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SATURDAY, September 14, 2024
Rabi Al-Awwal II, 1446
www.arabnews.com

ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

SINCE 1975

**FAST
FACT**

The WHO chief hailed the success of the first phase of a giant polio vaccination campaign in Gaza after more than 560,000 children received a first dose.



A Palestinian raises a national flag amid the devastation following an Israeli raid in Tulkarm, occupied West Bank. AFP

REGIME UNDER FIRE

Repression of women in Iran 'is on the rise'

Arab News Riyadh

Iran has increased its repression of women in the two years since the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, UN experts said on Friday. Amini, 22, an Iranian Kurdish woman, died three days after her arrest in Tehran in September 2022 for breaching Iran's strict hijab code.

Since then "Iran has intensified its efforts to suppress the fundamental rights of women and girls and crush remaining initiatives of women's activism," the independent UN fact-finding mission on Iran said.

The UN Human Rights Council appointed the experts to investigate the deadly crackdown on nationwide protests in Iran after Amini's death.

"Although mass protests have subsided, the unabated defiance of women and girls is a continuous reminder that they still live in a system that relegates them to second class citizens," the experts said.

"Security forces have escalated existing patterns of physical violence, including beating, kicking, and slapping women and girls who are perceived as failing to comply with the mandatory hijab laws."

The experts expressed particular concern about "an apparent new pattern of sentencing to death of women activists ... following their conviction for national security offenses."

They said: "Over the past two years, the death penalty and other domestic criminal law provisions, in particular those related to national security, have been used as instruments to terrorize and deter Iranians from protesting."

PEACE PUSH

A new coalition for Palestine

Kingdom joins talks with Muslim and European countries to create independent state

Arab News Riyadh

Ministers from Muslim and European states held high-level talks on Friday aimed at driving the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan represented the Kingdom at the talks in Madrid, attended by foreign ministers from other members of the Arab-Islamic Contact

Group for Gaza — Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkiye.

The heads of the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation also took part, along with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and foreign ministers from Ireland, Norway, Slovenia and Spain.

A two-state solution was "the only way to ensure a just and lasting peace in the region through the peaceful and secure

HIGHLIGHT

Israel has killed more than 41,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, since the war began last October, and injured nearly 100,000.

coexistence of the state of Palestine and the state of Israel," Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares said.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said: "Together, we want to identify the concrete

actions that will enable us to make progress toward this objective. The international community must take a decisive step toward a just and lasting peace in the Middle East."

Sanchez has been one of the strongest critics in Europe of Israel's 11-month war on Gaza.

In May, Spain, Ireland and Norway formally recognized a Palestinian state comprising the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank.

Meanwhile, Israeli airstrikes continued to pound Gaza

overnight on Thursday and later on Friday, killing at least 12 Palestinians in their homes.

Three people including a woman and a child died in attacks on the Nuseirat camp in Deir Al-Balah, and strikes in Rafah killed five people including two children.

The attacks resumed on Friday afternoon, killing another Palestinian in Nuseirat and three in Gaza City.

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• Opinion: Abdellatif El-Menawy P9

The Brief

RIYADH EXPO

INDEX Saudi Arabia 2024 will take place Sept. 17-19 in Riyadh to meet the rise in demand for interior design fit-outs. P4

SHEIKH HASINA

India should influence Bangladesh's ex-Premier Sheikh Hasina, who is living in New Delhi, to 'keep quiet,' Dhaka's top diplomat told Arab News. P8

INVESTMENTS

Private equity investments in the Middle East and North Africa reached \$5.9 billion across 49 deals in the first half of 2024. P11

CIVIL WAR

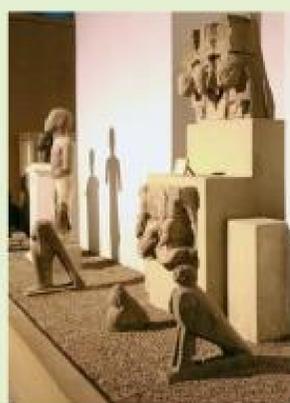
Sudan paramilitaries 'are looting country's heritage'

Priceless historical artifacts stripped from museums, heritage sites and private collections

Arab News Riyadh

Paramilitary forces in Sudan's civil war were accused on Friday of stripping priceless historical artifacts from museums, heritage sites and private collections.

Looters from the Rapid Support Forces are loading statuettes and fragments of ancient palaces on to trucks, smuggling them out of Sudan and selling them online. "The threat to culture appears to have reached an unprecedented level," said UNESCO, the UN



Experts voiced alarm after finding looted artifacts offered for sale online.

cultural agency.

In Khartoum, where fighting broke out in April 2023 between the army and the paramilitaries who now control the city, the Sudan National Museum "has been the subject of major looting," said Ikhlas Abdel Latif, head of museums at the national antiquities authority.

"Archeological objects stored

there have been taken in big lorries and transferred to the west and to border areas, particularly near South Sudan."

The museum opened in 1971 and houses prehistoric artifacts from the Paleolithic era and items from the famed site of Kerma in northern Sudan, as well as Pharaonic and Nubian pieces.

The Island of Meroe, a UNESCO World Heritage site that is home to the capital of the ancient kingdom of Kush and dozens of its pyramids, is also under threat. Artifacts and exhibition

accessories have been stolen from the museum in Nyala in South Darfur. In Omdurman, across the Nile from Khartoum, part of the Khalifa House museum was also destroyed.

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My sincere appreciation and gratitude to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for his generous patronage and continuous support for camel sports in our beloved country.

Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki
Saudi sports minister



Radars

KSA today



Riyadh Dramatic play

Enjoy the Omani theatrical show "Al-Ra'u," where a rural village is ensnared by fear and terror from the enigmatic Al-Ra'u, whose influence manipulates their lives through themes of love, hatred, truth and fear. For bookings, visit riyadh.platinumlist.net.



AlUla Magical journey

Take part in a stargazing experience at AlUla, combining a desert dinner, traditional Saudi hospitality and expert-led astronomy. Visit experiencealula.com for more details.



Dhahran Storytelling

If you are an aspiring storyteller, join Ithra Library's storytelling session every Wednesday. Share stories with children and inspire them with a love of books. Find more details on the Ithra app.



Abha Art village

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

The Register

THE PICTURES THAT MARK THE DAY



Saudi Ambassador to Azerbaijan Essam bin Saleh Al-Jutaili received Mammad Musayev, president of Azerbaijan's National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employers) Organizations, the Saudi Embassy reported on X on Friday.

In another meeting, he also spoke to the executive director of the Azerbaijan Export and Investment Promotion Agency, Yusuf Abdullayev.

During the meetings, the two sides discussed bilateral relations and other topics of common interest.

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



CR-1BN Cristiano Ronaldo

Cristiano Ronaldo has once again made history by becoming the first person to surpass 1 billion followers across all social media platforms.

The 39-year-old Portuguese footballer, who plays for Al-Nassr, hit the milestone by amassing followers on platforms including Instagram, X, YouTube, Facebook and TikTok. He has more than 600 million followers on Instagram and is the most followed person on the platform. Recently, he ventured into YouTube with his channel "UR Cristiano."

The channel shattered records by gaining 50 million subscribers in less than a week, and Ronaldo reached 1 million subscribers just 90 minutes after launching his first video.

'GOTTA KEEP GOING' Lady Gaga

Pop icon Lady Gaga recently responded to resurfaced comments from her former classmates who doubted her future success.

Back when she was a student at New York University, a group of her peers created a Facebook group, "Stefani Germanotta, you will never be famous," mocking her aspirations.

The topic recently gained attention on TikTok, where a video showcased a screenshot of the Facebook group alongside images of Gaga's achievements, including her Oscar, 13 Grammys and other accolades.

The video quickly went viral, catching the attention of Lady Gaga herself. In response to the video, she commented: "Some people I went to college (with) made this

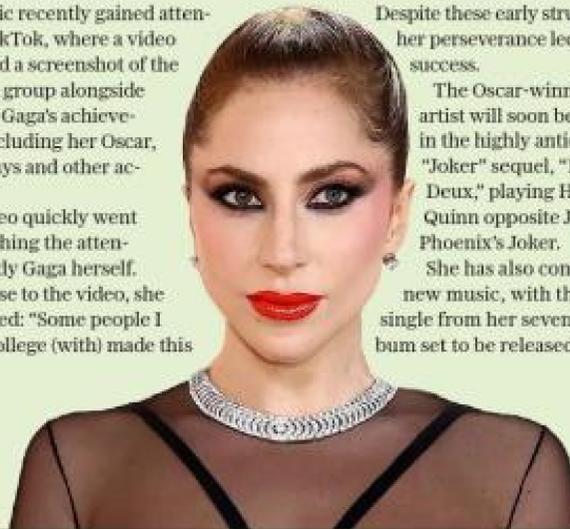
way back when. This is why you can't give up when people doubt you or put you down — gotta keep going."

Earlier this year, footage of her first performance at Lollapalooza resurfaced, prompting the singer to share memories from that period of her career. Lady Gaga revealed that she had put together her own performance outfit and dealt with technical difficulties on stage.

Despite these early struggles, her perseverance led to success.

The Oscar-winning artist will soon be seen in the highly anticipated "Joker" sequel, "Folie a Deux," playing Harley Quinn opposite Joaquin Phoenix's Joker.

She has also confirmed new music, with the first single from her seventh album set to be released soon.



Today's Number

5m

More than 5 million worshippers performed prayers at the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah last week and an estimated 230,823 visitors performed prayers at Rawdah, Saudi Press Agency reported on Friday.

Review

Views Lounge

WAAD HUSSAIN

Located in the eastern part of Riyadh, Views Lounge, originally from Slovakia, has quickly become renowned for its elegant and relaxing atmosphere.

During a recent visit, I sampled their signature margarita, which struck a perfect balance between salty and sweet. It was a refreshing take on a classic cocktail, showcasing the mixologists' commitment to crafting uncommon beverages.

The experience was elevated by the lounge's plush decor and soothing ambiance, making it a perfect spot for unwinding, albeit at a slightly higher price point.

The outdoor area, designed for sports enthusiasts, provides a serene backdrop for watching



football games without the usual rowdiness found in typical sports bars.

Guests can enjoy the game while savoring expertly crafted drinks and appetizers, making it a truly enjoyable experience.

Service at Views Lounge is another standout feature. Staff members' attentiveness adds to the overall experience, making guests feel valued and well cared for.

While the prices may be on the higher side, the quality of the offerings and the luxurious atmosphere make it a worthwhile indulgence for those looking to treat themselves.

For the latest updates, follow them on Instagram @views.lounge.

TheRegion

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Jeddah

- The Royal Cultural Center's Main Theatre in Amman, Jordan, is hosting a gala night presented by the Modern Theatre Group with a performance titled "Camera." Held on Sept. 14, the show is an hour and 10 minutes long. For more details visit calendar.jo.
- The Farmer's Market at Reem

Mall, Abu Dhabi, is a platform for Emirati farmers and producers to showcase their goods alongside activities for visitors. Children can take part in gardening workshops to learn about planting and plant care, recycling workshops that highlight sustainability, and hand crafts workshops that encourage creativity through hands-on projects. Held every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday

from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. until Nov. 2. More details on abudhabiculture.ae.

- "The limits of my language are the limits of my world" is an exhibition that encourages visitors to question how Arabic can be a prominent language in the future. Held at the Media Majlis Museum at Northwestern University in Qatar until Dec. 5.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

Sept. 14	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghreb	Isha
Makkah	4:51	6:07	12:17	3:43	6:27	7:57
Madinah	4:49	6:06	12:18	3:46	6:29	7:59
Riyadh	4:21	5:38	11:50	3:18	6:01	7:31
Abha	4:43	5:57	12:07	3:29	6:15	7:45
Dammam	4:05	5:24	11:36	3:05	5:48	7:18

Fifty percent of domestic energy should be from natural gas and the other 50 percent should be with renewables and alternative energy sources.
Abdulaziz Almizani
 Royal Commission for Riyadh



Spotlight GREEN & BLUE

SAUDI ARABIA

A blueprint for carbon neutrality

The Kingdom's strategic push for blue ammonia under Vision 2030 has positioned it as a leader in clean energy alternatives

Sulafa Alkhunaizi & Hajar Alqusayer Riyadh

As the world accelerates toward cleaner energy sources, Saudi Arabia is positioning itself at the forefront of blue ammonia production, which is emerging as a key component in the global effort to combat carbon emissions.

Long a global leader in oil and gas, the Kingdom now aims to lead in alternative energy, particularly blue ammonia, which has the potential to drive the global hydrogen economy and decarbonize hard-to-abate sectors.

