foreign Ministry says

AFP Istanbul

Horn of Africa rivals Somalia and Ethiopia will start a new series of talks in Ankara on Monday to ease tension, Turkey's Foreign Ministry said.

The ministry said in a statement that talks scheduled to start on Sept. 2 had been brought forward.

The talks aim to find a way to give Ethiopia access to international waters through Somalia

without upsetting its territorial sovereignty.

Since Eritrea's secession in 1991, Ethiopia has been the most populous country in the world without direct access to the sea.

Foreign ministers from the neighbors first met in Ankara on July 1, with Turkey's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan acting as mediator.

Fidan went to Ethiopia on Aug. 3 to meet its leaders.

The ministry said there have since been contacts with

FASTFACT

The talks aim to find a way to give Ethiopia access to international waters through Somalia without upsetting its territorial sovereignty.



Somalia "at the highest level."

It was not immediately known who would take part in Monday's talks on what the Turkish ministry called "the needs, worries, and approaches of the two countries."

Ethiopia made an accord in January with Somaliland, unilaterally breaking away from Somalia.

Ethiopia gained access to the sea but

recognized the territory's independence, setting off a new crisis with its neighbor.

The two countries, which have fought two wars in the past century, agreed in March to resolve their quarrel.

However, "indirect negotiations" have not produced a result, the Turkish ministry said, acknowledging "increasing tensions in the region."

Turkiye said it had secured support from countries in the region for its mediation efforts.

KEY ROLE

Iran leader picks pragmatist as top diplomat in proposed Cabinet

Reuters Tehran

Iran's new president presented his Cabinet to parliament on Sunday for a vote of confidence, state media reported, proposing seasoned, pragmatic diplomat Abbas Araqchi as foreign minister at a time of heightened regional tensions.

President Masoud Pezeshkian is shaping his Cabinet at a time of an increased risk of escalation of the conflict in Gaza into a broader regional war after the recent killings of Hamas' leader Ismail Haniyeh in Iran and of Hezbollah military commander Fouad Shukur in Beirut drew threats of retaliation against Israel.

Following the death of hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash in May, Pezeshkian won a snap election last month by promising to improve ties with the world, promote a pragmatic foreign policy, and ease social restrictions at home.

Pezeshkian's proposed Cabinet lineup requires lawmakers' approval, and parliament speaker Mohammed Baqer Qalibaf said that

RUSSIAN CONNECTION

Abbas, Putin to discuss Palestinian crisis

AFP Moscow

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas will visit Moscow to discuss the Gaza war with Russian President Vladimir Putin, a Palestinian envoy said.

Russia's TASS news agency cited the Palestinian ambassador in Moscow as saying Abbas will arrive on Monday and meet Putin on Tuesday.

Abbas heads the Fatah Palestinian movement, a rival to Hamas.

Ambassador Abdel Hafiz Nofal said the two leaders would discuss events in Gaza since the Oct. 7 attacks on Israel.

"They will discuss Russia's role and what can be done."

He added: "We have a very difficult situation, and Russia is a country that is close to us. We need to consult each other."

Moscow, for years, tried to balance relations with all major players in the Middle East — including Israel and the Palestinians.

But since the Israel-Hamas war and Russia's offensive on Ukraine, Putin has moved closer to Hamas and Iran.

The Kremlin has repeatedly criticized Israel's response to the Oct. 7 attacks and called for restraint.

Also on Sunday, Israeli emergency services and the army said a civilian was killed



Cars await passage at the Tayasir checkpoint in the West Bank on Sunday. Israel closed it following a shooting attack in the Jordan Valley area. AFP

and another wounded in a shooting in the occupied West Bank.

Medical teams "pronounced a man in his 20s dead" while a 33-year-old man was evacuated by helicopter "with gunshot wounds

to his lower limbs," an emergency services statement said.

The army said the dead man was an Israeli civilian.

"Terrorists opened fire from a passing vehicle at a number of vehicles in the area," an army

statement said.

"As a result of the attack, an Israeli civilian was killed, and an additional Israeli civilian was injured and is currently receiving treatment from medical teams.

"Soldiers have begun pursuing the terrorists, blocking routes and conducting thorough searches in the area."

The attack took place in the Jordan Valley in the northern West Bank.

SPEEDREAD

Abbas Araqchi, 61, who was Iran's ambassador to several countries, including Japan, played a key role in negotiating Tehran's 2015 nuclear agreement with six world powers.

parliamentary commissions would start reviewing his candidates on Monday.

Araqchi, 61, who was Iran's ambassador to several countries, including Japan, played a key role in negotiating Tehran's 2015 nuclear agreement with six world powers, which then-US President Donald Trump exited in 2018 and re-imposed sanctions on Iran.

Araqchi later led Iran's negotiators during multilateral efforts — ultimately unsuccessful — to revive the pact via indirect diplomacy with Washington before he was replaced by hard-line Ali Bagheri Kani in 2021.

The president's powers are limited in Iran by those of the Supreme Leader, who is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, appoints the head of the judiciary, and has the last say on major policies.

Tensions between Iran and the West have increased over Tehran's fast-advancing nuclear program and its threats to "harshly punish" Israel over the assassination of Haniyeh.

Tehran and Hamas accuse Israel of carrying it out, though it has not claimed or denied responsibility for the killing.

Separately, Iran's president nominated Mohsen Paknezhad as oil minister, who has served as deputy oil minister overseeing hydrocarbon resources between 2018 and 2021.

Pezeshkian has also nominated Farzaneh Sadeq as the road and transportation minister.

ENDORSEMENT

Tunisia's president among three cleared to run in election

Reuters Tunis

Tunisia's electoral commission said it had preliminarily accepted only three presidential candidates, including incumbent Kais Saied, amid widespread criticism of what the opposition says are moves to exclude serious contenders.

The commission said it had accepted the candidacies of Saied and Zouhair Magzhaoui, who is seen as close to Saied, and Ayachi

Zammel for the Oct. 6 election while rejecting 14 others.

Zammel is the head of the Azimoun Party and has not previously been regarded as an influential politician.

Prominent politicians, including Mondher Znaidi, Imed Daimi, Abdel Latif Mekki, Karim Gharbi, Safi Said, Kamel Akrouf, and Nizar Chaari, said the Interior Ministry refused to provide them with the criminal record details required by the commission as a

new condition to run.

They accused the authorities of seeking to return Tunisia to the years of dictatorship and sham elections.

The head of the commission, Farouk Bouasker, said that the candidates were rejected due to a lack of citizens' endorsements and not because they did not have a criminal record card.

Tunisian opposition parties and human rights groups have accused the authorities of using

"arbitrary restrictions" and intimidation to ensure the re-election of Saied.

A Tunisian court this month sentenced four potential presidential election candidates to eight months in prison and banned them from running for office on a charge of vote buying.

One potential candidate, Safi Said, said on Friday that he had withdrawn from the race because he refused to participate in what he called a "one-man show."

News Middle East

OUTRAGE

Indonesia, Malaysia urge UN to unite against Israel after latest Gaza massacre

Israel has killed at least 274 people in string of attacks on schools in Gaza since July, UN says

Sheany Yasuko Lai Jakarta

Indonesia and Malaysia have called on the UN to unite against Tel Aviv to stop the mass killing of civilians in Gaza, after the latest Israeli attack on a school — at least the 21st in the past 40 days — left more than 100 people dead.

At least three Israeli missiles struck the Al-Tabin school in Gaza City — which was sheltering displaced Palestinians — in the early hours of Saturday, targeting people performing dawn prayers at a mosque inside the educational facility.

Early reports citing paramedics and witnesses said that identification of the victims was impossible as “bodies were ripped to pieces” in the attack.

Following the massacre, Indonesia and Malaysia, which are vocal supporters of Palestine and have been critical of Israel since the beginning of its invasion of Gaza in October, called on the international community to hold Tel Aviv accountable.

“The international community should no longer tolerate and accept the belligerence of Israel,” the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement on Sunday.

“Malaysia continues to call for



Displaced Palestinians make their way as they flee Hamad City following an Israeli evacuation order in Khan Younis in the Gaza Strip on Sunday. Reuters

Israel's allies to compel Israel to immediately stop the killings of innocent Palestinians, and to stop providing Israel with the tools to continue this genocide. An immediate, urgent and decisive action by the UN Security Council

is needed to enforce a permanent ceasefire.”

Malaysia said that Israel has shown “that it has no desire for peace” and urged other Muslim countries under the 57-member Organization of Islamic

Cooperation to come together and work with UN member states to demand Tel Aviv comply with the UN Security Council resolution passed in June, which called for a ceasefire in Gaza.

Israel's ground and air attacks

over more than 300 days have killed almost 40,000 Palestinian citizens in the besieged strip, according to official estimates, though a study published in the Lancet journal last month estimated that the actual death

toll could exceed 186,000.

Israel's airstrike on Saturday has sparked a new wave of international condemnation, with the UN Human Rights Office saying that it was at least the 21st attack on schools-turned-shelters that it has recorded since July 4. The strikes have killed at least 274 Palestinians in total, including women and children, the agency added.

Israel has defended its latest operation and claimed that the school was a “command and

The international community should no longer tolerate and accept the belligerence of Israel.

control center” that “served as a hideout for Hamas terrorists and commanders.”

Indonesia has also joined growing calls for the UN Security Council to “immediately conduct a comprehensive investigation” into the Al-Tabin school massacre.

“Indonesia also calls upon the international community to unite in stopping the crimes against humanity and genocide committed by Israel,” the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

“Israel must be held accountable for all these crimes, and all forms of impunity must be brought to an end.”

SECURITY

Jordan ‘will not be drawn into Gaza conflict,’ King Abdullah tells US

Arab News Amman

King Abdullah told a delegation of US Congressional aides on Sunday at Al-Husseiniya Palace that Jordan will not be drawn into the ongoing Gaza conflict and will prioritize the safety of its citizens.