Blue ammonia, or NH_3 , is a versatile chemical compound traditionally used in agriculture as fertilizer, as well as in various industrial processes. However, its appeal as a clean energy source is gaining momentum.

The production of blue ammonia involves capturing the carbon dioxide emissions generated during its manufacture, thereby reducing its environmental impact.

Saudi Arabia's pivot to blue ammonia is part of its broader Vision 2030 reform agenda to expand its renewable energy capacity.

Under Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia aims to generate half of its energy needs from renewables and alternative sources by the end of the decade.

The Kingdom will transition



DID YOU KNOW?

1 Saudi Arabia is leading the clean energy transition through large-scale investment in blue ammonia, crucial for decarbonizing hard-to-abate sectors like shipping and aviation.

2 The Kingdom aims for 50 percent of its energy to come from natural gas and 50 percent from clean sources, including blue ammonia, by 2030.

3 Saudi Aramco and Ma'aden have already pioneered carbon-neutral ammonia exports, making significant strides in supporting the global hydrogen economy.

to natural gas and renewable energy sources in equal parts by 2030, Abdulaziz Almizani, head of sustainability in renewable energy and circular economy at the Royal Commission for Riyadh City, told Arab News.

"Fifty percent should be by natural gas and the other 50 percent should be with renewables and alternative energy sources, hydrogen, and blue ammonia," he said.

In addition, Saudi Arabia is adopting the circular carbon economy model to manage and reduce emissions, incorporating what are known as the "4Rs" — reduce, reuse, recycle, and remove.

As part of this effort, the Kingdom is investing in carbon capture, utilization, and storage technologies to remove CO₂ and convert it into useful products. Almizani highlighted Saudi Aramco's role in pioneering these technologies, including the launch of a project that transforms CO₂ into methanol.

Saudi Aramco has already become a key player in promoting the hydrogen economy, having shipped the world's first carbon-neutral ammonia to Japan in 2020. Furthermore, the Saudi Arabian Mining Co., or Ma'aden, recently exported 138,000 tons of

blue ammonia to South Korea.

Despite the high cost of production and the need for technological adaptation, Almizani is optimistic that the costs associated with blue ammonia will eventually decrease, making it more accessible and scalable.

As blue ammonia production scales up and technological advancements make it more cost-effective, Saudi Arabia is well-positioned to emerge as a world leader in this critical area of clean energy, offering a blueprint for other nations seeking to transition away from fossil fuels.

Always pause at the commas — it allows you to reflect

HASSAN BIN YOUSSEF YASSIN

Turtles have been around for 200 million years — a testament to how well adapted to this planet they are. But over the past century of human progress, their numbers have dwindled.

Perhaps if turtles had developed the ability to fly, to run, or dash underwater, they would not be quite as endangered as they are today.

Indeed, we humans, who have been around for just 200,000 years, have discovered ways to fly through the air, speed over land, and propel ourselves underwater. Our adaptive minds have allowed us to evolve quickly, setting us apart from other species.

As humans leapfrogged ahead, we

began to compete with nature itself. We drink water that has been converted from seawater, grow crops immune to pests and diseases, and study distant planets that could some day be a new home.

The pace of human innovation and progress appears to have no limits, making us feel as though we are perfectly in control. But as we rush to read the next sentence, we occasionally forget to pause for the commas.

Indeed, in grammar, commas allow us to consider more deeply what came before, and what may come after.

The Industrial Revolution gave us steam and combustion engines that powered mass production and connected whole continents. It brought electric lights to our homes and mass communications,



Hassan bin Youssef Yassin has worked closely with Saudi petroleum ministers, headed the Saudi Information Office in Washington, and served with the Arab League observer delegation to the UN.

allowing us to cooperate at a planetary level.

Today we have supersonic planes, rockets carrying humans into space, life-extending medicines, and every comfort our ancestors could only have dreamed of.

But for all our great achievements, could we humans be the authors of our own destruction?

The fossil fuels we have burned, our rapacious exploitation of natural resources, the waste and pollution that are byproducts of our overconsumption, and the destabilization of systems that nature has relied on for hundreds of millions of years mean we not only risk destroying the world's biodiversity, but also ourselves.

Had we learned to pause at every comma, we could have seen this coming. But we

are in such a hurry that we race through every sentence.

The turtle, with its slow pace, stopping at every comma, has withstood the test of time because it is so well adapted, living in harmony with its ecosystem and perpetuating the slow march of its species. Only humans have managed to endanger its continuity.

I am not saying we must become more like turtles. But I believe we must pause and take a step back to consider the impact of progress that we have so far overlooked.

Progress means allowing human ingenuity to advance while respecting the world that sustains us. So let us pause at the commas, take some time to process events, and then move ahead more responsibly.

VISION 2030

Exhibition to meet rise in demand for interior design fit-outs

INDEX Saudi Arabia 2024 taking place from Sept. 17-19 in Riyadh

Rashid Hassan Riyadh

INDEX Saudi Arabia 2024 will take place Sept. 17-19 at the Riyadh Front Exhibition and Conference Center to meet the significant rise in demand for interior design fit-outs in the Kingdom.

INDEX Saudi is the Kingdom's leading interior design, furniture and fit-out trade event where interior brands meet interior designers, retailers, distributors, and fit-out contractors.

The rising number of real estate projects for retail, commercial, hospitality, and residential properties, along with government initiatives to boost infrastructure as part of Vision 2030, are driving demand in the Saudi interiors market.

Giga-projects such as Trojena, The Line, Sindalah, Diriyah Gate, the Red Sea Development project, King Abdullah Economic City, and others are attracting various international and regional interior and fit-out designers.

"Given the diverse range of



Saudi initiative to entice international businesses is gaining traction. Supplied

interior design projects fuelling demand, INDEX Saudi Arabia is a perfect platform to forge invaluable connections, strike lucrative deals, and stay at the forefront of the industry,"

HIGHLIGHT

The rising number of real estate projects for retail, commercial, hospitality, and residential properties are driving demand.

confirms Jasmeet Bakshi, vice president of design and hospitality at dmg events, which is organizing INDEX Saudi Arabia.

This year's exhibition is packed with new features, including two

conferences: INDEX Design Talks and Workspace Summit — taking place for the first time in Saudi Arabia — where over 120 speakers will share their wisdom in specially curated sessions. Saudi Arabia's initiative to entice international businesses with its regional headquarters program is also gaining traction. Over 120 international companies were allowed to move their regional offices to Saudi Arabia in the first quarter of 2024, a staggering 477 percent increase from the previous year.

From remote collaboration tools and augmented reality in the workplace to the rise of artificial intelligence and automation, INDEX Saudi Arabia will cover it all.

TheSpace

●● Fake perfumes can pose real risks

DR. BADER BIN SAUD



In 2006, the Hollywood film "Perfume: The Story of a Murderer" was released, based on a 1985 novel by German author Patrick Suskind.

Both the book and the film tell the story of Jean-Baptiste, who was born in a fish market in Paris in 1783.

He had an extraordinary sense of smell that allowed him to perceive all scents except his own. He used this ability to create a unique perfume by capturing the scents of beautiful women whom he subsequently murders.

Jean-Baptiste bottles this fragrance, calling it "Magical Love." The perfume casts a romantic spell over anyone who inhales it, making them act as if hypnotized.

This concept is somewhat similar to what is known as pheromone perfumes, derived from the secretions of insects.

However, experts have debunked the idea that pheromones can have such a powerful effect on humans, and their use in commercial perfumes is often exaggerated for marketing purposes.

The previous example is quite similar to the trend of "inspired perfumes," which have become popular in Saudi Arabia. The term "inspired" is used to sidestep the fact that these products are essentially imitations, although their creators openly admit this.

They claim that their products are inspired by international perfume brands. Some influencers proudly boast about their "inspired" perfumes, whether it is niche perfumes for the wealthy or designer fragrances for those with limited incomes.

However, one individual broke the norm by betting with another person that his imitation perfume was original. The bet reached SR10

million (\$3.4 million), but in the end, he backed out for unclear reasons.

It is undoubtedly a profitable business — otherwise multitasking entrepreneur Elon Musk would not have ventured into it. In late 2022, he launched his own perfume, Burnt Hair, priced at \$100 per bottle. He managed to sell more than 20,000 bottles within just a few days, with sales exceeding \$2 million, according to his statement at the time.

The global perfume industry is vast and enticing, with revenues in 2022 estimated at more than \$53.2 billion. The largest share belongs to the US, which alone accounts for around \$8.14 billion in sales.

Meanwhile, the Saudi perfume market is experiencing a boom, with its value reaching \$1.8 billion in 2023, and expected to grow to \$2.6 billion by 2032.

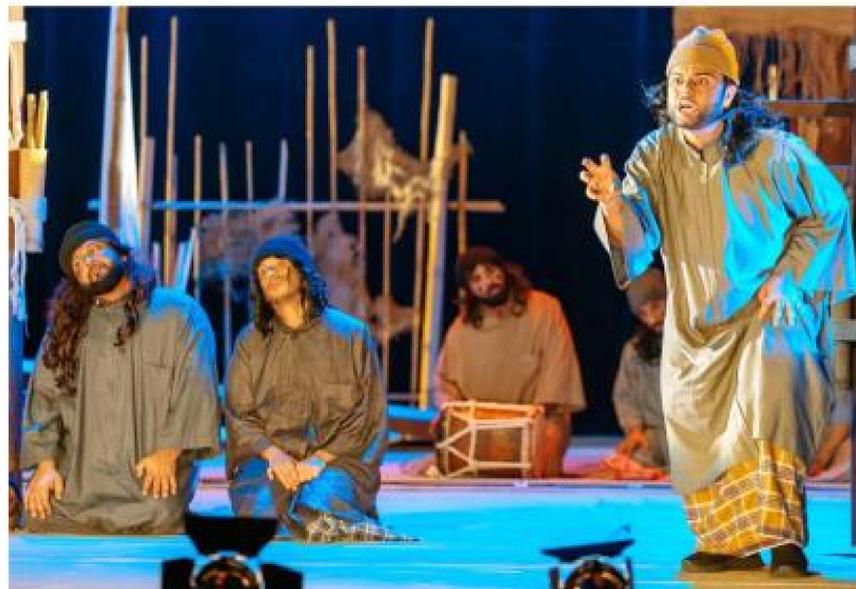
Saudi perfume companies are exporting their products to nearly 35 countries worldwide, and are establishing themselves as trusted brands in the traditional perfume and incense market.

Meanwhile, inspired and counterfeit perfumes attempt to mimic the scents of global brands. They often resort to foreign online stores to bypass local regulatory hurdles, such as the preapproval required by the Food and Drug Authority for perfume manufacturing.

Counterfeit producers typically analyze the composition of the original perfume in a specialized laboratory and then replicate it for sale.

●● The Saudi perfume market is experiencing a boom, with its value reaching \$1.8 billion in 2023.

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



Entertainment The Gulf Theater Festival, hosted in Riyadh from Sep. 10-17, showcased the Emirati play 'Ashoufak.' The festival strengthens cultural ties between countries of the GCC.

SPA

BURGEONING INDUSTRY

Saudi fashion investment offerings in London

SPA Riyadh

The Saudi Fashion Commission will launch an investment tour in London on Tuesday, in collaboration with the nation's Cultural Development Fund and Ministry of Investment.

The tour, which coincides with the conclusion of London Fashion Week, will offer opportunities for investors seeking a stake in the nation's burgeoning industry.

The venue is The Twenty Two

located in the Mayfair area, which is close to the primary London Fashion Week activities, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Friday.

The tour is a part of the commission's ongoing endeavors to improve and simplify access to the fashion sector, particularly by the private sector.

It aligns with the objectives of the Cultural Development Fund, which aims to position the Kingdom as a global leader in arts and culture.

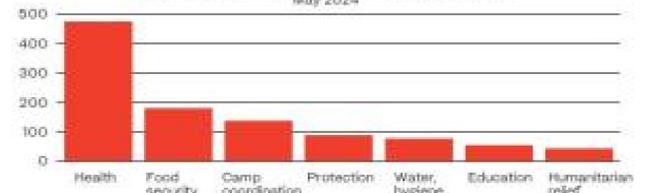
The event will feature discussions with representatives of international and local investors.

A report said in May that Saudi Arabia's fashion industry is set to post a cumulative annual growth of 48 percent from 2021 to 2025 as the Kingdom diversifies its economy. The Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority said that Saudi Arabia's Fashion Commission is playing a crucial role in building a more robust ecosystem to propel the sector's growth.

The Day's FIGURES

SAUDI AID AGENCY PROJECTS IN YEMEN

May 2024



Source: ksrelief.org

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Technology Balsam index to evaluate Arabic AI models

The King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language has launched the Balsam index, a tool for evaluating and measuring Arabic large language models. The launch took place on Friday during the 3rd Global AI Summit in Riyadh.

The Balsam index, developed in partnership with the Saudi Data and AI Authority and international collaborators, aims to "set global benchmarks for assessing AI models in Arabic language tasks," according to a press release.

SPA Riyadh

Support KSrelief restores hope for mine victims in Yemen

The Kingdom's aid agency KSrelief has been a beacon of hope for mine victims in Yemen.

Through its Prosthetic Limbs and Rehabilitation Center in Aden, the organization has provided essential services to thousands of individuals affected by the devastating conflict.

In the sixth phase of the project, from September 2023 to June 2024, the center provided prosthetic limbs, orthotic devices, and physiotherapy to 2,961 patients.

SPA Aden

Awareness drive Border Guards hold exhibition in Jeddah

The General Directorate of Border Guards in the Makkah region is organizing an awareness exhibition — "A Nation Without Violators" — at Red Sea Mall in Jeddah from Sept. 12-16.

The event will raise awareness about the importance of adhering to border security and residency laws, as well as reporting violators due to the security, health, social and economic consequences of their presence, such as drug smuggling, trafficking and the spread of various crimes.

SPA Jeddah

News Saudi Arabia

FINAL DESTINATION

Bon voyage: Retired airplanes take Jeddah to Riyadh road trip

850 km journey sparked social media campaign to capture the unusual sight

Saleh Fareed Jeddah

Stunning images of three retired airplanes mounted atop trailer trucks being transported from Jeddah to Riyadh has created a buzz on social media.

From a man enjoying gahwa on a traditional carpet on the side of the road to a group of children giving the aircraft a salute on its final journey, the images are capturing a new turn in the life of the aircraft.

The airplanes, which were retired from Saudia Airlines between 2016 and 2017, were transported under tight security, covering a distance of more than 850 km from Jeddah to Madinah, then to Qassim, and ultimately to Riyadh.

Large crowds of locals gathered to witness the unusual sight. During their former service with Saudia, the Boeing 777-200ER models carried 341 passengers in three-class cabins.

According to the General Entertainment Authority, five retired aircraft in total will be converted into shops and restaurants and used for staging interactive experiences for adults and children as part of the Boulevard Runway project, which is being carried out in collaboration with Saudia Airlines.

The authority's chairman, Turki Alalshik, launched a campaign, "Where Are They? ... Please Let Me Know," to document and follow the planes on the way to Riyadh.

The campaign encourages locals to share images of the



HIGH LIGHTS

• Saudi General Entertainment Authority's chairman, Turki Alalshik, launched a campaign, "Where Are They? ... Please Let Me Know," to document and follow the planes on the way to Riyadh.

• They covered a distance of more than 850 km from Jeddah to Madinah, then to Qassim, and ultimately to Riyadh.

aircraft throughout the road trip.

Alalshik also launched a competition, with a luxury car as the prize, for the best photograph of the planes.

Many people who learned about the final voyage gathered on the side of the highway to Riyadh.

"We have seen large airplanes transporting trucks and vehicles from one place to another, but here we have videos and photos where a truck is actually carrying airplanes. It is not something that we normally



In a memorable viral image, a man takes a selfie next to a group of children giving the retired aircraft a salute on its final journey. Supplied/X

see on our roads," said Ahmed Al-Shalaan from Riyadh on X.

The ferrying of the aircraft has led to some memorable moments caught on camera

as people documented their encounters with the unusual motorcade. It also created traffic jams as motorists driving down the highways were awestruck at

the sight of the planes.

Many slowed down and some stopped to take photographs and selfies with the aircraft in the background.

"This is quite a unique experience, which we rarely see in our lifetime. I think that is why people are crowding to see it," said Abdulsalam Al-Ahmad from Madinah on X.

On Thursday, residents in Umm Aldome in Taif were treated to an unusual sight as the aircraft arrived in their small town and a special breakfast was organized for the drivers in

celebration of their arrival.

Abdullah Al-Omair, a local, said on X: "It is a historical day here in Umm Aldome and we are so happy to see the giant aircraft passing by our town."

Hajjaj Al-Zahrani, head of the transporting team, spoke to media in the town and said: "This journey has been amazing and what we have witnessed on the road was incredibly amazing.

"Residents of all cities we have been through have been very generous with us and they did everything to make the journey easy for us."

RISING SUN

Saudi boy, 10, shines as summer ambassador

Afshan Aziz Jeddah

Saudi actor Abdulaziz Al-Qahtani, 10, who has been an ambassador for the Saudi Summer Program 2024, has brought an intense passion and energy to the role.

With a career marked by appearances in commercials and TV series, Al-Qahtani's journey from actor to ambassador highlights a deep connection to his cultural roots and commitment to promoting the country globally.

Al-Qahtani told Arab News: "I've always loved performing. I started by acting in ads for big brands like Infiniti Cars, Al-Rajhi Bank and Aramco. These opportunities allowed me to explore different facets of acting and build a solid foundation in the industry."

His experience includes campaigns for the ministries of

health and environment, water and agriculture, as well as the Misk Foundation.

His acting career has been marked by outstanding performances in series including "Al-Deek Al-Azraq" and "Orim."

Al-Qahtani's upcoming film, "Shahd," has also generated considerable excitement among his fans. "Acting is my real passion ... Growing up, my culture deeply

It's a special chance to share the beauty and diversity of our country's summer experiences with the world. I take this role very seriously and am dedicated to making the most of it.

Abdulaziz Al-Qahtani
Saudi actor



influenced the roles I chose. I feel fortunate to work on projects that resonate with my heritage and bring our stories to life."

Transitioning to his role as the ambassador for the Saudi Summer Program, Al-Qahtani considers it an honor and responsibility.

"I'm thrilled ... it's a special chance to share the beauty and diversity of our country's summer experiences with the world. I take this role very seriously and am dedicated to making the most of it," he said.

As part of his duties, Al-Qahtani has been touring Saudi Arabia, exploring various summer destinations and participating in local events.

Al-Qahtani said: "Every place I visit



Abdulaziz Al-Qahtani's journey from actor to ambassador highlights a deep connection to his cultural roots and commitment to promoting the country globally. Supplied

has its own unique charm. Boulevard City in Riyadh is incredibly dynamic, while Jeddah Corniche offers a beautiful blend of sea and city.

Abha, where I grew up, holds a special place in my heart, and I'm always excited to share its beauty with others."

One of the standout moments of his tour was attending the King Cup final in Jeddah. "It was a significant event, and representing the summer program there was a source of immense pride for me. It felt like a perfect blend of sports and cultural celebration."

A particularly memorable experience for him was meeting Saudi Arabia's Tourism Minister Ahmed Al-Khateeb in Asir. The meeting offered Al-Qahtani insights into the ongoing efforts to boost the Kingdom's tourism sector.

"Meeting the minister was an invaluable experience," he said. "I learned a lot about the strategies and initiatives aimed at promoting tourism in Saudi Arabia. It was inspiring to see the commitment and vision behind these efforts."

During the interaction, Al-Qahtani held a kite adorned with the program's logo and Al-Khateeb drew a picture symbolizing summer on it. "(It) was a special moment for me. It felt like a meaningful connection to the program and underscored the collaborative spirit of this initiative."

GRAVE RISKS

Hezbollah targets two military bases in Israel

• 20 rockets launched toward northern city • Warning of more drone strikes against settlements

Najla Housseini Beirut

Hezbollah launched a swarm of assault drones on Filon Base — the headquarters of Israel's 210th Division — and its warehouses in the southeast of Safed on Friday.

This is the second attack on the northern Israeli city of Safed in less than 12 hours.

Hezbollah said it had "targeted the positions and locations of the base's soldiers and officers, striking them directly."

Israeli media outlets confirmed the attack, stating that "20 rockets were launched from Lebanon toward Safed."

This came hours after Israeli raids on Friday morning that targeted several houses in Bint Jbeil, the largest city in the area of the Israel-Lebanon border. The impact of the explosions destroyed some residential buildings and caused damage to other structures.

The Israeli army also raided the outskirts of Yaroun and Alta Al-Shaab, with heavy artillery targeting the forests of Alma Al-Shaab and the outskirts of Kfarshouba.

Israeli forces also targeted two motorcycles in Nabatieh on Thursday night, killing three people, including a four-year-old child identified as Mehdi Mubarak, along with his father, Sadeq Mubarak from Markaba, and Sajed Mustafa, Hezbollah announced.

Hezbollah immediately responded by targeting a major air-defense base in Safed with dozens of Katyusha missiles, setting parts of it ablaze and leading to a complete power outage in Safed and nearby areas. Around 50,000 settlers fled to shelters after hearing the sound of sirens, according to Israeli media outlets.

European and US calls to prevent the expansion of war in Lebanon have yet to have any effect.

In his Friday sermon, the head of Hezbollah's Shariah Council, Sheikh Mohammed Yazbek, said "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and the initiator is the aggressor."

He added: "Hezbollah stands up to the Israeli attacks, the monstrous and destructive bombing of houses, and killing of civilians, by launching rocket and drone operations against



Smoke rises near the border after Hezbollah fired projectiles toward northern Israel. Reuters

more settlements."

Yazbek highlighted "the Israeli escalation," and said that Hezbollah "is fully prepared to teach Israel a lesson it has not dreamed of, and won't stop before the attack against Gaza stops."

Israeli media outlets reported on Thursday night that the US presidential envoy to Lebanon and Israel, Amos Hochstein, will head to Israel with a message calling for it to avoid "carrying out an expanded military operation in Lebanon."

The Lebanese authorities have yet to receive confirmation of whether Hochstein intends to visit Beirut.

According to Information International, the death toll from confrontations on the southern front between Oct. 8, 2023, and the morning of Sept. 13, 2024, was 626.

Among them are 431 Hezbollah members and 97 civilians. A total of 2,050 homes have been

completely destroyed, 1,800 homes have been partially destroyed, and around 8,000 homes have suffered minor damage, while more than 110,000 people have been displaced, with many losing their livelihoods.

Meanwhile, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon Imran Riza issued a statement

FASTFACT

UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon Imran Riza announced the allocation of \$24 million as an aid package from the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund 'to support the country's most vulnerable groups.'

announcing the allocation of \$24 million as an aid package from the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund "to support the country's most vulnerable groups, and address the needs of those affected by the escalating hostilities in southern Lebanon."

Riza said: "As the escalation of hostilities in south Lebanon

drags on longer than we had hoped, it has led to further displacement and deepened the already critical needs. The long-term consequences on vulnerable groups are particularly worrying — schools are closing, healthcare services are under strain, and basic services are being stretched thin."

He continued: "We are allocating these funds from the LHF at a time of unprecedented challenges. Lebanon is grappling with multiple crises, which have overwhelmed the country's capacity to cope. Despite our best efforts, only 25 percent of our annual appeal has been met. We urgently call on the international community for more support."

"The LHF has allowed us to support over 200,000 people, but this is still far from enough. Without sufficient funding, we are not only limited in addressing those immediate needs but also risk weakening our preparedness efforts and our capacity to address the other urgent crises Lebanon is currently facing."

The LHF clarified that the

new funding will "provide urgent support to those in need, including food, shelter, healthcare, WaSH and protection. Specifically, \$10 million from the LHF will be directed toward emergency relief for those affected by the hostilities in south Lebanon.

"Additionally, \$13 million will be allocated to support vulnerable communities across Lebanon, and the remaining \$1 million will be dedicated to empowering local NGOs, enhancing their ability to respond effectively to the multifaceted crisis."

In November 2023, in response to the escalation of hostilities on Lebanon's southern border, the LHF allocated \$4.1 million to support advanced preparedness and immediate response efforts for those displaced and in need. This response was further bolstered in February, when the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund allocated an additional \$9 million to address the urgent needs of vulnerable populations, particularly in southern Lebanon.

GAZA CRISIS

Hamas chief Sinwar thanks Nasrallah for group's solidarity

Reuters Beirut

Hamas chief Yehya Sinwar thanked the leader of Lebanon's Hezbollah, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, for his group's support in the conflict with Israel, Hezbollah said on Friday, in the first reported message since Sinwar became Hamas leader in August.

Hezbollah has been waging attacks on Israel for nearly a year in a conflict across the Lebanese-Israeli border that has been taking place in parallel to the Gaza war.