While reaffirming Jordan's commitment to regional stability, King Abdullah also called for urgent efforts to de-escalate tensions and secure an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

He warned that the conflict poses a significant threat to the region and urged intensified international efforts to prevent it from escalating into a broader war.

He highlighted the dangers of extremist settler attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank and violations at Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

He reiterated the need for a political solution based on the two-state framework as the only path to lasting peace and security for Palestinians and Israelis.

King Abdullah also stressed the importance of continued support for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees to ensure it



Smoke billows following Israeli bombardment in the central Gaza Strip. AFP

BACKGROUND

The US delegation acknowledged Jordan's crucial role in promoting peace and stability in the region.

can fulfill its humanitarian mission.

The meeting also covered opportunities to strengthen US-Jordan relations, with King Abdullah expressing gratitude for the

continued American support.

The US delegation, in turn, acknowledged Jordan's crucial role in promoting peace and stability in the region under the King Abdullah's leadership.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Safadi; Dr. Jafar Hassan, the director of the King's Office; and Jordan's ambassador to Washington, Dima Kawar.

Safadi said on Saturday that

Jordan would not be a battlefield for Iran or Israel.

“We will not be a battlefield for Iran or Israel. We informed the Iranians and the Israelis that we will not allow anyone to violate our airspace and risk the safety of our citizens,” the minister said in an interview with Al Arabiya TV.

“We will intercept anything that passes through our airspace or think that it constitutes a threat to us or our citizens.”

In April, Jordan, which lies between Iran and Israel, said it intercepted flying objects that entered its airspace as Tehran launched explosive drones and fired missiles at Israel in the first direct retaliatory attack of its kind.

After that attack, which was launched in retaliation for a suspected Israeli strike on Iran's embassy compound in Syria, Jordanian, Iraqi and Turkish officials each said Iran had provided them with some early warning of its action.

Iran has repeatedly vowed to “punish” Israel since the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, the political leader of Hamas, in Tehran on July 31.

CONFLICT

5 Iran-backed fighters killed in drone strike near the Iraqi border

AFP Beirut

Five Iran-backed fighters were killed on Sunday in a drone strike in Syria's east, near the Iraqi border, a war monitor said, adding it was not clear yet who was behind the attack.

“Five pro-Iranian fighters were killed, and others were injured, some severely ... after an unknown drone targeted the military vehicle they were in ... near the Syrian-Iraqi border,” said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The strike occurred in Syria's eastern Deir Ezzor province, where Iran wields significant influence and which is regularly targeted by Israel and the US, according to the Britain-based monitor with a network of sources inside Syria.

In June, three pro-Iran fighters, including at least two Iraqis, were killed in an airstrike in eastern Syria near the Iraqi border, the Observatory had reported at the time.

Since the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011, Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes,

mainly targeting army positions and Iran-backed fighters, including from Lebanon's Hezbollah group.

Israel rarely comments on individual strikes in Syria.

Iran-backed groups, including Lebanon's Hezbollah movement, have bolstered President Bashar Assad's forces during Syria's civil war.

HIGHLIGHTS

● The strike occurred in Syria's eastern Deir Ezzor province, where Iran wields significant influence and which is regularly targeted by Israel and the US.

● In June, three pro-Iran fighters, including at least two Iraqis, were killed in an airstrike in eastern Syria near the Iraqi border.

The Syrian government's brutal suppression of a 2011 uprising triggered the conflict that has killed more than half a million people and drawn in foreign armies and extremists.

STUDENT-LED MOVEMENT

Ousted Bangladeshi PM blames US for her removal from power

Sheikh Hasina says Washington wanted control of country's island

Sanjay Kumar New Delhi

Bangladesh's ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who is currently taking refuge in India, has accused the US of playing a role in her removal from power as she promised a prompt return to Dhaka.

Hasina was forced to resign and fled to neighboring India on Aug. 5, following weeks of nationwide demonstrations and a deadly crackdown on protesters, which emboldened a student-led movement to oust her regime after 15 years of uninterrupted rule.

The 76-year-old said Washington was to blame for her ouster in a message issued for supporters of her Awami League party, which appears to be her first statement since she left Dhaka.

"I resigned, so that I did not have to see the procession of dead bodies. They wanted to come to power over the dead bodies of students, but I did not allow it. I resigned from the premiership. I could have remained in power if I had surrendered the sovereignty



Sheikh Hasina, 76, was one of the world's longest-ruling female leaders. AFP

of Saint Martin Island and allowed America to hold sway over the Bay of Bengal," she said in a statement, which was first reported by India's English-language daily The Economic Times.

"I beseech the people of my land, 'Please do not be manipulated by radicals.'"

Hasina was referring to St. Martin's Island, Bangladesh's sole coral reef island located in the northeastern part of the Bay of Bengal, alluding to years-old rumors claiming that the US was seeking control over the island to turn it into a military airbase.

The US Embassy in Dhaka did not immediately respond to Arab News' request for comment on Sunday.

"If I had remained in the country, more lives would have been lost, more resources would have been destroyed. I made the extremely difficult decision to exit. I became your leader because you chose me, you were my strength," Hasina said.

"With the grace of almighty Allah, I will return soon. The Awami League has stood up again and again. I shall forever pray for the future of Bangladesh, the nation which my great father strived for. The country for which my father and family gave their lives."

Hasina, 76, was one of the world's longest-ruling female leaders and has played a pivotal role in Bangladesh's politics, a

nation of about 170 million people that declared its independence in 1971.

She is the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the country's charismatic founding leader, who was killed in 1975 in a military coup when Hasina was 28. She served as prime minister from 1996 to 2001 and regained power in 2009.

Under her leadership, Bangladesh became one of the fastest-growing economies in the region, with World Bank estimates showing that more than 25 million people in the country have been lifted out of poverty in the last two decades.

But critics say she has grown increasingly autocratic and called her a threat to the country's democracy, with many saying that the sudden collapse of Hasina's government had reflected a broader discontent against her rule.

The student-led demonstrations that began peacefully in July were against a quota system for government jobs, which was widely criticized for favoring those with connections to the ruling party.

CONTROVERSIAL PROJECT

Lithium protests part of hybrid warfare against Serbia, says president

AP Belgrade

Serbia's president on Sunday accused demonstrators who opposed a lithium mining project in the Balkan country of being part of a Western-backed "hybrid" warfare against his government and vowed to take strong legal action against those protesters who have blocked railway and road traffic in the capital a day earlier.

In one of the biggest protests in recent years, tens of thousands took to the streets in the capital, Belgrade, Saturday against lithium mining in Serbia, despite officials' warnings of their alleged plot to unseat populist President Aleksandar Vucic and his government.

Some of the protesters later blocked tracks at two railway stations in the city, and briefly stopped traffic on a major highway. Riot police early Sunday pushed them out of the railway stations with their riot shields.

Interior Minister Ivica Dacic said 14 people have been brought in for questioning. Police are working to identify all the perpetrators who will face charges, he said.

Vucic told reporters that



SPEED READ

This plan against lithium mining was scrapped in 2022 after large demonstrations were held that included the blocking of key bridges and roads.

Tens of thousands of Serbians took to streets in Belgrade on Saturday against lithium mining in Serbia. Reuters

although the main protest was done democratically, the blockage of traffic on the highway amounted to "terror of the minority over the majority."

"It is part of the hybrid approach" designed to topple the government, Vucic told reporters. "We knew everything in detail.

You think you have surprised someone ... we have always been restrained, without violence we ensured order in the country, without a problem."

Vucic said last week he had been tipped off by Russian intelligence services that a "mass unrest and a coup" were being prepared

in Serbia by unspecified Western powers that wish to oust him from power.

Government officials and state-controlled media have launched a major campaign against the Saturday rally, comparing it to the Maidan uprising in Ukraine's capital, Kyiv.

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

South China Sea Actions of China air force reckless, says Philippines

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Sunday condemned Chinese air force actions in waters of the South China Sea claimed by both countries, calling the actions "unjustified, illegal and reckless."

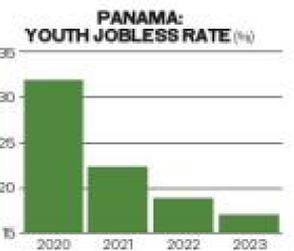
Manila and Beijing accused each other on Saturday of disrupting their militaries' operations around the Scarborough Shoal in the first incident since Marcos took office in 2022 in which the Philippines has complained of dangerous actions by Chinese aircraft, as opposed to navy or coast guard vessels. Reuters

War Zelenskyy admits incursion in Russia's Kursk

Days after Ukraine began a surprise military incursion into Russia's Kursk border region, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy broke the government's silence on it late Saturday by indirectly acknowledging ongoing military actions to "push the war out into the aggressor's territory" in his nightly address.

Ukraine's incursion into Russia continued for a sixth day Sunday. It's the largest such attack since the Moscow launched its full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022 and is unprecedented for its use of Ukrainian military units on Russian soil. AP

The Day's FIGURES



Source: Statista

What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

The Limits of Expertise

R. KEY DISMUKES, BENJAMIN A. BERMAN, LOUKIA LOUKOPOULOS

"The Limits of Expertise" reports a study of 19 major plane accidents in which authorities found crew error to be a causal factor.

The book examines how competing task demands, ambiguity and organizational pressures interact with cognitive processes to make all experts vulnerable to characteristic

forms of error, according to a review on goodreads.com.

The book identifies themes cutting across the accidents, discusses the role of chance, criticizes simplistic concepts of causality of accidents,

and suggests ways to reduce vulnerability to these catastrophes.

The authors' complementary experience allowed a unique approach to the research.



Venezuelan politics Maduro urged to end 'violence and persecution'

Venezuela's opposition candidate has called for President Nicolas Maduro to end "violence and persecution," hours after the country's high court said its upcoming ruling on the disputed July 28 election cannot be appealed.

Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia, who claims to have won the election by a wide margin, posted a social media video demanding Maduro allow free political expression. AFP

Tragedy in Brazil Experts work to identify dead in plane crash

Families of victims of an airliner crash in Brazil are gathering Sunday at a morgue and hotels in Sao Paulo as forensics experts work to identify the remains of the 62 people killed in the accident.

Local authorities said the bodies of the pilot, Danilo Santos Romano, and his co-pilot, Humberto de Campos Alencar e Silva, were the first to be identified. Brazilian media said another four people were identified at the Sao Paulo morgue. AP

أَقَاتِنُ كُلَّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ
وَيَقْتُلُنِي الْفِرَاقُ بِلَا قِتَالٍ
(عنترة بن شداد)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

I can fight every tough giant, but separation kills me without a fight.

Antara bin Shaddad

(A pre-Islamic Arab knight and poet)

Opinion

'Damned if you do, damned if you don't' haunts Hezbollah

DR. DANIA KOLEILAT KHATIB

Since Oct. 7 Hezbollah has lost many of its operational leaders to Israeli strikes. One of the most recent targets was Fouad Shukur, a senior military leader of the group. He was designated a terrorist by the US State Department, which put a \$5 million bounty on his head in 2017. On July 30, Shukur died in an Israeli attack in Beirut. The killing of such a senior commander leaves Hezbollah's leadership facing a dilemma over whether to respond or not. In either case, they will face grave consequences.

Hassan Nasrallah, the group's leader, said in a televised address last Thursday that the response will come when it suits them, and when they find a proper target opportunity. Social media has been full of anecdotes mocking the group and also Iran. Unlike Iran, however, Hezbollah faces not only external enemies, but also internal threats. The group cannot afford to show weakness to its domestic enemies. Thus a response is all but imperative. However, in Tehran, the situation

might be looked at differently. Ayman Safadi, Jordan's foreign minister, has been shuttling around the region trying to find a formula for de-escalation. What is proposed now is that Iran gives up on its promise to avenge the killing of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in return for a ceasefire in Gaza. On Aug. 8, US President Joe Biden, Egyptian leader Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, and Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani issued a joint statement calling for a truce, and for an end to the suffering of the people of Gaza and the families of the hostages.

A Lebanese news website said that Hezbollah will avenge the killing of its senior military leader regardless of the mediators' efforts. Hezbollah needs to re-establish deterrence. There is nothing that can stop Israel from continuing its assassinations in the wake of Oct. 7. Some of these killings were likely based on intelligence gathered through its networks of informers over the years. No one knows who they are still after. Hezbollah's main aim will be to stop the string of assassinations. Can that be



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done without reestablishing deterrence, and making Israel understand that for each killing it will pay a heavy price?

However, if Hezbollah does respond, it will also face grave consequences. The problem with war is that it has many unknown unknowns. Hezbollah does not know how Israel will respond. The conflict can quickly cross the established rules of engagement. Will Israel turn Lebanon into Gaza? Will a ceasefire allow the group a graceful exit? Possibly, but a truce does not guarantee that Israel will halt the assassinations, especially since these have been quite successful. Yoav Gallant, Israel's defense minister, has said previously that Lebanon is a separate issue from Gaza. Hence, a ceasefire may not mean that Israel would leave Hezbollah alone.

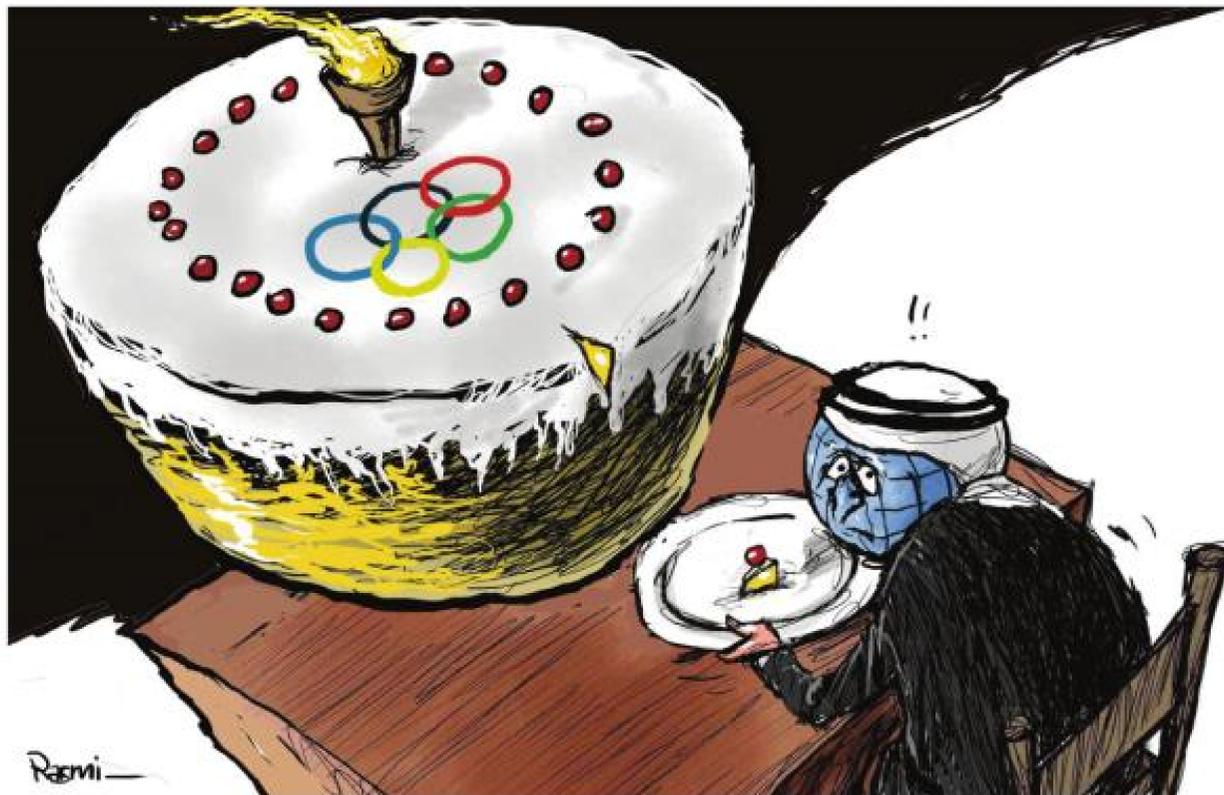
Shukur's killing shows one thing clearly: The group has been infiltrated. Who could have known where the Hezbollah commander would be staying? The information must have come from within a close circle. The group is also technologically inferior to Israel, which is another

sign of weakness. Hezbollah is supposed to be a resistance to Israel, but the latter has been able to hunt it down easily. The group's main objective is to stop the assassinations. How can they do that? If they land a painful blow, it might deter Israel, or encourage it to further hit the group and the country.

The 2006 war may have shown Hezbollah's strength, but the current conflict has revealed its vulnerability. That is a bad message to send to both Israel and its internal enemies. What will it do? Will it offer concessions to its opponent internally in order to create some consensus? Will it offer concessions on the election of a president in return for support for its struggle with Israel? The group does not trust anybody, and it will be difficult to surrender control without trust in other Lebanese factions.

Whatever decision Hezbollah favors, it faces a hard choice. The group will only make concessions when it realizes the current situation is unsustainable. Does it understand this? We still do not know.

The 2006 war may have shown Hezbollah's strength, but the current conflict has revealed its vulnerability



Iran's struggling economy, marked by high inflation and unemployment, cannot sustain a full-scale war

Risk of all-out war grows as Iran, Israel cross red lines

DR. MAJID RAFIZADEH

Following the direct retaliatory attacks between Israel and Iran in April, the long-standing practice of engaging in indirect conflict through proxies and shadow wars has apparently come to an end. This significant shift toward direct confrontation heightens the risk of an all-out war. As the frequency of these direct attacks increases, it underscores the escalating tensions and the potential for broader conflict.

Iran has communicated its intent to strike Israel, according to Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz. This revelation comes amid intense diplomatic efforts to prevent further military escalation that could trigger a direct war between Iran and Israel. Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto conveyed this message to Katz after receiving it from Ali Bagheri, Iran's acting foreign minister. Katz emphasized the importance of the international community holding Iran accountable for any aggressive actions. The involvement of Hungary as an

intermediary highlights the broader international implications of this conflict.

It is important to point out that understanding the underlying objectives of both Israel and Iran is crucial. Some analysts suggest that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu might feel emboldened following US President Joe Biden's decision not to seek reelection. Previously, Biden had urged Israeli leaders to avoid actions that could lead to a wider regional war. For instance, after Iran launched missile and drone attacks that were largely intercepted by the US, Biden advised Netanyahu to consider the situation a victory and refrain from retaliating, thereby preventing further escalation. This restraint was seen as a pragmatic approach to maintaining regional stability. However, with Biden stepping down, Netanyahu may perceive an opportunity to adopt a more aggressive stance, believing that the absence of direct US pressure provides a strategic advantage to address long-standing security concerns with Iran more forcefully.

Some may argue that Netanyahu may



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be seeking a direct confrontation with Iran rather than continuing to engage its proxies, such as Hezbollah and the Houthis. If this is the case, it could potentially draw the US into the conflict, despite its reluctance to engage in another Middle Eastern war. The dynamics of such a direct confrontation would significantly alter the geopolitical landscape, compelling the US to reassess its strategic priorities and commitments in the region. This potential shift from proxy warfare to direct engagement marks a critical juncture in Israeli defense policy as well, and has profound implications for regional stability and international security.

From the perspective of the Iranian government, retaliatory strikes against Israel could be a means to maintaining its standing after the killing of a Hamas leader in Tehran. Iran aims to project strength to its conservative base and regional allies, asserting its influence on both the regional and global stages. The loss of such a high-profile ally within its borders

represents a significant blow to Iran's prestige. Responding forcefully is seen as a necessary action to reaffirm its position as a dominant regional power, and to deter future acts against its interests.