Hezbollah says its attacks aim to support the Palestinians.

"Your blessed actions have expressed your solidarity on the fronts of the Axis of Resistance, supporting and engaging in the battle," Sinwar told Nasrallah, according to Hezbollah's Al-Manar broadcaster.

Sinwar has not appeared in public since the Oct. 7 attacks, and is widely thought to be running the war from tunnels beneath Gaza.

Your blessed actions have expressed your solidarity on the fronts of the Axis of Resistance, supporting and engaging in the battle.

It was the second time he is reported to have sent a letter this week.

Hamas said on Tuesday he had sent one congratulating Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune on his reelection.

Hezbollah is the most powerful faction in an alliance of Iran-backed groups known as the Axis of Resistance, which has also entered the fray with attacks from Yemen and Iraq in support of Hamas during the Gaza war.

In the early days of the conflict, former Hamas leader Khaled Meshal hinted at frustration over the scale of Hezbollah's intervention, thanking the group but saying, "The battle requires more."

Over the last year, Israel has killed around 500 Hezbollah fighters, including its top military commander Fouad Shukur.

Yehya Sinwar



UPROAR

Mother, relatives charged over child's killing

Reuters Diyarbakir, Turkiye

A Turkish court has jailed pending trial the mother and brother of a murdered eight-year-old girl whose body was found in a sack hidden under rocks in a case that horrified the nation and triggered protests

since her disappearance three weeks ago.

President Tayyip Erdogan has said he would seek the most severe punishment for those responsible for the death of Narin Guran, whose body was found in a village near Diyarbakir, the largest city in southeast Turkiye.

Prosecutors at a Diyarbakir court charged the girl's mother and brother with participating in the murder, while six people, including an uncle and cousins, were charged with destroying evidence.

Another uncle was earlier charged with murder.

Political parties and women's

groups have held protests in various cities across Turkiye to demand justice for Guran, whose murder triggered an outpouring of shock on social media, mainly because of the number of relatives allegedly involved in her killing.

Guran went missing on Aug.

21 from her village, some 10 km south of Diyarbakir.

Her body was found in a sack hidden under rocks in a nearby stream on Sept 8.

It was not clear how she was killed, but media reports said the autopsy revealed she had lesions on her neck.

News Middle East

DISASTER WARNING

Deadly floods bring relief to Moroccan farmers

AFP Rabat

When powerful thunderstorms hit Morocco's arid south, they brought deadly floods and provided some relief to farmers as the country grapples with its worst drought in nearly 40 years.

The torrential rains at the weekend triggered floods that killed at least 18 people in areas of southern Morocco that straddle the Sahara Desert.

While the rain was devastating in part, it also brought some relief to farmers growing crops like almonds, dates, and cereals. "These rains will bring a

breath of fresh air" to the south, said agronomist Mohammed Taher Srairi.

"But it has not rained elsewhere, and the country remains under a heavy structural drought."

According to Lhoussaine Youabd, spokesman for Morocco's General Directorate of Meteorology, the unusual rainfall resulted from a tropical air mass shifting northward.

Experts say climate change makes extreme weather, such as storms and droughts, more frequent and intense. Morocco is one of the world's



Experts say climate change makes extreme weather, such as storms and droughts. File/AFP

most water-stressed nations, with frequent droughts affecting a third of the population employed in agriculture. Near areas of the northwest

African country lashed by the weekend's rain, water levels in dams have risen, and groundwater is expected to be replenished.

The four Draa Oued Noun dams, which supply areas impacted by the floods in the Ouarzazate region, saw water levels increase by 19 percent to 191 million cubic meters, according to Youssef Ben Hamou, director of the agency managing the barrages.

The region of Ouarzazate, located in Morocco's south, sits between the Atlantic Ocean, the Atlas Mountains, and the Sahara.

Water levels of the large Ouarzazate dam climbed to 69 million cubic meters, roughly 70 percent of its capacity, while levels at the Fask dam rose by 10

million cubic meters in just 24 hours.

"The rains have proved to be a boon for the region because these reserves will be able to ensure drinking water supply, which remains a priority," said Ben Hamou.

Mohammed Jalil, a water resources consultant, said the downpours would help to replenish soil saturation levels, although that usually requires rainfall overtime after a long drought.

"This will bring respite to the oases, particularly for agriculture," he said.

HEALTHY CAUSE

Gaza polio vaccination drive a 'massive success': WHO

Fresh campaign to provide a needed second dose is due to begin in about four weeks

AFP Geneva

The WHO chief has hailed the success of the first phase of a giant polio vaccination campaign in war-ravaged Gaza after more than 560,000 children received a first dose.

"This is a massive success amidst a tragic daily reality of life across the Gaza Strip," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on X, formerly Twitter.

Disease has spread with Gaza lying in ruins and the majority of its 2.4 million residents forced to flee their homes due to Israel's military assault — often taking refuge in cramped and unsanitary conditions.

After the first confirmed polio case in 25 years, a massive vaccination effort began on Sept. 1, targeting at least 90 percent of children under 10, aided by localized "humanitarian pauses" in fighting.

The campaign's first phase, which first brought vaccines to children in central Gaza, then the south, and finally to the hardest-to-reach north of the territory, wrapped up Thursday.

A fresh campaign to provide a needed second dose is due to begin in about four weeks in Gaza, besieged for over 11 months.

"We admire all the health teams who conducted this complex operation," Tedros said, also voicing gratitude to the families for turning out in droves



Palestinian medics administer polio vaccines to children at the Al-Daraj neighborhood clinic in Gaza City. AFP

to vaccinate their children against polio.

Poliovirus is highly infectious, most often spread through sewage and contaminated water. It can cause deformities and paralysis and is potentially fatal.

It mainly affects children under the age of five.

WHO has hailed that

BACKGROUND

After the first confirmed polio case in 25 years, a massive vaccination effort began on Sept. 1, targeting at least 90 percent of children under 10.

area-specific humanitarian pauses were respected, allowing the campaign to go ahead, and has urged a broader halt in fighting to help establish humanitarian corridors and the delivery of desperately needed aid throughout the war-torn territory.

"Imagine what could be

achieved with a ceasefire!" Tedros said.

The war in Gaza was sparked by Hamas's Oct. 7 attack. Israel's retaliation has killed at least 41,118 people in Gaza, according to the territory's Health Ministry.

The UN human rights office says most of the dead have been women or children.

CONFLICT

Israeli military says it acted against targets in Syria

Reuters Jerusalem

The Israeli military said on Friday that over the course of the week, it had acted in Syria against targets, just days after Syrian state media reported Israeli airstrikes killed 16 people in western Syria and wounded dozens more.

"In southern Syria, the IDF targeted several terrorists who were advancing terror activities against Israel," a statement from the military said on Friday.

The Israeli military rarely comments on allegations that it acts in Syria and declined to comment on a New York Times report that Israeli special forces raided a weapons manufacturing site near the Syria-Lebanon border on Sunday.

On Sunday, the Syrian regime's news agency SANA reported that Israel launched the strikes on "a number of military sites in the central region" without elaborating on what was struck.

A war monitor said on Friday that Israeli forces helicoptered into Syria days ago and destroyed an underground missile production facility built under Iranian supervision, with two US media outlets also reporting the raid.

Syrian authorities said 18 people were killed in Israeli strikes on "military sites" in Hama province's Masyaf area, while the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor reported 27 dead.

SECURITY ROW

US blames Iran-linked group for attack on Iraq diplomatic compound

AFP Baghdad

The US Embassy in Iraq on Friday blamed Iran-linked groups for an attack this week on a US diplomatic compound at Baghdad airport, warning it retained the

right to self-defense.

An explosion rocked the compound located within the perimeter of Baghdad International Airport late on Tuesday night. A senior military official said it was caused by two

Katyusha-type rockets.

The US Embassy in Baghdad said in a statement issued on Friday that the attack was "initiated by Iran-aligned militia groups which operate freely in Iraq"

It said there were no casualties

at the facility, which is attached to the US Embassy and provides logistical support and medical services, among other things.

The attack occurred amid rising regional tensions over the Gaza war and shortly ahead of a visit by

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to Iraq.

In its statement, the US Embassy said Iraq had "repeatedly committed to protecting diplomatic missions" and US military personnel in the

country "at the government of Iraq's invitation."

"We again call on the government of Iraq, as we have done on many occasions, to protect diplomatic and coalition partner personnel and facilities," it added.

DIPLOMACY

Bangladesh urges India to keep Hasina 'quiet' in 'best interest' of bilateral ties

Busted Bangladeshi PM is in India, with which she enjoyed close ties during 15-year rule

Shehab Sumon Dhaka

For the sake of bilateral relations, India should influence Bangladesh's ex-PM Sheikh Hasina to "keep quiet," Dhaka's top diplomat said, as the ousted prime minister continued to give instructions from her exile in New Delhi.

After 15 straight years in power, Hasina resigned and fled to neighboring India on Aug. 5, forced out by weeks of student-led rallies and a nationwide uprising in the wake of a police crackdown on demonstrators that left hundreds of people dead.

In the following days, parliament was dissolved, and a new temporary administration was appointed, with Nobel Prize-winning economist Muhammad Yunus at the helm.

With the new government in office, Hasina kept making political remarks from India and official calls to her party supporters. She also demanded a "thorough investigation" into the protests-related violence to "bring to justice those responsible for these heinous killings and acts of sabotage" and claimed that the US was behind her ouster.

"As long as she is in India ... it is not in the best interest of relations that she continues to sermonize from there. Since she is being given shelter there, we would prefer that she keeps quiet and her hosts tell her that she keeps quiet," Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain told Arab News in an interview at his office in Dhaka this week.

A former foreign secretary and ambassador, Hossain was appointed last month as chief of the interim government's foreign affairs.



Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain speaks to Arab News at his office in Dhaka. AN Photo

While Hasina enjoyed close strategic and economic ties with India during her 15-year rule, Hossain said that the new government in Dhaka also wanted "a good relationship" with New Delhi.

Amid calls for Hasina's extradition from India to face trial at home for the violence preceding her downfall, he added that time will show if such a request will be made.

"It's a much wider issue," he said. "But for the moment, I think that it is in her best interest — and also the interests of her hosts and us — that she keeps quiet."

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

HEALTH

WHO grants first mpox vaccine approval to ramp up response to disease in Africa

AP Geneva

The World Health Organization said Friday it has granted its first authorization for use of a vaccine against mpox in adults, calling it an important step toward fighting the disease in Africa.

The approval of the vaccine made by Bavarian Nordic A/S means that donors like vaccines alliance Gavi and UNICEF can buy it. But supplies are limited because there's only a single manufacturer.

"This first (authorization) of a vaccine against mpox is

an important step in our fight against the disease, both in the context of the current outbreaks in Africa, and in future," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

WHO also said it was creating an "access and allocation mechanism" to try to fairly distribute mpox tests, treatments and vaccines to the countries who need them most.

The UN health agency approved the two-dose mpox vaccine for people aged 18 and above. WHO said that while it was not recommending the

vaccine for those under 18, the shot may be used in infants, children and adolescents "in outbreak settings where the benefits of vaccination outweigh the potential risks."

The mpox vaccine made by Bavarian Nordic was previously authorized by numerous rich countries across Europe and North America during the global mpox outbreak in 2022. Millions of doses given to adults showed the vaccine helped slow the virus' spread, but there is limited evidence of how it works in children.

Officials at the Africa Center for Disease Control and Prevention said last month that nearly 70 percent of cases in Congo — the country hardest hit by mpox — are in children younger than 15, who also accounted for 85 percent of deaths.

Overall, WHO said over 120 countries have confirmed more than 103,000 cases of mpox since the outbreak began two years ago. Its latest tally, as of Sunday, showed that 723 people in more than a dozen countries in Africa have died of the disease.

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Espionage

UK dismisses 'baseless' Russia spying claims

The British government on Friday rejected out of hand that six of its diplomats in Moscow were spies, calling the Russian accusations "completely baseless."

The FSB security service said the diplomats' accreditation had been withdrawn for suspected espionage and "threatening Russia's security."

But the Foreign Ministry in London indicated that it was a tit-for-tat measure after Western moves against "Russian state-directed activity across Europe and in the UK." **AFP**

Diplomacy

Spain tries to calm spiralling row with Venezuela

Spain tried to calm the war of words with Venezuela Friday with relations between the two countries almost at breaking point after Caracas recalled its ambassador.