However, it is worth noting that Iran likely seeks to avoid an all-out war with Israel for several reasons. Such a conflict would inevitably involve the US, significantly altering the military balance of power. Iran's military capabilities would be no match for the combined forces of the US and Israel.

In addition, Iran's struggling economy, marked by high inflation and unemployment, cannot sustain a full-scale war. The economic toll of extended military engagement would be devastating, further weakening an already vulnerable economy.

In summary, the current situation is perilous, with former red lines between Iran and Israel having been crossed. This increases the likelihood of an inevitable all-out war, contingent on the actions and reactions of both nations. The potential for broader regional conflict looms large.

Opinion

French shift highlights Morocco's growing role in Africa

ZAID M. BELBAGI



France's recent recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara is a seismic development in one of the continent's longest-running conflicts. Last week, in a letter addressed to Moroccan King Mohammed VI, French President Emmanuel Macron officially recognized that the "present and future of Western Sahara fall within the framework of Moroccan sovereignty." In highlighting that the 2007 Moroccan proposal for the autonomy of Western Sahara is the "only basis" to resolve the conflict, the French leader completely reordered the geopolitics of the region, strengthening France's hand, while recognizing the new realities on the ground.

Following eight coups in two years that have resulted in a sustained decline in French influence, the news, though no doubt a significant diplomatic victory for Morocco, also reestablished the importance of France in its historical area of interest. Morocco has maintained that it has a legitimate claim on Western Sahara since the latter gained independence from Spain in 1975. The territory, which is spread over

250,000 sq. km, with more than 1,000 km of strategically important Atlantic coast, is of great historical importance to Morocco. Located in the country's south, it fell under the remit of various Moroccan kingdoms, from the Almoravids to the Saadian dynasty. Various Saharan tribes, such as the Reguibat, the Tekna and the Oulad Delim, pledged allegiance to successive Moroccan sultans, given their cooperation in matters of politics, spirituality, and trans-Saharan trade.

The territory eventually came under Spanish and French control in the late 19th century. Since the departure of European powers from the Maghreb in the 20th century, modern-day Morocco has asserted its claim over the territory, and held France and Spain responsible for the border discrepancies in the region. France's recognition of this today is, therefore, a seminal acceptance of its historical responsibility. Following six decades of reticence on the matter, the French move is equally an acknowledgement of Morocco's tactical importance for France given the former's geostrategic location as a neighbor of Europe and the gateway to Africa. Amid the wider collapse of strategic influence

the border discrepancies in the region. France's recognition of this today is, therefore, a seminal acceptance of its historical responsibility. Following six decades of reticence on the matter, the French move is equally an acknowledgement of Morocco's tactical importance for France given the former's geostrategic location as a neighbor of Europe and the gateway to Africa. Amid the wider collapse of strategic influence

in the region, its bold reentrance into the Saharan issue has emboldened France at a time of diplomatic decay.

Joining the US, Spain, and Israel in recognizing Morocco's claim is a bid by France to coordinate its North Africa foreign policy with that of its Western allies. The UK and Germany, too, have become increasingly vocal about the validity of Morocco's autonomy plan, indicating imminent diplomatic support for the Kingdom. Morocco's growing independence in economic and foreign policies has been part of a wider multilateralism building support among the international community independent of France. Moroccan rejection of French aid following a devastating earthquake in the Atlas Mountains last October was a bold display of the country's ability to rely on itself and other international partners. Having put diplomatic relations between the two capitals on hold, Morocco illustrated its importance to France in a region of military rule where France's influence has dramatically decreased. The Saharan decision played into this situation, providing a geopolitical portal for France to remain relevant.

After decades of shuffling between its two former colonies, Morocco and Algeria, France has decisively supported the former. France's traditional regional policies have led to a zero-sum game, with support for one translating into opposition toward the other. Thus, despite the importance of Algerian gas exports to France owing to the war in Ukraine, France's Saharan decision is reflective of Morocco's

growing role in Africa and internationally. Strong diplomatic relations with Morocco are crucial at a time when France is faced with the forced evacuation of French troops and diplomats elsewhere in the region. In this context, France recognizes the value of political and economic stability in Morocco as a means to securing its own strategic and economic future in the region.

While the UN and the broader international community are yet to officially recognize Morocco's claim, French recognition is a notable achievement for Morocco given the recent rift in diplomatic relations. France's decision shows that it appreciates the integral role of Morocco in working toward a constructive solution for Western Sahara.

French recognition is a notable achievement for Morocco given the recent rift in diplomatic relations

While the UN is yet to recognize Morocco's claim, French recognition is a notable achievement for Morocco

India shapes two strategic 'triangles' to manage challenges

TALMIZ AHMAD



Just over two months after the general elections that enabled Prime Minister Narendra Modi to form his third government in New Delhi, India is facing numerous foreign policy challenges in its strategic space that embraces Eurasia and the Indian Ocean. In its immediate neighborhood, it has had to offer refuge to Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, its closest friend and ally in South Asia.

A month earlier, Modi had affirmed India's close ties with Russia with a high-profile visit to Moscow, even as a NATO summit was taking place in Washington. Meanwhile, S. Jaishankar, India's external affairs minister, has met his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, and visited Mauritius, and will be in the Maldives in mid-August to affirm India's crucial interests in the Indian Ocean.

The challenges posed by China to India's strategic interests will remain the principal driver of New Delhi's foreign policy. Besides the continuing military confrontation at the undemarcated 3,400-km Sino-Indian border, India views with concern China's expanding influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean. Thus, India's security dilemma has given rise to two triangular engagements: the India-China-US triangle

and the India-China-Russia triangle.

Given the asymmetry in its power equations with China, India has sought to build its domestic capacity by expanding defense, economic, and technological ties with the US, besides joining certain US-sponsored regional groupings. Despite these collaborations, India continues to uphold "strategic autonomy" — the right to reject externally sponsored security alignments, and assert independent decision-making and action in the national interest. Thus, India has helped dilute the Quad as a security coalition directed at China, and focus on areas of long-term cooperation, such as technology, health, and cybersecurity.

Modi's visit to Moscow in early July exemplifies the importance of the second triangular relationship, one that links India with Russia and China. Russia meets 40 percent of India's defense requirements, particularly in core areas, such as personal weaponry, armor, artillery, naval vessels, and aircraft. India's purchases of discounted Russian oil in 2022-23 were valued at \$67 billion, compared with \$9 billion the previous year, and have made Russia India's fourth-largest trade partner.

These enduring and substantial Indo-Russian ties have been shaped even as

Sino-Russian relations have emerged as a key factor in challenging the US global hegemony. This provides a significant strategic value to the India-China-Russia triangle in that the three partners support the shaping of a new multipolar order in which middle-powers will exercise influence over issues and geographies that are important for their interests.

The Modi government has already signaled that improvement of ties with China will be a priority concern. The present state of bilateral relations displays an important contradiction: While there are deep concerns relating to the confrontation at the border, economic ties are flourishing. China is now India's largest trade partner, with imports in 2022-23 worth almost \$102 billion. The Indian government is also relaxing restrictions on Chinese investments in Indian enterprises, and is supporting participation in China-related supply chains.

Beyond these "triangles," ties with immediate neighbors in South Asia will receive priority attention from the Modi government. These states periodically experience major changes in their own domestic affairs, as has happened recently in Bangladesh, with ties with India usually an important source of domestic discord.

In recent years, there has also been an increase in Chinese influence in these states, particularly through major investments in infrastructure. Jaishankar realistically sees this situation as an expression of "competitive politics," one in which India should garner its own resources to provide effective competition to China.

The Middle East also calls for a fresh approach from the Indian government. India has strategic partnership agreements with most Middle East nations. However, its engagements with them have remained bilateral and transactional. India does not have a collective region-wide approach to the region, and has avoided getting involved in regional disputes or in promoting peace and stability.

In the Middle East, China has important energy and economic stakes, interests that it shares with India. China has also recently emerged as a significant player in the political arena, best exemplified by its promotion of Saudi-Iran reconciliation last year, and the recent convening of a meeting in Beijing of the diverse Palestinian factions to promote their coming together. Despite these important Chinese initiatives, the region remains mired in instability and uncertainty, largely connected with the long-standing Israel-Palestine conflict.

India has sought to build its domestic capacity by expanding defense, economic, and technological ties with the US

India does not have a collective region-wide approach to the region, and has avoided getting involved in regional disputes

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Saudi Research & Media Group

Established in 1987 by
Prince Ahmad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz

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

Founded in 1979 by
Hisham & Muhammad Ali Hafiz

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Faisal J. Abbas

Deputy Editor-in-Chief
Noor Osama Nugall

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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
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The (updated) law reaffirms Saudi Arabia's commitment to creating a welcoming and secure environment for investors.

Khalid Al-Falih
Saudi Investment Minister



Business

INVESTMENT ENVIRONMENT

Kingdom updates law to facilitate foreign investors

Revised legislation integrates investor rights, freedoms into a unified framework

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia has announced a significant overhaul of its investment law as part of its Vision 2030 reform strategy, aiming to strengthen its appeal to international investors.

The revised legislation integrates existing investor rights and freedoms into a unified framework designed to improve transparency and ease of business operations.

The updated law promises enhanced protections for investors, including adherence to the rule of law, fair treatment, and property rights, while ensuring robust safeguards for intellectual property and facilitating smooth fund transfers.

It streamlines the registration process, replacing complex licensing requirements with a simpler system, and introduces new service centers to expedite government transactions and investment procedures.

The update follows a series of pro-investment measures, including the introduction of the Civil Transactions Law, Private Sector Participation Law, Companies Law, Bankruptcy Law, and the creation of Special Economic Zones.