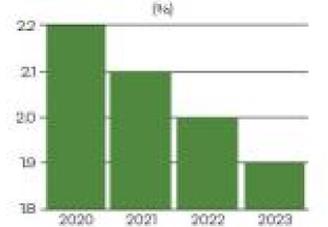
Venezuelan Foreign Minister Ivan Gil summoned the Spanish ambassador there to a meeting Friday after ordering his country's envoy to Spain to come home for "consultations."

The new flareup followed Spain's Defense Minister Margarita Robles calling the government of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro a "dictatorship" Thursday. **AFP**

The Day's FIGURES

Source: Statista

GABON: POPULATION GROWTH (%)



What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

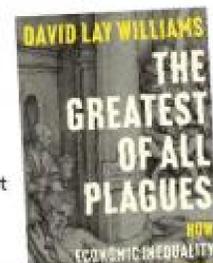
The Greatest of All Plagues

DAVID LAY WILLIAMS

Economic inequality is one of the most daunting challenges of our time, with public debate often turning to questions of whether it is an inevitable outcome of economic systems and what, if anything, can be done about it.

But why, exactly, should inequality worry us? "The Greatest of All Plagues" demonstrates that this

underlying question has been a central preoccupation of some of the most eminent political thinkers of the Western intellectual tradition.



Politics

India's top court frees jailed PM Modi rival on bail

A top political opponent of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was granted bail on Friday after months behind bars on accusations his party took kickbacks in exchange for liquor licenses.

Arvind Kejriwal, chief minister of the capital Delhi and a key leader in an opposition alliance that battled Modi in national elections earlier this year, was first detained in March over the long-running corruption probe.

He is among several opposition leaders under investigation or facing criminal charges. **AFP**

Reversal of fortune

Philippine televangelist pleads not guilty

A Philippine televangelist, who calls himself the "anointed son of God" and once claimed to have stopped an earthquake, pleaded not guilty Friday to charges of abuse of minors and human trafficking in a court arraignment that's the latest mark of his reversal of fortune.

Apollo Carreon Quiboloy and four of his co-accused were brought under heavy security to the regional trial court in Pasig city for the human trafficking charges and was later arraigned by video from police detention by another court handling a separate non-bailable case of child abuse. **AP**

عش لحظَاتِكَ بعينِ نُحْبِ الْجَمَالِ وَفَكْرٍ
مُنْفَتِحٍ، تَسْتَطِيعُ عِنْدَهَا رُؤْيَا الْحَيَاةِ
(أشعة مداراتنا ككتابة ليلتنا)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

When you live your moments with a beauty-loving eye and an open mind, then you can see life.

Fatima Abdullah
(Lebanese writer)

Opinion

Philadelphi Corridor crucial to Gaza ceasefire

ABDELLATIF EL-MENAWY



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www.arabnews.com/opinion

Despite its small size — just 14 km long and 100 meters wide — the Saladin Corridor, or the Philadelphi Corridor as it is known by Israelis, the narrow strip of land in Gaza along the border with Egypt, is playing a central role.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's insistence on keeping Israeli forces there affects not only the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also regional relations, particularly with Egypt, and the US mediation role.

Netanyahu argues that Israel requires control of the corridor to stop Hamas smuggling weapons from Sinai into Gaza. However, some analysts suggest that he is also using the issue as a political tool to keep Israel's far right aligned with him and prevent the collapse of his government.

The presence of Israeli forces in the Philadelphi Corridor is an obstacle in

ceasefire negotiations with Hamas, which demands Israel's complete withdrawal from Gaza. It also complicates the release of Israeli hostages held by Hamas. The insistence on keeping forces in the corridor is seen by some as a way to prolong the war without making tangible progress on either issue.

It also risks significantly damaging Israel's relationship with Egypt. Cairo views any Israeli military presence in the corridor as a threat to national security and a hindrance to its role as a mediator. It would also limit Egypt's ability to control the Rafah crossing, the only lifeline for Gaza's residents to receive humanitarian aid.

Amid this tense atmosphere, the significance of last week's surprise visit to the Gaza border by Lt. Gen. Ahmed Khalifa, chief of staff of the Egyptian military, should not be overlooked. Such visits carry important symbolic weight.

Another critical question is whether the

US is making sufficient efforts to convince Israel not to stay in the Philadelphi Corridor. The US is coordinating with Egypt and Qatar on a compromise — international monitoring systems to prevent smuggling — but their efforts have been thwarted by Israeli intransigence. Some analysts say Washington has not applied enough pressure on Netanyahu, possibly because of America's focus on other regional issues or its reliance on Israel as a strategic security partner.

There is no doubt that both Israel and Hamas are exaggerating their demands regarding the exchange deal and ceasefire, which complicates efforts to reach a compromise. Furthermore, Egypt and Qatar have their own interests, adding to the political complexity.

The success of the American proposal largely depends on the willingness of Israel and Hamas to make concessions. If Israel agrees to withdraw its forces from the corridor, this could pave the way for

progress on the exchange deal and a ceasefire. On the other hand, Hamas must accept compromises that ensure some of its demands are met without jeopardizing the ceasefire.

The Philadelphi Corridor is more than just a narrow border strip; it is a symbol of the political and military complexities that govern the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Netanyahu's insistence on keeping Israeli forces in this corridor reflects the challenges Israel faces in securing its borders on the one hand and maintaining internal political balance on the other. Meanwhile, Hamas remains steadfast in its demands, making it difficult to reach a compromise.

The US role in this crisis could be decisive in bridging the gap between the two sides, but it requires more pressure on Israel to make concessions. The question remains: Will the international community succeed in resolving this complex crisis and achieving lasting peace?

Netanyahu argues that Israel requires control of the corridor to stop Hamas smuggling weapons from Sinai into Gaza



COURTESY: AMJAD RAHMANI/AL-AHWAT

Raoni

The Gaza war has underpinned the normalization process as Turkiye has supported Arab efforts

Can Turkiye be part of the Arab regional system?

SINEM CENGİZ



Sinem Cengiz is a Turkish political analyst who specializes in Turkiye's relations with the Middle East.
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In March 2010, Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa proposed expanding the group to include Turkiye — as a friendly neighboring major power with significant historical, cultural, and economic ties to the Arab world — in a strategic dialogue. The proposal was postponed and was never realized because of the Arab uprisings that began nine months later.

This proposal was part of Moussa's "Arab neighboring policy," which was aligned with Turkiye's "zero-problem with neighbors" policy, but both policies were tested by critical regional shifts after 2011. Thirteen years later, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan was invited for the first time to attend the Arab League Foreign Ministers' meeting in Cairo.

As Turkiye enters a phase of normalization with regional states, there has been a concerted effort to substantiate this on a more institutional basis. Turkiye and the GCC states adopted a joint action plan for 2023-2027, followed by an agreement to begin negotiations on a free-trade

agreement. They also decided to resume strategic discussions, both institutionally and bilaterally.

Fidan said the next Turkish-Arab Economy Forum would be held in Istanbul in October. The forum is an avenue for foreign ministers to discuss regional and international affairs. It was established to develop political, social, economic and cultural relations between Turkiye and Arab League members. The forum is important because it focuses on the non-conventional aspects of Turkish-Arab relations, such as social and cultural interactions.

Normalization between Ankara and Cairo has been a catalyst for Turkiye's reintegration into the Arab regional system. Egypt's pivotal role in the region has influenced the Arab League's acceptance of Turkiye. This normalization, marked by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's long-awaited visit to Ankara last week, facilitated Fidan's participation in the summit. Syria approved Turkiye's participation in the Arab League gathering, though it was also claimed that the Syrian delegation left during Fidan's

speech — something Turkish sources have denied. Nevertheless, there are continuing efforts to normalize Turkish-Syrian relations, driven largely by Arab states keen to reintegrate Syria into the Arab fold. Turkiye's relationship with the Arab League may advance Turkish-Syrian normalization within the Arab institutional framework. Ankara's efforts to normalize ties with Damascus are progressing gradually, which is understandable given that the issues in Turkiye-Syria relations are more complex than the ideological or regional dominance disputes Turkey has had with other Arab nations. These relations are multifaceted, involving challenges such as the Kurdish threat, refugee concerns, political opposition, and the presence of Turkish military forces.

In the past decade, in the name of Arab solidarity and sovereignty, the Arab League has consistently criticized Turkiye's operations in northern Syria as illegal. Turkiye's military presence in Libya and Somalia was also criticized. In this new era, it is unlikely that we will see more such criticism, since

much of it was voiced during a period of tension between Turkiye and the Arab states. Consequently, the Arab League dissolved its committee exploring "Turkiye's intervention in the internal affairs of the Arab states" and dropped a related proposed topic of debate for the summit. For the first time in years, the group did not criticize Turkiye in the summit declaration.

The Gaza war was the central topic of Fidan's speech. Turkiye is already part of the joint contact group to seek an end to the violence. Fidan asked the Arab ministers to close ranks against Israel, following Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's proposal to form an alliance among Islamic countries with that purpose.

The Gaza war has underpinned the normalization process as Turkiye has supported Arab efforts. This clearly echoes Turkiye's pre-2011 policies in the region, when Ankara aimed to win the hearts of not only the Arab public but also elites. Whether Moussa's "Arab neighboring policy" will finally integrate Turkiye into the Arab regional system remains to be seen, but there is hope for progress.

Opinion

Water, water everywhere ... but not for long

MARIANA MAZZUCATO, NGOZI OKONJO-IWEALA, JOHAN ROCKSTRÖM, THARMAN SHANMUGARATNAM

When it comes to water, the world confronts an unsustainable situation. But fixing it is not only within reach, it is also the low-hanging fruit in tackling climate change and generating jobs and growth.

Year after year, in one region after another, record-high heat waves and droughts are followed by destructive storms and floods. Food systems are running dry and cities are sinking as we reach the limits of extracting water from the land. More than 1,000

children under the age of 5 die each day from illnesses caused by unsafe drinking water and a lack of sanitation, and hundreds of millions of women spend hours each day collecting and hauling water.

This is a human-made crisis, and it can and must be resolved through human interventions. The costs will be insignificant compared with the economic and humanitarian harm inflicted by continued inaction.

The first step is to recognize that the problems are not merely local. A destabilized water cycle affects every corner of the world. Current approaches deal with the water we can see and assume that supply is stable. But this is no longer true, as changes in land use, climate change, and a water cycle out of kilter are affecting rainfall patterns.

Current thinking overlooks the "green water" in our soil, plants, and forests, which is recycled through the atmosphere. Green

water generates around half the rainfall that we receive on land, the very source of all our freshwater. In the same vein, countries are connected not only through flows of blue water (like rivers) but, more critically, through atmospheric flows of moisture. As a critical component of the global water cycle, green water urgently needs to be better managed.

Most dangerously, disruptions to the water cycle are deeply intertwined with global warming and the decline of the world's biodiversity, with each reinforcing the other. A stable supply of green water in soil is crucial to sustaining the land-based natural systems

that absorb up to 30 percent of the carbon dioxide emitted from fossil-fuel combustion.

But deforestation and the loss of wetlands and soil moisture are depleting the planet's greatest carbon stores, with devastating consequences for the pace of global warming. Rising temperatures then trigger extreme heat waves

and increase evaporative demand in the atmosphere, which severely dries landscapes and heightens the risk of wildfires. Insufficient food, accelerated spread of diseases, increased forced migration and cross-border conflicts are just a few of the predictable outcomes.

Such a large-scale collective and systemic problem can be fixed only with concerted action across boundaries and cultures. It demands a mission-driven approach to water that cuts across sectors and focuses on all levels, from managing local river basins to



The authors co-chair the Global Commission on the Economics of Water. © Project Syndicate.

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shaping multilateral cooperation. We can and must succeed on the world's most important water missions: launching a new Green Revolution in food systems to cut back on water use while increasing agricultural yields to meet a growing population's nutritional needs; conserving and restoring the natural habitats that are critical for protecting green water resources; establishing a "circular" water economy in every sector; and ensuring that every vulnerable community has adequate clean and safe water and sanitation services by 2030.

These missions require new ways of governing. Policymaking must become more collaborative, accountable, and inclusive of all voices, especially those of youth, women, marginalized communities, and the indigenous peoples on the frontlines of water conservation.

The most fundamental policy shift lies in valuing water properly to reflect its scarcity and its critical role in sustaining the natural ecosystems that every society depends on. We must cease the underpricing of water and harmful agricultural subsidies that drive unsustainable usage and degrade the land, channeling those funds into water-saving solutions and support for the poor and vulnerable.

To fix chronic underinvestment in water, we must reprioritize water infrastructure in public finance, where it is oddly neglected in most countries. We must ensure larger and more reliable flows of finance to help lower-income countries invest in water resilience.

Development banks and finance institutions will need to work closely with governments to support national water missions that reflect local needs and ecological conditions. International trade agreements also offer potential levers to promote efficient water use, because they can ensure that the "virtual water" embedded in traded goods does not aggravate scarcity in water-stressed regions.

Just as we do for emissions, we must compile data on corporate water footprints and water-use disclosure. We must also develop systems for valuing water as part of natural capital. Putting a price on this most critical resource could deliver significant dividends. In short, we must shape markets across our economies so that they become radically more efficient, equitable, and sustainable in their water use.

The 2023 preliminary report of the Global Commission on the Economics of Water set out the case for pursuing fundamental change in the way the world manages water. Our final report this October will show how we can do so through transformative action.

If we do not address these problems head on, wildfires, floods, and other extreme events will only become more intense and deadly. Advancing the water security agenda may seem more difficult amid growing geopolitical tensions, but it presents an opportunity to prove that collaboration can benefit all countries and enable a just and liveable future for all. We cannot shrink from this challenge.

Afghanistan is America's shame, however you vote

LUKE COFFEY

US House Foreign Affairs Committee chair Michael McCaul, a Republican, released a scathing report last week blaming Joe Biden for the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021. McCaul's Democratic counterpart on the committee, Gregory Meeks, dismissed the report as a "partisan narrative."

It was the latest example of the political blame game over the 20-year US involvement in Afghanistan. And there's plenty of blame to go around: while the chaotic withdrawal happened on Biden's watch, the groundwork was laid during the Trump administration.

Trump, during his 2016 campaign, promised to end the so-called "forever wars," with Afghanistan the prime example. But by the time he took office in 2017, the war he wanted to end was not the one the US was then fighting. Casualties had decreased and troop levels were down to

about 18,000, mainly trainers for Afghan security forces and counterterrorism operators. The cost had also dropped to about \$18 billion a year. Nevertheless, Trump remained focused on his populist message.

In 2019, his administration initiated direct talks with the Taliban, culminating in a 2020 agreement negotiated without the involvement of the Afghan government that set a timeline for a phased withdrawal of US forces by May 2021.

When Biden took office in January 2021, only 2,500 US troops remained in Afghanistan. While small in number, they were a stabilizing force. Few believed that 2,500 troops were enough to enable the Afghan government to

regain full control, but they were enough to prevent the Taliban from doing so. Biden repeatedly claimed that his hands were tied by Trump's deal, but that was not true. He had no problem reversing many of Trump's other policies, and there was no legal or strategic imperative that forced him



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to stick to Trump's withdrawal timeline. The truth is, Biden, who had long been skeptical of the US mission in Afghanistan, saw an opportunity to end it once and for all, and he seized it — without fully considering the consequences.

By July US forces had abandoned Bagram air base without notifying their Afghan counterparts. Shortly after, the Taliban began capturing provincial capitals, and Kabul fell within weeks.

It is hard to argue that today's Afghanistan, ruled by the Taliban, is preferable to maintaining a small contingent of US troops and contractors, especially given the low cost and minimal risk. It is an option Biden could have chosen, but he didn't.

Trump now has the advantage that no one will ever know what he would have done with a second term. Would he have stuck to his timeline or made adjustments? It's impossible to say. What we do know is that by the 20th anniversary of the

Sept. 11 attacks, the Taliban controlled more territory in Afghanistan than they did on that tragic day in 2001. While Trump's decision to negotiate with them was reckless, Biden bears responsibility for the disastrous final act.

The consequences of this debacle extend far beyond Afghanistan. America's adversaries, sensing weakness and indecision, have been emboldened. Months after the fall of Kabul, Russia invaded Ukraine. China is increasingly belligerent over Taiwan. Meanwhile America's allies are left questioning the reliability of their most important partner.

But the people who have suffered the most are the Afghans. While American politicians engage in finger pointing, millions live under a repressive regime, facing economic collapse and a worsening humanitarian crisis. No US leader has yet offered a solution, and the lack of accountability is a sad reflection of the state of American foreign policy today.

While the chaotic withdrawal happened on Biden's watch, the groundwork was laid during the Trump administration

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Education has been a key consideration in MENA, PitchBook report says.

Business



The figures reflect a slowdown in deal activity compared to 2023, when \$15.4 billion was deployed across 159 deals for the entire year, according to the latest report by PitchBook. Shutterstock

INVESTMENT

MENA private equity deals reach \$5.9bn in H1, despite challenges: PitchBook

Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund is the most active investor since 2018, report reveals

Nour El-Shaeri Riyadh

Private equity investments in the Middle East and North Africa reached \$5.9 billion across 49 deals in the first half of 2024, despite challenging market conditions, according to a new report.

The figures reflect a slowdown in deal activity compared to 2023, when \$15.4 billion was deployed across 159 deals for the entire year, raising concerns about whether activity will rebound in the second half of 2024, according to the latest report by PitchBook.

Private equity refers to investment funds that acquire ownership in mature companies, typically through buyouts, aiming to improve performance, restructure operations, or expand before eventually selling for profit.

The data highlights the impact of what it describes as the "worst market conditions in the past two years" on private equity dealmaking in the region.

In comparison with the last decade, where deal values surpassed \$10 billion in five out of 10 years, the first half of 2024 represents a significant drop.

Historically, MENA private equity activity has often been driven by a few large, multibillion-dollar deals, and a similar pattern would be required in the second half of the year to match 2023's performance.

The report revealed that Saudi

Arabia's Public Investment Fund was the most active investor since 2018, reportedly investing in 36 deals.

The Emirate's Abu Dhabi Developmental Holding Co., also known as ADQ, came in second with 20 deals, followed by Jordan's Al Arabi Investment Group with 19 transactions. Market conditions this year have been heavily impacted by a combination of geopolitical conflicts, fluctuating oil prices, and the threat of trade sanctions.

The ongoing conflict between Israel and Gaza has not only caused immense humanitarian suffering but has also destabilized economies across the region.

"The risk of escalation or a lengthy conflict creates difficult circumstances for economies. Alongside the humanitarian impacts, conflicts lead to substantial economic losses with potential spillovers to neighboring countries," the report stated.

Compounding these challenges are disruptions in trade and oil production. Earlier this year, attacks on ships in the Red Sea prompted shifts in trade routes and contributed to a reduction in oil output, amplifying volatility in oil prices — a key factor for MENA economies

As energy exports represent a significant portion of revenue for many countries in the region, any reduction in oil production heightens fiscal pressures and affects broader economic stability, the report explained.

GEMS Education is a Dubai-based private school provider with over 60 years of operation. Supplied



These market headwinds are making it increasingly difficult for private equity investments to gain traction, as businesses navigate both operational risks and broader economic uncertainty.

PE digest

A significant private equity deal in the first half of 2024 was CVC Capital Partners' \$3.3 billion sale of GEMS Education to Brookfield.

GEMS Education, a Dubai-based private school provider with over 60 years of operation, is expected to welcome more than 140,000 students across 46 schools in the UAE and Qatar by September.

"Education has been a key consideration in MENA, and attempts to improve it have been a priority. Initiatives including strengthening education funds, revamping programs, focusing on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) skills, and the implementation of virtual education due to the COVID-19 pandemic have been

FASTFACTS

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part of the plans," the report said.

The healthcare sector in the MENA region is poised for significant growth in the coming years, driven by increasing demand and substantial investments. A major deal this year was Gulf Islamic Investments' \$164.6 million investment in Saudi-based health

care provider Abeer Group.

As part of its Vision 2030, the Kingdom plans to invest over \$65 billion in healthcare infrastructure, with projects including 20,000 new hospital beds and 224 health care centers valued at \$12.8 billion. The UAE is also advancing healthcare development, with approximately 700 projects worth a combined \$60.9 billion, largely driven by the private sector. Public-private partnerships are expected to play a key role in the sector's growth.

Qatar has introduced a PPP law to encourage international investment, while Oman has initiated its first medical city through the same arrangement.

Additionally, mandatory health insurance policies are becoming increasingly common across the Gulf Cooperation Council, leading to higher patient numbers.

"Strong demand for health-care fueled by increasing and aging populations in the MENA region is anticipated to drive up government and private investor spending in the sector. A large pipeline of projects as well as new technologies will create opportunities for startups, portfolio companies, and investors," the report added.

MENA exits

Private equity and venture capital-backed exit activity saw a sharp decline in the first half of 2024, with only \$1.6 billion generated from 25 exits.

This marks a significant drop

compared to the previous four years, where annual exit values consistently surpassed \$10 billion.

The report stated that the current figures underscore a notable slowdown in exit activity within the MENA region, reflecting broader global trends in 2024. Investors and management teams have been hesitant to pursue exits amid market volatility, influenced by fluctuations in public markets, inflationary pressures, and rising interest rates, which have dampened growth prospects.

With interest rate hikes largely on pause and potential rate cuts expected in Europe and the US later this year, there is cautious optimism for a recovery in the second half of the year.

VC's role in PE

The MENA venture capital ecosystem experienced weaker capital deployment in the first half of the year, mirroring global trends.

A total of \$1.3 billion was invested across 321 VC rounds, putting the region on track to fall short of 2023 levels by year-end.

This follows a decline in 2023, when activity in the sector dropped from a peak of \$5.5 billion across 894 deals in 2022.

"The MENA region has been earmarked for high growth and untapped opportunities, but it has not been insulated from the broader slump in activity felt by more mature ecosystems," the report said.



High oil prices have created a robust operating environment for banks, enabling them to support the Kingdom's giga-projects. Reuters

SAMA REPORT

Saudi banks' aggregate profit reaches all-time high

Deposits grew by 8% during January-July, reaching SR2.64 trillion: SAMA

Dayan Abou Tine Riyadh

Saudi banks' aggregate profit before zakat and tax reached an all-time high of SR7.83 billion (\$2.1 billion) in July, marking an annual 23 percent rise, newly released data has revealed.

According to the Kingdom's central bank, also known as SAMA, from January to the end of July the financial institutions reported total profits of SR50.22 billion, up 13 percent from SR44.5 billion during the same period last year.

Total deposits grew by 8 percent during this period, reaching SR2.64 trillion, with term deposits experiencing the highest growth at 20 percent, totaling SR930.24 billion.

Demand accounts, which make up 53 percent of total deposits, saw a more modest increase of 5 percent, bringing the total to SR1.4 trillion.

On the asset side, total bank credit rose to SR2.79 trillion, marking a 12 percent increase

in July compared to the same month of 2023.

The loans-to-deposits ratio, a key metric for assessing a bank's liquidity, climbed to 80.73 percent, up from 78.84 percent a year earlier.

The expansion of Saudi Arabia's banking sector is being driven by a combination of favorable economic conditions and strategic initiatives.

High oil prices, coupled with continued government spending, have created a robust operating environment for banks, enabling them to support the Kingdom's ambitious giga-projects and the broader Vision 2030 strategy.

This economic backdrop has also contributed to solid non-oil GDP growth, further bolstering the banking industry's performance.

In addition to these traditional growth drivers, the rise of fintech is playing a transformative role in reshaping the sector's landscape.

SAMA has been pivotal in regulating this sector, ensuring that innovation thrives within

FAST FACTS

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a secure and well-governed framework.

By implementing initiatives such as the open banking framework and supporting fintech companies through its regulatory sandbox, SAMA is driving technological advancements that enhance efficiency, improve consumer experience, and expand financial inclusion.

High interest rates in the Kingdom have further boosted profits on loans, as banks benefit from the increased interest income.

However, this environment has also intensified competition among financial institutions for financing opportunities, as they vie to attract borrowers and secure their market share.

McKinsey's research on the Saudi banking sector revealed that the those institutions distinguishing themselves are those increasingly focused on meeting the high expectations of young, tech-savvy consumers — a strategy that offers a significant competitive advantage.

The research underscores a strong link between positive customer experiences and improved financial performance, demonstrated by higher cross-sell and retention rates.

To capitalize on this trend, GCC banks are fully digitizing their customer journeys, transforming every step from the initial touchpoint to successful fulfillment.

In the UAE and Saudi Arabia, several banks are reimagining both retail services, such as onboarding, personal loans, credit cards, and home financing, and corporate services, including MSME and midsize corporate onboarding and credit renewals.

Beyond revamping these journeys, GCC banks are also leveraging generative AI and other advanced technologies to enhance customer self-service capabilities, reduce reliance on assisted service channels, and automate issue resolution, thereby further improving customer satisfaction and operational efficiency.