Saudi Investment Minister



The law aims to foster a competitive market environment by promoting fair competition and ensuring equal treatment for investors. File

Khalid Al-Falih said: "The law reaffirms Saudi Arabia's commitment to creating a welcoming and secure environment for investors, driving economic growth, and enhancing the

Kingdom's position as a premier global investment destination."

He added: "The policy direction outlined in Vision 2030 allows investors to invest with certainty and to grow with

confidence at a time when many other markets are experiencing considerable volatility."

The law also aims to foster a competitive market environment by promoting fair

competition and ensuring equal treatment for both domestic and international investors.

It provides access to advanced dispute resolution mechanisms through the Saudi Arbitration

HIGHLIGHT

The updated law promises enhanced protections for investors, including adherence to the rule of law, fair treatment, and property rights, while ensuring robust safeguards for intellectual property and facilitating smooth fund transfers.

Center and other affiliated entities.

Saudi Arabia's investment-friendly policies have already shown significant results, with gross fixed capital formation surging 74 percent to nearly \$300 billion in 2023, and FDI inflows increasing by 158 percent from \$7.46 billion in 2017 to \$19.3 billion in 2023.

"The updated investment law builds on an extensive diversification agenda from an enhanced quality of life offering to investment specific measures such as the establishment of special economic zones," said Al-Falih.

The updated regulations, developed by the Ministry of Investment, will take effect in 2025 and are designed to align with Gulf Cooperation Council and World Trade Organization standards, as well as other international investment agreements.

STOCK MARKET

Saudi benchmark index edges up 0.9% to close at 11,771

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's Tadawul All Share Index rose on Sunday, gaining 104.57 points, or 0.90 percent, to close at 11,771.69.

The total trading turnover of the benchmark index was SR5.09 billion (\$1.35 billion) as 162 of the stocks advanced, while 61 retreated.

The Kingdom's parallel market Nomu slipped 293.95 points, or 1.14 percent, to close at 25,521.34. This comes as 28 stocks advanced, while 39 retreated.

The MSCI Tadawul Index gained 17.22 points, or 1.18 percent, to close at 1,480.07.

Thimar Development Holding Co. led the day's stock performance, with its share price jumping 9.97 percent to SR40.80.

Other notable gainers included

Al-Babtain Power and Telecommunication Co., and Fawaz Abdulaziz Alhokair Co.

The worst performer was Baazeem Trading Co. whose share price dropped by 9.05 percent to SR6.53.

Other notable decliners included Wafrah for Industry and Development Co. and Al Moammar Information Systems Co.

On the announcements front, Fawaz Abdulaziz Alhokair Co., also known as Cenomi Retail, reported its interim financial results for the period ending June 30.

According to a Tadawul statement, the company recorded a net loss of SR67.6 million in the first half of the year, compared to a net profit of SR113.8 million in the same period last year.

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's Riyadh Air has introduced the first bus in its fleet of electric coaches for employee transport, aligning with the Kingdom's Vision 2030 goals to reduce carbon emissions.

The fleet, developed with National Transportation Solutions Co., a division of Petromin Corp., and TAM-Europe, aims to advance digital solutions in public transportation.

This initiative reflects Riyadh Air's commitment to the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, following its recent affiliation with the UN Global Compact in 2024.

The electric buses are expected to improve fuel efficiency and

VISION 2030

Riyadh Air unveils 1st electric bus in push to promote sustainability



This initiative reflects Riyadh Air's commitment to the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Supplied

reduce the number of individual vehicles on Riyadh's roads, contributing to a more sustainable urban environment.

Tony Douglas, CEO of Riyadh Air, said: "Every effort we

make to champion sustainable practices counts in our collective fight against climate change."

He added: "Sustainability is embedded in our DNA and we will reflect this across all Riyadh

Air's operations, from managing fuel efficiency in the sky to reducing carbon emissions on the ground."

The CEO explained that investing in electric coaches is an early initiative to offset the airline's environmental footprint and demonstrate its commitment to leading the aviation industry's global net-zero agenda.

Saudi Arabia is pushing to electrify transportation across the nation as part of its goal to cut carbon dioxide equivalent emissions by 278 million tonnes per year by 2030.

According to the International Energy Agency, private cars and vans accounted for over 25 percent of global oil consumption and around 10 percent of energy-related carbon dioxide emissions in 2022.

Business Saudi Arabia

PERFORMANCE

Saudi Arabia's non-oil activities increase by 2.2% in June

Data shows Kingdom is well on the path to diversify its economy

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's non-oil activities saw a 2.2 percent increase in June compared to the previous month, signaling ongoing growth in the Kingdom's efforts to diversify its economy.

According to the General Authority for Statistics, the Kingdom's Industrial Production Index fell by 1.6 percent in June, a decrease attributed to the oil output reductions agreed upon by OPEC.

The year-on-year comparison showed an even sharper decline, with the IPI dropping 4 percent from June 2023.

GASTAT defines the IPI as an economic indicator that measures changes in the volume of industrial output. It is calculated using data collected from industrial production surveys.

The authority noted an 11.3 percent decline in Saudi Arabia's mining and quarrying activities in June compared to the same period in 2023.

This downturn is attributed to the Kingdom's decision to reduce crude oil production as part of the OPEC+ agreement. In an effort to stabilize the global oil market, Saudi Arabia initially cut its oil output by 500,000 barrels per day in April 2023, with this reduction now extended through December 2024.

"Given the relative importance of the mining and quarrying activity, which accounted for 61.4 percent of the index weight, the trend of the mining and quarrying activity index dominates the overall trend of the industrial production index, followed by the manufacturing industry activity and electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply activities with a relative importance of 35 percent and 2.8 percent, respectively," said GASTAT.



NUMBER

10.2%

The sub-index for electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply activities increased by 10.2 percent in June.

The report further indicated that the sub-index for electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply activities increased by 10.2 percent in June compared to the same month of the previous year.

Additionally, water supply, sewerage, and waste management activities saw a year-on-year rise of 1.7 percent in June.

As Saudi Arabia continues to navigate its economic diversification goals under Vision 2030, the mixed performance in June's industrial production data highlights the complexities of balancing non-oil sector growth with strategic oil production cuts.

The Kingdom's seasonally adjusted real gross domestic product grew by 1.4 percent in the second quarter of 2024 driven by non-oil activities. Reuters/File

While non-oil activities show promising growth, the overall industrial output remains sensitive to global oil market dynamics and production agreements.

The Kingdom's seasonally adjusted real gross domestic product grew by 1.4 percent in the second quarter of 2024, compared to the previous three months, driven by non-oil activities, official data showed.

Strengthening the non-oil sector is crucial for Saudi Arabia as it embarks on an economic diversification journey to reduce its dependence on crude revenues. This transformation is essential for building a more resilient economy that can withstand global oil market fluctuations and ensure sustainable growth for the future.

In March, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Economy and Planning Faisal Al-Ibrahim said that non-oil economic activity contributed 50 percent to the Kingdom's GDP in 2023, the highest level ever.

EXPORTS

KSA records 27% rise in issuance of certificates of origin to exporters

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi exporters saw a more than 27 percent monthly rise in certificates of origin in July, reaching 40,588, according to official figures.

This marked the 15th consecutive month in which the Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources issued over 30,000 certificates to Saudi manufacturers, highlighting the strength of the Kingdom's export sector.

The last time the figure dropped below 30,000 was in April 2023.

A certificate of origin verifies the national origin of exported products. This service is available to industrial businesses, commercial entities, and individuals such as farmers, fishermen, and artisans.

The procedure aligns with the Kingdom's Vision 2030 economic transformation plan, which aims to boost the share of non-oil exports in Saudi Arabia's gross domestic product from 16 percent to 50 percent by the end of the decade.

The increases in certificate of origin issuance underscore the robust expansion of Saudi Arabia's export sector, which is driven by the Kingdom's initiatives to enhance trade across diverse markets.

Saudi Arabia's non-oil exports, including re-exports, experienced a 4.4 percent increase in February compared to the same period in 2023, according to official data.

The General Authority for Statistics reported that the total value of these exports reached SR 21.86 billion (\$5.83 billion), up from SR 20.93 billion in the previous year.

This rise in non-oil shipments was largely driven by an 8.3 percent increase in the exchange of rubber and plastic products, which accounted for 24.1 percent of the total exports.

DEAL

ACWA Power restructures debt, ownership in Turkish affiliate

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi utility giant ACWA Power has restructured debt and ownership in its Turkish affiliate, converting outstanding loans into equity following an agreement with major lenders and minority shareholders.

ACWA Guc, which operates the 950-megawatt combined cycle gas turbine power plant in Kirikkale, Turkey, is partially and indirectly owned by ACWA Power.

The deal involves lenders converting their loans into shares of ACWA Guc based on specific shareholding agreements and conversion terms, according to a statement on the

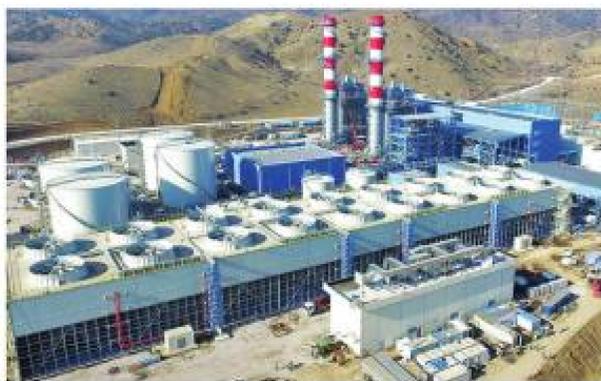
Saudi Stock Exchange.

To facilitate the transition, a wholly owned ACWA Power subsidiary will pay SR496.5 million (\$132.2 million) to the lenders in installments over three years.

Following this, ACWA Power, its subsidiaries, current minority shareholders, and relevant stakeholders have entered into a series of contractual agreements.

Post-deal, ACWA Guc is expected to be free of any commercial debt to third parties and will remain classified as an equity investment for ACWA Power.

The \$1 billion plant in Turkey was launched in November



ACWA Guc, which operates the 950-megawatt combined cycle gas turbine power plant in Kirikkale, Turkey, is partially and indirectly owned by ACWA Power. File

2017 during a major ceremony attended by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Berat Albayrak, the minister of energy and natural resources, among

other senior officials.

The combined cycle power plant has a capacity of 1,000 MW and is capable of meeting 3 percent of Turkey's total electricity demand. It is the first and largest Saudi energy investment in Turkey's power sector.

The Kirikkale Power Plant provides steady and reliable energy to Turkey's national grid and is among the top three most efficient combined cycle gas power plants in the country, significantly contributing to the economy through gas consumption savings.

In a continued drive to streamline its operations and expand its market reach, ACWA Power

also finalized deals in July to sell a 35 percent stake in two subsidiaries to China Southern Power Grid International for SR595.9 million.

In a statement to the Saudi Stock Exchange, the Public Investment Fund-backed company announced the completion of the sale and purchase agreement for its shares in ACWA Power Bash Wind Project Holding Co. and ACWA Power Uzbekistan Wind Project Holding Co.

The restructuring and recent transactions underscore ACWA Power's ongoing strategic efforts to optimize its portfolio and enhance its global presence in the energy sector.

Business News



This surge reflects the increasing momentum in urban development, driven by public and private sector investments. Reuters/File

SECTOR

Qatar's construction sector witnessing robust growth

Gulf country sees 36% rise in building permits issued in July

Arab News Riyadh

Qatar's construction sector is experiencing robust growth, with the nation documenting a 36 percent month-on-month rise in building permits in July.

This surge, highlighted in the latest data from the National Planning Council, reflects the increasing momentum in urban development, driven by public and private sector investments.

Data on building permits and completion certificates is of "particular importance" as it sheds light on the construction sector's performance, which occupies a significant position in the national economy, the body said in the statement.

The uptick in construction activity underscores Qatar's broader economic objectives under the National Vision 2030 — a strategic plan to transform the country into a diversified and sustainable economy.

The permits entailed various types of buildings, with new constructions comprising 36 percent of the total permits.

Residential permits dominated, particularly for villas, which made up 86 percent of new residential permits.

Industrial buildings led the non-residential category with 39 percent, followed by service infrastructure buildings and mosques.

In July, Al-Rayyan municipality led the issuance of building permits, accounting for 26 percent of the total permits, followed by Doha and Al-Da'ayen with 21 percent and 20 percent, respectively.

The construction sector has demonstrated notable trends in both residential and non-residential categories. Among new residential buildings, villas have been the dominant force, accounting for 86 percent of the total new residential permits. Apartment buildings follow at 13 percent, while other types of residential buildings make up the

remaining 1 percent.

In the non-residential category, industrial buildings such as workshops and factories are the most prominent, representing 39 percent of the total. Service infrastructure buildings are the next significant group at 28 percent, with mosques constituting 16 percent of non-residential permits.

HIGHLIGHT

The permits entailed various types of buildings, with new constructions comprising 36 percent of the total permits.

The issuance of building completion certificates also reflects the sector's progress. In July, new building completion certificates—covering both residential and non-residential structures—constituted 84 percent of the total issued. Within this, villas dominated, making up 94 percent of all new

residential completions.

Compared to the previous month, there was an overall decrease of 4 percent in the number of certificates issued in July. This decline was particularly marked in Al-Doha, which experienced a 52 percent drop, and Umm Slal, which saw a 5 percent decrease. Conversely, Al-Wakrah reported a remarkable 102 percent increase, Al-Khor had a 55 percent rise, and Al-Shamal experienced a 29 percent increase.

The fluctuations in the issuance of building completion certificates across Qatar's municipalities highlight varying development paces in different regions. Al-Wakrah's significant increase is attributed to extensive infrastructure projects and residential developments as part of the area's rapid urban expansion plans. Al-Khor's rise can be linked to ongoing work in the Al-Bayt Stadium precinct, a FIFA World Cup 2022 legacy project that continues to drive local construction activity.

ACQUISITION

Abu Dhabi fund to acquire stake in Sotheby's

Arab News Riyadh

Abu Dhabi's wealth fund ADQ is set to acquire a minority stake in Sotheby's, reflecting its commitment to enhancing its global presence in the arts and luxury sectors. According to a press release, the Abu Dhabi-based

investment firm has signed a definitive agreement with Sotheby's, a global leader in fine art and luxury markets.

Patrick Drahi, who acquired Sotheby's in 2019, will invest additional capital alongside ADQ and remain the auction house's majority owner. The total investment amounts to approximately \$1 billion. ADQ's investment into Sotheby's underscores its strategic goal of pursuing value-accretive investment opportunities that contribute to Abu Dhabi's economic diversification.

This move will support Sotheby's in executing its ambitious growth agenda and expanding into new markets, including reinforcing its presence in the Middle East as Abu Dhabi

continues to develop its arts and culture sector.

Hamad Al-Hammadi, deputy group chief executive officer of ADQ, said: "Our investment

The additional capital and investment expertise will enable us to accelerate our strategic initiatives.

Charles F. Stewart
Sotheby's CEO



underscores our firm belief in the enduring value of Sotheby's brand, market leading platform and the ability of its management to execute on their growth agenda. We look forward to creating new collaboration opportunities with Sotheby's and being a part of its journey."

Commenting on the deal, Charles F. Stewart, CEO at Sotheby's, said: "We are delighted to welcome ADQ as a shareholder to Sotheby's. We embrace their long-term vision of our business, and this investment is a testament to what we have achieved so far as well as our significant potential for future growth. The additional capital and investment expertise will enable us to accelerate our strategic initiatives."

BizBriefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Prices

US inflation 'uncomfortably' high: Fed official

US inflation remains "uncomfortably" above the Federal Reserve's target despite the progress it has made in recent months, a senior bank official said.

The US central bank has held interest rates at a two-decade high for the past year as it battles to return inflation to its long-term target of 2 percent following COVID-19 pandemic.

The Fed's favored inflation gauge now sits at an annual rate of just 2.5 percent while the US economy is still growing and the labor market has weakened somewhat. **AFP**

GDP

Russian growth dips in Q2 as inflation rises

The pace of Russia's economic growth slowed in the second quarter of 2024, official data showed, amid concerns over stubborn inflation and warnings of "overheating."

Gross domestic product dipped from 5.4 percent in the first quarter to 4 percent from April to June, the lowest quarterly result since the start of 2023 but still a sign the economy is expanding.

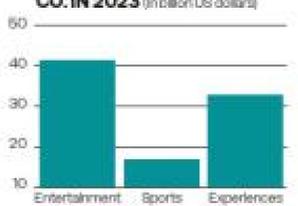
Inflation, meanwhile, showed no signs of easing, with consumer prices rising 9.13 percent year-on-year in July — up from 8.59 percent in June. **AFP**

Chart of THE DAY

In 2023, the Walt Disney Co. generated a total revenue of nearly \$32.6 billion with its parks, and experiences.

Source: Statista

REVENUE OF WALT DISNEY CO. IN 2023 (in billion US dollars)



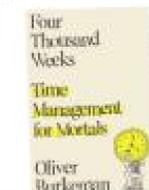
What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

Four Thousand Weeks

OLIVER BURKEMAN

Drawing on the insights of both ancient and contemporary philosophers, psychologists, and spiritual teachers, Oliver Burkeman delivers an ultimately profound guide to time management, says a review published on goodreads.com. Rejecting the futile modern obsession



with getting everything done, "Four Thousand Weeks" introduces readers to tools for constructing a meaningful life by embracing finitude, showing that many of the ways we have come to think about time are not inescapable, but choices we have made as individuals and as a society.

Optimism

Olympics expected to give boost to French economy

The French central bank said that the nation's economy should get a considerable bump from the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

After having expanded by 0.3 percent in the second quarter, the Banque de France said it expects the French economy to grow by nearly 0.5 percent in July-September quarter.

The Olympic Games officially opened in late July and the Paralympic Games finish in September.

The central bank put up to 0.25 percentage points of that growth down to the impact of the event. **AFP**

Unemployment

Canada sheds 2,800 jobs in July, data shows

Canada's economy shed a net 2,800 jobs in July, as gains in full-time work were offset by part-time job losses, while the unemployment rate remained at a 30-month high of 6.4 percent.

Analysts polled by Reuters had forecast a net gain of 22,500 jobs and the unemployment rate to rise to 6.5 percent from 6.4 percent in June.

An increase in the unemployment rate was expected due to rapid population growth.

The numbers came after a jump last week in the US unemployment rate. **AFP**

At Ajmal Perfumes, our mission is to create fragrances that resonate deeply with our customers.

Abdulla Ajmal
CEO of Ajmal Perfumes



Corporate

PRESS RELEASES FROM THE WORLD OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE

PARTNERSHIP

KPMG Saudi Levant and KPMG Lower Gulf vote to integrate

Partners at KPMG Saudi Levant and KPMG Lower Gulf have voted overwhelmingly in favor of a proposed integration of their businesses.

The integration will result in the establishment of a new limited liability partnership and, once implemented and necessary regulatory approvals obtained, will see a collective KPMG business comprising over 5,000 employees operating across Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

The proposed integration is consistent with KPMG's Global Collective Strategy,

which includes the clustering of member firms across the network. Greater integration brings a number of benefits to clients, people and the communities in which KPMG operates. Importantly, it underpins KPMG's commitment to greater consistency and quality albeit continuing to service clients through separate legal entities that have operated in the respective markets.

Dr. Abdullah Al-Fozan will become the senior partner and CEO of the new firm, and Emilio Pera will become the deputy senior partner and deputy CEO of the new firm, as well



Dr. Abdullah Al-Fozan will become the senior partner and CEO, and Emilio Pera will become the deputy senior partner and deputy CEO of the new firm.

as continuing in his role as the regional managing partner for the Lower Gulf firm.