Emerging aerospace industry of Saudi Arabia

ASAAD AL-JOMOAI

Right now, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an exceptional place to start a career in aerospace engineering. The Kingdom's bold ambitions for the aerospace sector, including plans to become a center for aviation and space technology, aerospace manufacturing and production, and air transport, present an unprecedented wealth of opportunities for the future cadre of Saudi engineers who are currently studying at universities across Saudi Arabia.

According to Boeing's predictions in our Pilot and Technician Outlook 2023-2042 report, the Middle East will require 58,000 new aviation technicians in the next 20 years — and that is just for maintenance in the commercial aviation sector.

The growth of Saudia, Riyadh Air, and other airlines, and the expected boost in business and tourism travel, will mean that a large proportion of these technicians will make their careers in Saudi Arabia, supporting the aircraft fleets that will safely carry passengers to and from the Kingdom.

When we also factor in the need for engineering personnel to service business aviation, civil helicopters, defense aviation, and emerging sectors like autonomous aerial vehicles and drones, it is clear that Saudi Arabia will require a considerable number of technicians in the future — and that is only part of the story.

The growth of the local aviation industry, including the development and manufacturing of aircraft, spacecraft, autonomous systems, and aviation technology, will create a huge demand for aerospace engineers in the Kingdom in the coming decades.

So how can Saudi Arabia ensure that it can meet this demand for talent and ensure that the local aerospace sector continues to grow and thrive?

A long-term strategy is essential to ensure an adequate supply of qualified personnel. There needs to be enough training capacity, built out over time, to meet both the current demand of aviation operators and future growth, including Saudization.

The industry also needs to ensure investment in STEM education, career development programs, and outreach to the next generation of engineers to engage tomorrow's talent and encourage them to explore aerospace careers.

The aerospace sector in Saudi Arabia is not just about one company but about building a robust ecosystem that includes government, industry, and academia. This collaborative approach will ensure the development of a skilled workforce capable of driving the Kingdom's aerospace ambitions.

For students and future engineers, the opportunities are vast and varied, promising a fulfilling career path in a dynamic and transformative sector. As Saudi Arabia's aerospace sector expands into new areas, such as space and autonomous systems, these young engineers will have the opportunity to work on groundbreaking projects that will redefine the aerospace sector. Saudi engineering talent is already hard at work developing the aviation systems of tomorrow.

The emerging aerospace job market in Saudi Arabia is poised for significant growth and offers exciting prospects for engineers and other STEM professionals.

Whether through local initiatives or international partnerships, the Kingdom is set to become a global leader in aerospace innovation, providing a fertile ground for careers with a global impact.

Asaad Al-Jomai is president of Boeing Saudi Arabia.

The Guardian found no record of any significant published stories by Elon Perry, other than the recent series of articles in The Jewish Chronicle.



Media

FIGHTING FAKE NEWS

Israeli army probes claims of fabricated stories in The Jewish Chronicle

Experts debunk Gaza stories appearing in London-based newspaper under Elon Perry byline

Arab News Dubai

The Israeli army is investigating stories published by The Jewish Chronicle, amid claims that they were not true.

The London-based newspaper published an exclusive story on Sept. 5 that said Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar was planning to flee to Iran through the Philadelphia Corridor, a narrow strip of land along the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, along with other leaders of his organization and Israeli hostages.

The claim was said to be based on details provided by "intelligence sources," and information obtained "during the interrogation of a captured, senior Hamas official" and "documents seized" on Aug. 29. The story gained traction online but was quickly debunked by several experts, media organizations and other critics.

Israeli broadcaster Channel 12



Several stories published by The Jewish Chronicle carrying the same byline, Elon Perry, are now alleged to have been fabricated. Screenshot/The Jewish Chronicle

said "all of the relevant sources in the security establishment are unaware of the supposed intelligence."

Israeli news website Ynet published a story in which four sources from the country's intelligence community and the

army's prisoners and missing persons division were quoted as saying the newspaper's claims were "100 percent lies" and a "wild fabrication."

The story is not the only one published by The Jewish Chronicle that has been called into question. Several other reports carrying the same byline, Elon Perry, are now alleged to have been fabricated.

Perry's biographical

information on the newspaper's website states he is "a former commando soldier of the elite Golani Brigade of the Israel Defense Forces, which he served in for 28 years. He was a prisoner for 23 years during wars and terrorist attacks. Since 2018, he has been working in the UK and USA about the 100 years of Yom Ha'atzmaut, with an emphasis on the South Palestinian conflict. He lives in London."

The Guardian newspaper found no record of any significant published stories written by Perry as a reporter in English or Hebrew, other than the recent series of articles in The Jewish Chronicle.

On his personal website, Perry said that during his military service he was part of the Israeli army's mis'arvim units, the members of which go undercover as Palestinians. He also said he participated in Operation Entebbe, the 1976 Israeli military raid in Uganda to rescue the passengers of a plane that had been hijacked by Palestinian and German militants.

Perry is also a published author. Pen and Sword Books, the publisher of his second book,

HIGHLIGHTS

• The London-based newspaper published an exclusive story on Sept. 5 that said Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar was planning to flee to Iran.

• The story gained traction online but was quickly debunked by several experts, media organizations and other critics.

• Israeli broadcaster Channel 12 said 'all of the relevant sources in the security establishment are unaware of the supposed intelligence.'

"Children in War," describes him as having been a political science and history professor at Tel Aviv University between 1998 and 2014. These claims are false, Israeli broadcaster Channel 13 reported on Sept. 9 in its program "Hazineer." It said it could find no record of Perry working at the

university or participating in Operation Entebbe.

During an interview with a Channel 13 reporter, Perry confirmed he had not been a professor at Tel Aviv University or an undercover Israeli army operative.

Other publications and journalists, including Israeli-Palestinian magazine +972 and Simi Spolter, a tech journalist with Israel business newspaper The Marker, also highlighted inconsistencies and outright falsehoods in Perry's claims.

The Jewish Chronicle published a statement on Thursday saying it was "aware of allegations concerning a freelance journalist, which we take very seriously."

It added: "The Jewish Chronicle is the oldest Jewish newspaper in the world and has always maintained the highest standards of reporting and integrity. An investigation is underway and there will be an update in due course."

TRANSPARENCY

Musk brands Australia 'fascists' after move to fine social media giants

Reuters Sydney

Elon Musk, owner of social media platform X, on Friday called Australia's center-left government "fascists" over proposed legislation to slap fines on social media firms for failing to prevent the spread of misinformation online.

Australia's Labor government on Thursday unveiled legislation which could fine internet platforms up to 5 percent of their global revenue for enabling misinformation, joining a worldwide push to rein in borderless tech giants.

The proposed law would require tech platforms to set codes of conduct to stop dangerous falsehoods spreading and be approved by a regulator. The regulator would set its own standard if a platform failed to do so and fine firms for non-compliance.

Musk, who views himself as a champion of free speech, responded to a post by an X user linking the story about the misinformation law with one word: "Fascists."

A spokesperson for Communications Minister Michelle Rowland said by email that companies operating in Australia must comply with Australian laws.

"This bill improves the transparency and accountability of platforms for users and the



Australia has unveiled legislation which could fine internet platforms up to 5% of their revenue. Reuters/File

Australian people," Rowland said.

Musk's comment on the push against misinformation drew criticism and ridicule from other government lawmakers.

"When it's in its commercial interests, he is the champion of free speech and when he doesn't like it ... he's going to shut it all down," Government Services Minister Bill Shorten told

FASTFACTS

• The proposed law would require tech platforms to set codes of conduct to stop dangerous falsehoods spreading.

• The regulator would set its own standard if a platform failed to do so and fine firms for non-compliance.

Channel Nine's breakfast show. Social media platforms should not publish scam content, deepfake materials and livestream violence in the name of free speech, Assistant Treasurer Stephen Jones told ABC television.

In a previous clash with the Australian government, X in April went to court to challenge a cyber regulator's order for the removal of some posts about the stabbing of a bishop in Sydney, prompting Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to call Musk an "arrogant billionaire."

The regulator later dropped its challenge against X after a setback in the federal court.

X had blocked Australian users from viewing the posts about the stabbing but refused to remove them globally on the grounds that one country's rules should not control the internet.

It means a lot. To be able to be in this position right now, to be clinching that spot, it's very important for us.

Brandon Nakashima US tennis player



Sport News

MULTISPORT EVENT

3rd Saudi Games set to strike gold with record participation and expansive fan zone

The Games will feature a record 52 sports, up from 45 in the inaugural event; overall participation increases by 30 percent

Aisha Fareed Riyadh

As anticipation mounts for the third Saudi Games, organizers promised a grander and more inclusive event than ever before. They said the event will build on the successes of previous years to showcase an impressive array of sports, greater participation, and an innovative fan experience.

This year's Games, running in Riyadh from Oct. 3 to 17, will feature a record 52 sports, an increase from the 45 featured in the inaugural event. Overall participation will increase by 30 percent, organizers added, reflecting a significant rise in athlete engagement and public interest.

Mohammed Al-Salem, the head of sports management for the Saudi Games, said the increase in participation among women and youths is particularly notable.

"From our side, we are trying to make the best preparations possible," he said. "So we are in direct communication with all the sports federations, with all the venues, with all the athletes."

"Last year, we had nearly 30 events specifically for women; now we have more than 50 because that directly contributes to the goals of the Games."

This expansion highlights the commitment of organizers to the principles of inclusivity and gender equality, he added.

"We have seen an increase (in youth participation) from last year," Al-Salem said, adding that the young athletes will compete in 15 sports, compared with only five last year.

The Games experience



Saudi Games organizers promise a grander and more inclusive event than ever before, building on the successes of previous years. Social media

will also be bigger and better for spectators, with the fan zone, strategically located in the vibrant Boulevard area, promising to be a highlight. Fan zone manager Hanan Al-Zaid said it will feature competitions in four dynamic sports: beach volleyball, 3x3 basketball, skateboarding and wall climbing.

"The Saudi Games have a history of two successful editions," she said. "So this year we are becoming bigger and better. As you know, it's now 52 sports and four of them are in the fan zone."

This approach is part of a broader strategy to make sports more relatable and accessible through an immersive experience for fans that aims to spark interest and foster deeper connection with the sports community.

"We chose the Boulevard to increase the sports awareness," said Al-Zaid. "We're meeting

the fans where they are. If you're attending the Boulevard as a normal guest and you see a game, then you develop an interest in the beginning, then you develop a passion. After that you develop a profession, then you choose this as a career."

Abdullah Al-Azzam, project manager for the Games, emphasized the sheer scale and complexity of organizing such a significant event.

"We're talking about the

largest sports event in the Kingdom," he said. "So the preparation is up to speed. We're doing it on a yearly basis. It is a challenge. However, we're up to the challenge and we have overachieved that challenge by making the third edition right now."

The increased focus on young athletes demonstrates the commitment of the Games to nurturing emerging talent, he added.

Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Tennis

US, Germany seal Davis Cup final 8 berths

The US booked their ticket to the Davis Cup final eight with a 3-0 win over Slovakia in Zuhai on Friday, with Germany also advancing.

Mackenzie McDonald beat Lukas Klein 6-4, 6-3 in the opening singles rubber before Brandon Nakashima cased past Jozef Kovalik 6-3, 6-3 to give the Americans an unassailable 2-0 lead.

Austin Krajicek and Rajeev Ram then teamed up in the doubles to battle past Klein and Norbert Gombos 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (7/4), 10-1.

"It means a lot," said 40th-ranked Nakashima. **AFP**

Football

Cyprus national team, Georgian coach part ways

Georgian coach Temur Ketsbaia lost his job with the Cyprus national team, the national federation said Friday, days after a 4-0 home loss against Kosovo in the UEFA Nations League.

The former Newcastle, Wolverhampton and AEK Athens player was in his third year with the Cyprus team now ranked No. 127 by FIFA, a drop of 20 places while he was in charge. **AP**



It was not to be Afghanistan-New Zealand Test abandoned

The one-off Test between Afghanistan and New Zealand was washed out on Friday after five days of rain, just the eighth Test in history to be abandoned without a ball being bowled.

Afghanistan's adopted home ground at Greater Noida, on New Delhi's outskirts, has been hit by persistent rain over the past fortnight, forcing officials to call the match off.

Despite some sunshine on day one and two — and increasingly desperate ground staff using electric fans — the outfield remained soaked. **AFP**

MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

Iconic Sphere in Las Vegas to host Riyadh Season Noche UFC

Arab News Las Vegas

The city of Las Vegas is gearing up to host the Riyadh Season Noche UFC at the iconic Sphere in Las Vegas on Saturday.