Al-Fozan, current chairman and CEO at KPMG Saudi

Levant, said: "An integrated business would enable us to be even stronger and better positioned to provide value for our clients and communities.

With a wider geographic coverage, we would be able to expand our service and sector expertise to complement an already deep local market understanding."

Pera, current CEO and senior partner at KPMG Lower Gulf, said: "An integrated business would significantly benefit our clients, our people, and our partnership by enabling faster growth and sustainable investments in new services, while expanding our knowledge and access to regional experts, enhancing our agility and leveraging KPMG's multidisciplinary expertise."

CREATING MEMORIES

Wego shares travel tips for family holidays

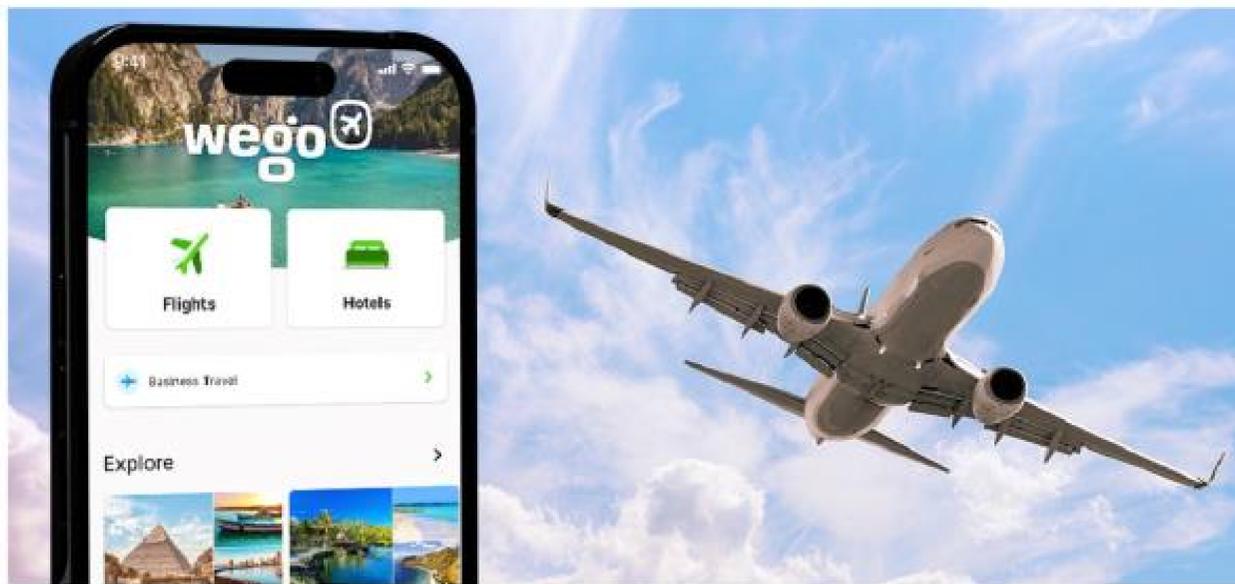
Wego, the No. 1 travel app and the largest online travel marketplace in the Middle East and North Africa, brings you the best travel tips to plan your family holiday.

Traveling is undoubtedly one of the most enjoyable experiences one can have, allowing us to explore new places, cultures, and cuisines. Wego understands the sole needs of Saudi families seeking the perfect getaway.

These responsibilities easily double when you are traveling as a family. From selecting the perfect destination to comfortable accommodations and activities for everyone, it is not an easy task, but with Wego, planning family trips becomes less stressful.

Users can search for the top family-friendly destinations under the "Trip Ideas" section of Wego. The travel advisory feature that Wego provides also allows travelers to get all the necessary information on the places they want to visit, including weather conditions.

In addition, the platform offers the best flights based on families' budgets and schedules, allowing them to compare the airfares, dates, and availability of flights from Saudia Arabia, and assess a range of family-friendly airlines listed on



Wego. One of the top airlines that offer many services for families is Saudia. It provides a special Family Membership Program called Alfursan, apart from providing complimentary prams and family check-in desks, along with dedicated ground staff and cabin crew trained to assist families.

It also offers perks for those traveling with children.

This includes the Little VIP

campaign, which provides families with dedicated check-in desks and priority boarding, along with complimentary bassinet seats and an additional baggage allowance that includes a 10kg checked bag and a 5 kg cabin bag.

Be it Saudia, Qatar Airways, Lufthansa, Gulf Air, Qantas and other family-friendly air carriers, Wego helps easily book the right type of trip for families.

Wego's user-friendly platform caters to families by offering a centralized hub to explore travel options. Compare airfares, dates, and availability from a wide range of airlines operating in Saudi Arabia, including Saudia, Flynas, Flyadeal, Egyptair, Nile Air, Air Arabia, and Air Cairo. This allows families to find the perfect flight that fits their budget and schedule.

In addition, users can benefit

from Wego's blogs in English and Arabic which provide users with plenty of information on visas and destination ideas and help compile the requirements to prepare and decide the right timeline for trips, taking into consideration school holidays and drawing up an itinerary full of activities and experiences that would keep the family entertained throughout the trip.

EXPERIENCE

Ajmal Perfumes and Threads unveil new children's fragrances

Ajmal Perfumes, the renowned fragrance house with a legacy spanning seven decades is all set to welcome students back to school, with its new collection "Whiffs of Wonder," a line of six enchanting fragrances featuring scents such as "Lady Farasha," "Little Prince," "Hannah Banana," "Adventure Bay," "Pink Princess," and "Sea Cruiser," which is tailored for children and now available at all

Ajmal stores across the UAE and Kidzania.

Building on the success of Ajmal's previous collaboration with Kidzania Dubai, where children engaged in the art of perfume making, the company has now partnered with Threads. The brand known for its high-quality school apparel, now joins forces with Ajmal to offer parents a one-stop shopping experience.

This collaboration allows

parents to seamlessly purchase school uniforms and children's fragrances together, adding an extra touch of magic to their back-to-school preparations.

Each fragrance from the "Whiffs of Wonder" is thoughtfully crafted to evoke joy, innocence, and a sense of adventure, making the start of the school year even more special.

Abdulla Ajmal, CEO of Ajmal Perfumes, said: "At Ajmal

Perfumes, our mission is to create fragrances that resonate deeply with our customers. With our new collection, 'Whiffs of Wonder,' we're excited to introduce young consumers to the art of fine fragrances. Our goal is to integrate these scents into their daily routines, encouraging self-expression and bringing joy to their everyday moments."

Jacques Wessel Rheeder, MD of Threads, said: "Partnering

with Ajmal Perfumes extends our commitment to quality beyond apparel. This collaboration enriches our offerings, making back-to-school shopping a more joyful and convenient experience for families across the UAE."

This partnership between Ajmal Perfumes and Threads merges luxury fragrance craftsmanship with trusted school apparel expertise.

Corporate Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Driving experience GMC HUMMER EV arrives in the Middle East

With GMC recently announcing the much-anticipated arrival of the GMC HUMMER EV in the Middle East, both drivers and passengers in the region can now enjoy a range of cutting-edge technologies that redefine the driving experience.

The GMC HUMMER EV, built on General Motors' Ultium Platform, seamlessly integrates advanced technologies to deliver optimal driving range and out of this world performance. This advanced platform enables capabilities beyond those of traditional vehicle architectures and propulsion systems. The GMC HUMMER EV offers impressive range and performance, featuring fast-charging capabilities that add nearly 160 kilometers of range in just 10 minutes.

Independent testing Kaspersky Safe Kids proves superior safety

Kaspersky Safe Kids has received "Approved" certificates from AV-TEST and AV-Comparatives, independent testing organizations, for its outstanding effectiveness in blocking inappropriate content. Tests proved 100 percent and 98.1 percent in successful blocking of adult content on the Windows platform. In the AV-TEST's research, the solution became twice the only one with blocking adult content in the history of tests since 2015. In AV-Comparatives' testing, the solution became the only one certified out of 5 participants, supporting the similar cases in tests of 2019, 2021, and 2022.

Achievement Ethiopian Airlines gets award

Ethiopian Airlines, the leading aviation group in Africa and a rapidly expanding global airline brand, has been distinguished with the US President's Lifetime Achievement Award. This accolade recognizes the airline's outstanding contributions and dedicated service to communities in the United States. The award, signed by the US President Joseph R. Biden, was presented to Ethiopian Airlines during the 8th Annual Galla Dinner, hosted by the Black IAM organization at the Hilton Atlanta Airport Hotel.



Aja Wilson was the highest scorer for the Americans, who won the title for the 10th time overall.

SENSATIONAL ENDING

Sifan Hassan wins marathon to claim 3rd Paris medal

AFP Paris

Sifan Hassan completed her mission impossible with a grueling women's marathon win on the sun-baked streets of Paris Sunday.

On the final day of what has been seen as a spectacular Games, the race to top the medals table was coming down to the final event, with China and the US grappling for dominance.

Dutchwoman Hassan had taken on what many considered to be a crazy gamble, competing in the 5,000m, the 10,000m and the marathon — the last two

Netherlands' gold medalist Sifan Hassan celebrates after winning marathon event. Reuters



events just two days apart.

But in a thrilling sprint finish, Hassan overhauled Ethiopia's Tigst Assefa to take gold by three seconds in an Olympic record of 2hr 23min 55sec.

On Friday, she had taken bronze in the 10,000m in the Stade de France after coming away with a bronze in the 5,000m.

She fell to the ground on

FASTFACT

Dutchwoman Sifan Hassan had taken on what many considered to be a crazy gamble, competing in the 5,000m, the 10,000m and the marathon — the last two events just two days apart.

the blue carpet in front of the golden dome of the Invalides memorial complex in the heart of Paris before grabbing a Dutch flag to celebrate an extraordinary achievement.

"It was not easy," said Hassan, 31. "It was so hot, but I was

feeling OK. I've never pushed myself through to the finish line as I did today."

"Every moment in the race I was regretting that I ran the 5,000m and 10,000m. I was telling myself if I hadn't done that, I would feel great today.

"From the beginning to the end, it was so hard. Every step of the way. I was thinking, 'Why did I do that? What is wrong with me?'"

Hassan's victory was a sensational ending to an Olympics athletics program that saw US sprinter Noah Lyles win the 100m by just five thousandths of a second.

PARIS OLYMPICS

US win 8th successive Olympic basketball gold

Aja Wilson scores a game-high 21 points for Team America

AFP Paris

The US held off France 67-66 to win an unprecedented eighth successive women's Olympic basketball gold on Sunday and extend their run of victories at the tournament to 61 games.

Aja Wilson scored a game-high 21 points for the Americans who won the title for the 10th time overall, surviving a buzzer-beating shot from France's Gabby Williams.

The hosts needed a three to force overtime, but Williams' foot was on three-point line as she let go of the ball, so her shot counted for just two points in a dramatic finale.

The US secured their 40th gold of the Paris Games in the final event of the competition, pipping China to the top the medals table by virtue of winning more silvers.

The US women got support from LeBron James who sat courtside wearing his gold medal, joined by teammates Bam Adebayo and Derrick White, a day after they won the men's gold by beating the French men's team 98-87 in Saturday's final.

A low-scoring first quarter saw a cold-shooting France muster just nine points, but the US only fared marginally better and led by six after 10 minutes.

Williams trimmed the gap to a point with a three early in the second period before a basket from Valerieane Ayayi tied the game at 20-20.

Marine Fauthoux drained a three from near midcourt with the shot clock expiring to send the crowd wild, but Napheesa Collier's putback ensured the teams headed into the break level at 25-25.

France strung together a 10-point run to start the third period as Fauthoux and Ayayi



A low-scoring first quarter saw a cold-shooting France muster just nine points, but the US only fared marginally better and led by six after 10 minutes. AFP

both nailed threes.

The US to hit back to lead 45-43 going into the final quarter, with Kelsey Plum connecting on a pair of threes — one after Johannes took a nasty blow from Wilson that went unpunished, to France's fury.

Wilson belatedly found some rhythm offensively after a difficult first half, but France had an answer each time and went back in front, 51-49, on Marieme Badlane's layup.

The US nudged back ahead,

HIGHLIGHTS

• The US secured their 40th gold of the Paris Games in the final event of the competition, pipping China to the top the medals table by virtue of winning more silvers.

• The US women got support from LeBron James who sat courtside wearing his gold medal, joined by teammates Bam Adebayo and Derrick White.

Wilson getting a kind bounce off the backboard and Plum sinking a pair of free throws to leave them leading by three with two minutes to play.

Williams' jumper made it a one-point before Kahleah Copper drove to the basket to keep the US in the driving seat.

A traveling call against Wilson gave the ball back to France with around 45 seconds left, but Fauthoux's desperation three came up well short under pressure from Breanna Stewart.

Wilson then made a free throw to extend the lead to four and Plum looked to have clinched the win with a pair of foul shots, but Williams kept France alive with a clutch three.

Copper held her nerve to sink two more free throws for the US to restore their cushion to three.

They needed every point as Williams nearly pulled off a miraculous escape act as the buzzer sounded only to be denied by a matter of centimeters.

Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Filling the void Athletics has moved on from Bolt, Coe says

Track and field chief Sebastian Coe has hailed the emergence of an "extraordinary" group of athletes at the Paris Olympics who have gone some way to filling the void left by Jamaican legend Usain Bolt.

Bolt was a transformational figure in athletics, winning eight Olympic and nine world gold medals as he dominated the sprints during his stellar career.

Talk since his retirement after the 2017 world championships in London has always been about who might step into his shoes as the leading pin-up for the sport. **AFP**



Scottish football Celtic maintain perfect start with win at Hibs

Celtic moved to the top of the Scottish Premiership as a fast start eased Brendan Rodgers' men to a 2-0 win at Hibernian on Sunday.

Nicolas Kuhn opened the scoring inside three minutes before Callum McGregor's strike doubled the visitors' advantage before the 20-minute mark. Victory takes the Scottish champions two points clear of Rangers and Dundee, who were both victorious on Saturday, at the top of the table. **AFP**

Cricket Bangladesh retain Shakib for Pakistan

Bangladesh retained all-rounder Shakib Al-Hasan on Sunday in the squad for this month's Test series against Pakistan, despite the former ruling party lawmaker facing backlash after the country's premier was toppled.

Shakib, 37, lost his status as a lawmaker after parliament was dissolved following the dramatic ouster of long-time ruler Sheikh Hasina after weeks of deadly mass protests.

"The emphasis was on picking our best players," chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain said in a statement. **AFP**

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Jenna Ortega opened up to Vanity Fair about the crossover between Hollywood and politics, saying: 'Everybody wants to be politically correct, but I feel like, in doing that, we lose a lot of our humanity and integrity, because it lacks honesty.'



Lindsay Lohan wore a Balmain ensemble at Disney's D23 fan convention in California. Courtesy of Disney

CLOSE UP

Lindsay Lohan reveals 'Freaky Friday 2' title

Arab News Dubai

Fans gave a warm welcome to Dubai-based Hollywood star Lindsay Lohan at Disney's D23 fan convention at The Honda Center in Anaheim, California.

On Saturday, Lohan and Jamie Lee Curtis, the stars of the upcoming "Freaky Friday" follow-up, revealed to fans for the first time the sequel's official title, "Freakier Friday," expected in cinemas in 2025.

Lohan, who wore a black and white Balmain ensemble to the event, took to Instagram to share her excitement. "What a wonderful time I had at @disneyd23 Thank you for the overwhelming response of love and excitement for FREAKIER FRIDAY," was how she captioned her carousel images from the event.

Directed by Nisha Ganatra and produced by Kristin Burr, Andrew Gunn and Curtis, "Freakier Friday" picks up years after Curtis and Lohan's characters, Tess and Anna, first endured an identity crisis: Anna has a daughter of her own and a soon-to-be stepdaughter. As they navigate challenges that come when two families merge, they discover that lightning might indeed strike twice.

In an interview with The Hollywood Reporter, Lohan also revealed that "Star Wars: Acolyte" star Manny Jacinto will play Lohan's character's husband in the film.

"Manny is lovely. So funny," Lohan said of her onscreen love interest.

It was also announced that original cast member Chad Michael Murray will be returning to play Jake in the sequel, fueling fans' excitement that they will get to see

Lohan and Murray's characters together 20 years after the original film.

While it appears that they won't be in a romantic relationship, Curtis teased, "Chad is in it. And boy, oh boy, is Chad in it."

"Freakier Friday" also stars Mark Harmon, Christina Vidal Mitchell, Haley Hudson, Lucille Soong, Stephen Tobolowsky and Rosalind Chao. New cast members include Julia Butters, Sophia Hammons and Maitreyi Ramakrishnan. Executive producers are Nathan Kelly, Ann Marie Sanderlin and Lohan.

Aside from Jacinto as Lohan's onscreen husband, no further details have been released about the roles played by Butters, Hammons and Ramakrishnan — although it is likely at least one of them will be playing Lohan's daughter and another one may take the part of her almost-stepdaughter.

among several others.

This year's class of Disney Legends were inducted into the company's hall of fame in a ceremony at The Honda Center in Anaheim, California, as a part of the D23 fan convention.

Director James L. Brooks is also joining the starry club, along with Williams, known for the scores of the "Star Wars" and "Indiana Jones" franchises, among many others.

HOLLYWOOD

Disney honors 14 'legends' at fan event

AP Anaheim

Disney bestowed legend status to 14 artists, including Harrison Ford, Angela Bassett and Miley Cyrus, who have shaped the company.

The honorees, whom the company says have had a "significant impact" on Disney's legacy, include director James Cameron, iconic film composer John Williams, and Kelly Ripa,

ART & CULTURE

Qatar Museums brings art to the Paris Olympics

Rebecca Anne Proctor Dubai

What does art have to do with the Olympics? Qatar Museums, the Gulf nation's preeminent government institution for art and culture, believes that art is a way to further spur cultural diplomacy and highlight the country's unique heritage and cultural scene in line with its 40-year participation in the Olympics.

Qatar Museums is celebrating the 2024 Summer Olympics with the staging of several exhibitions and public events in Paris, including art shows, book launches and the takeover of renowned restaurant Le Dali at Le Meurice hotel on Rue de Rivoli by Jiwan, an acclaimed restaurant located within Doha's National Museum of Qatar.

The series of events also includes the launch of the first-ever Arabic translation of writings, "Textes Choisis," by Pierre de Coubertin, the French historian and visionary widely regarded as the father of the



On view in the 'Olympism: More Than a Dream' exhibition is memorabilia, including Qatar's first-ever Olympic medal. Supplied

modern Olympic games.

The project is anchored by two exhibitions curated by Qatar Museums and 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum: "Olympism: More Than a Dream Exhibition," recording 40 years of Qatar's participation in the Olympics since 1984, which runs until Aug. 25; and "Esports: A Game Changer," which runs until Sept. 8 at the Residence Citeaux in Paris.

The latter exhibition explores how esports relates to gaming and traditional sports. It takes a sociological look at competitive gaming, defining it in relation

to traditional sports and casual gaming, while also looking at its governing organizations and economies. On view are objects that trace the history of esports, including the invention of the first electronic pinball machine almost a century ago.

On view in the "Olympism: More Than a Dream" exhibition is memorabilia, including Qatar's first-ever Olympic medal, a bronze won by athlete Mohammed Saleiman in the 1,500-meter running event during the 1992 Barcelona Summer Olympics.

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