This event will be the first-ever sports championship held at the Las Vegas Sphere as part of UFC events, and it also marks Riyadh Season's debut as a sponsor in the US.

Following the success of the Riyadh Season Card in Los

Angeles, this event is granting UFC the prestigious title of naming partner for the first time to a sponsor, renaming UFC 306 to Riyadh Season Noche UFC.

The highly anticipated event features a bantamweight title bout, headlined by Sean O'Malley from the US defending his title against Georgia's Merab Dvalishvili.

The octagon will also feature an electrifying women's flyweight title bout, as Mexico's Alexa

Grasso faces off against Valentina Shevchenko from Kyrgyzstan.

Additionally, the event will feature a featherweight bout between Brian Ortega from the United States and Diego Lopes from Brazil.

Raul Rosas Jr. from Mexico will face Aoriqileng from China in the bantamweight category. Another bout will see Irene Aldama from Mexico taking on Norma Dumont from Brazil in a women's bantamweight bout.

In the lightweight category, Manuel Torres from Mexico and Ignacio Bahamondes from Chile will compete for the title. Edgar Chairez from Mexico will face Joshua Van from the United States in a flyweight bout. Another flyweight fight will feature Ronaldo Rodriguez from Mexico versus Ode Osbourne from Jamaica.

The event will also feature a women's strawweight bout between Yazmin Jauregui from

Mexico and Ketlen Souza from Brazil, with the event concluding with a lightweight fight between Daniel Zellhuber from Mexico and Esteban Ribovics from Argentina.

Riyadh Season previously hosted UFC Fight Night on June 22, 2024, where Australian Robert Whittaker delivered a knockout victory against Russia's Ikram Aliskerov in the main middleweight event at Kingdom Arena.

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Joey King stars in the sci-fi movie 'Uglies,' now streaming on Netflix.



Weekend Lifestyle, Art & Culture

CULTURE

'The Camel Through the Ages' opens at Ithra

New exhibition ties in with Ministry of Culture's Year of the Camel

Jasmine Bager Dhahran

The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) is currently hosting "The Camel Through the Ages" exhibition at its Dhahran headquarters in collaboration with the Riyadh-based Layan Cultural Foundation. The show runs until Nov. 1 in a year designated by the Ministry of Culture as the Year of the Camel.

"Camels have long occupied a special place in the societies of the Arabian Peninsula, including the kingdom of Saudi Arabia; they were a means of transportation across vast distances, crossing mountains, valleys, and deserts, similar to ship movements within the sea waves," Ithra said in a statement.

In an emotional keynote speech at the opening of the exhibition, LCF founder, Prince Faissal bin Abdullah bin Mohammed, expressed the significance of the camel to the Kingdom's cultural heritage and as a symbol of strength and resilience. Ghada Al-Tobaishi, executive director of the LCF said: "We are very pleased to cooperate with Ithra (on this) exhibition. This academic and cultural project aims to enrich the knowledge of many important facts of cultural heritage of past eras."

Last year, the LCF published a two-volume Arabic-language book about camels, in cooperation with the King Abdulaziz Public Library. That was the inspiration for the current exhibition at Ithra. Some of the works were commissioned specifically for the exhibition, while others were part of the book. The show is curated by Kumail Muhammed Almusaly with the help of Maryam Al-Dossary.

"We, at Ithra, reached out to Layan Cultural Foundation to



(Above) Abdulrahman Al-Soliman's 'The Camel is not a Ship.' (Right) Prince Faissal bin Abdullah at 'The Camel Through the Ages.' (Below) Digital mosaics created by Layan Cultural Foundation for the show. Supplied



collaborate on an exhibit specifically for the Year of the Camel," Almusaly told Arab News. "And it fits very well with the intent of this gallery, which focuses on the history of Saudi Arabia.

"We came up with five themes in order to create a journey in which the visitor could flow freely between the artworks — it is not a linear journey," he added.

The five themes are: the camel as an iconic symbol of the Arabian identity; the camel as a meditative or spiritual

connection — especially through Qur'anic verses; the camel as a source of pride in camel races and as part of the family; camels as part of oral or folk history; and camels as a companion, in times of rest and travel.

The first thing visitors see on entering the exhibition space is a collection of paintings, including a 2013 painting by the Saudi artist Abdulrahman Al-Soliman titled "The Camel is not a Ship."

"This is a statement by a pioneering artist," Almusaly

said. "(It's) a piece that 'corrects' our perception toward camels. He is using text over the painting, which states that the camel is 'not the ship of the desert.' He wants to convert that perception back to the reality that the camel is a creature — it is not an object."

This section of the exhibition also includes digital mosaics created by the LCF, alongside works from international and local artists. "There is a part where we switch to how Western artists have looked at Eastern culture — how they are examining the camel and Arabic

culture from their perspective," Almusaly explained.

After the paintings, the show moves on to sculptures of various styles and sizes, to photographs, to old coins and a few traditional garments. Arabic calligraphy is a part of many of the pieces.

According to Almusaly, the LCF has been instrumental in "maintaining culture, maintaining history and preserving culture through these materials," bringing in experts to examine each object and in order to elevate our overall understanding of the camel.

Overall, the exhibition provides an opportunity to examine the camel through the eyes of various artists, and through a visual language that is steeped in Saudi identity, highlighting the vital role the camel has played in the Kingdom's cultural and economic progress throughout history.



Screen Scene

NEW TO WATCH AT HOME



My Brilliant Friend

Starring: Alba Rohrwacher, Irene Maierino, Fabrizio Gifuni

Where: OSN+

Final season of the Italian drama series based on Elena Ferrante's novels. It focuses on the adult lives of protagonists Elena and Lila as they balance motherhood with their careers.



Uglies

Starring: Joey King, Keith Powers, Chase Stokes

Where: Netflix

Sci-fi movie based on Scott Westerfeld's novel. It's set in a post-apocalyptic future in which cosmetic surgery is mandatory for 16-year-olds to maintain enforced beauty standards.



The Circle

Starring: Madelyn Rusinyak, Darian Holt, Savannah Miller

Where: Netflix

Season seven of the social-media-based reality show in which contestants are locked down in an apartment complex and try to charm and bluff their way to high popularity rankings.



Officer Black Belt

Starring: Kim Woo-bin, Kim Sung-kyun

Where: Netflix

South Korean action comedy in which a probation officer who manages violent criminals after their release teams up with a skilled martial artist to monitor and prevent crimes.

MUSIC MATTERS

Saudi rapper Asayel discusses her debut single, 'Asliyah'

Adam Grundey Dubai

Saudi rapper, singer and songwriter Asayel Bishi (who uses just her first name as an artist) has released her debut single, "Asliyah" on MDLBeast Records. In it, according to a press release, she "addresses naysayers and doubters with a playful smirk, her words laced with Hejazi slang (Bishi was born and raised in Makkah but now lives in Jeddah) and a wisdom beyond her years."

The song is billed as "a statement of intent" and will serve, for most, as an

introduction to Bishi's music. Her flow, on this track at least, is deliberate, closer to a spoken-word performance than a rap. And that was a conscious decision, she says.

"I'm actually telling a story. I'm not really rapping and I'm not singing," she says. "It's like I'm talking to someone."

"This is stuff that really happened to me and stuff that I really want people to know. I'm basically telling how people have mocked my style. And the reasons why they don't like my style," she continues. "And at the end, I'm

Saudi rapper, singer and songwriter Asayel, who recently released her debut single, 'Asliyah.' Image supplied



saying, like, 'OK. I'm here. And I'm entering the scene.'"

The track's colorful accompanying video was shot on the streets of Jeddah.

"All the locations in the video are very famous (here). The director (Ahmed Lebleb) wanted to reflect the image that, here in Jeddah, you can do these (creative) things. It's not just about the beach and swimming," Bishi explains.

"Asliyah," Bishi tells Arab News, was the first song she wrote in Arabic.

"When I started out, I was writing in English, but

when I started working with MDLBeast, they told me, 'OK, now you need to focus on the Arabic side because you need to communicate with your community,'" she says.

"They also told me about local artists — I should be listening to, like Moayad and Dafencil."

It's been an inspiring change, Bishi explains.

"I have purpose now," she says. "I want to do it to improve myself, but I also want to do it to encourage other girls to go out and to sing, to perform, to write, to rap ... to build this female music community."

Weekend



DJ Cosmicat is one of several Saudi artists also set to perform at this year's Azimuth festival in AlUla.

James Blake

The UK singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, Grammy winner, and in-demand DJ and producer has managed the rare feat of maintaining both critical and commercial success for the majority of his career since first coming to prominence in his homeland with his eponymous 2011 debut album. That's a feat which is even more impressive when you consider his penchant for stylistic experimentation, inspired by his love of electronic music. But whatever's going on musically, his soulful soprano and smart, honest lyrics are a constant — his popularity as a collaborator among hip-hop's A-listers tells you plenty about the latter.

Top tracks: "I Need A Forest Fire," "Coming Back," "Say What You Will," "Where's The Catch?"



MUSIC MATTERS

Who to see at Azimuth

The major acts performing at this year's festival, which runs Sept. 19-21 in AlUla



The Blaze

Paris-based ambient electronic music duo consisting of cousins Jonathan and Guillaume Alric. They're not the most prolific of acts — releasing just eight singles and two albums in seven years — but the high-quality of their output, not just in terms of songs, but visually too (their music videos have led to headlines like Fader's "Somebody Give The

Blaze an Oscar Already"), suggests that's a wise strategy. Their music is a slow-burn delight that combines elements of pop, house, and dub to create something all their own. "Blaze" is French slang for "name," but, Guillaume told Fader, "the principal meaning is warm and strong things — love, and hope."

Top tracks: "Territory," "Heaven," "She," "Places"

Ben Bohmer

Critically acclaimed German DJ-producer's live shows generally see him embellish his tracks with live synthesizers and effects. He's known for his progressive house sound, which also

incorporates indie electronica elements. The Azimuth audience may well get to hear some as-yet-unreleased material too, as his new album, "Bloom," drops Sept. 27.

Top tracks: "Breathing," "Begin Again," "Home"



Jamie Jones

The Los Angeles-based Welsh DJ-producer is a busy man. Not content with putting out a regular stream of his own music and being a good enough DJ to top Resident Advisor's rankings in 2011, he's also a member of the band Hot Natured, head of a record label, host of a radio show, and founder of online store House of Hot, which sells clothing, records, and artwork. In an interview with Wales Online, Jones credited his mother for giving him the emotional support to pursue his dreams of a career in music. He recalled that she told him she didn't care what he did as long as he was happy, "and I think



to hear that from your parent at an early age allows you the freedom to not care about some of the other pressures that life throws at you."

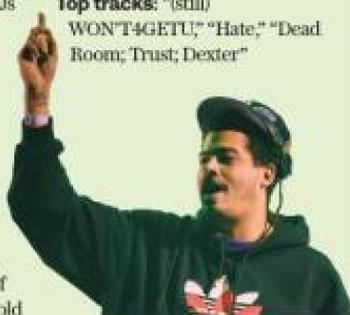
Top tracks: "Lose My Mind," "Fine Fine Baby," "Summertime," "La Musa"

Seth Troxler

The American DJ-producer famed for his mammoth live sets topped the Resident Advisor Top 100 DJs poll the year after Jamie Jones, in 2012. Like Jones, he's a keen entrepreneur — founder of several labels and also owner of a barbecue restaurant in London, Smokey Tails. He's known primarily on house and techno music, with a solid grounding in the Detroit (he's a Michigan native) and Chicago sounds. But that's not the sum of his music by any means. As he told

Forbes in an interview last year, "The best genre is no genre. I try really not to be definable."

Top tracks: "(still) WON'T GET U," "Hate," "Dead Room," "Trust," "Dexter"



Ghostly Kisses

French-Canadian singer-songwriter Margaux Sauve heads up this musical project, which is also a collaboration with producer Louis-Etienne Santais, her real-life partner. Sauve's singular vocals and gift for melodic melancholy have brought Ghostly Kisses international acclaim, although their most-recent album "Darkroom" saw a shift in atmosphere. Sauve told Montreal Rocks shortly before its release, "So far our music has been felt,



mainly, for our introvert fans, but we wanted them also to feel it in their body and be able to move with the music. That was kind of a goal. I think this album is a bit more affirmative and maybe a bit more confident." In that same interview, Sauve also mentioned that Ghostly Kisses' fans are "mainly from" overseas, citing Saudi Arabia as one of the countries where her music is most popular.

Top tracks: "Empty Note," "Golden Eyes," "There's No More Space"