SAUDI ARABIA
'CAIRO NIGHTS' BRINGS EGYPT'S LIVELY URBAN CULTURE TO JEDDAH **Page 5**



OPINION
COULD ROUHANI OR LARIJANI BE IRAN'S NEXT SUPREME LEADER?
By Hassan Al-Mustafa
Page 9





BUSINESS
ARAMCO AWARDS JAFURAH GAS FIELD CONTRACTS **Page 11**

&FINALLY
ELYANNA MAKES A STATEMENT AT GLASTONBURY
Page 16



MONDAY, July 1, 2024
Dul Hijjah 25, 1445
www.arabnews.com

ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

SINCE 1975

MIDDLE EAST WAR

80,000 displaced as fighting rages in Gaza neighborhood

• Families trapped as Israeli tanks fire shells toward Palestinian homes

Arab News Jeddah

Israeli forces advanced further on Sunday into the Shejaia neighborhood of northern Gaza and also pushed deeper into western and central Rafah in the south, killing at least six Palestinians and destroying several homes, residents said.

Israeli tanks, which moved back into Shejaia four days ago, fired shells toward several houses, leaving families trapped inside and unable to leave, the residents said.

The UN humanitarian agency OCHA estimated that "60,000 to 80,000 people were displaced" from Shejaia since new fighting broke out there on Thursday and the army issued evacuation orders.

While the offensive focused on Gaza, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, one man was killed, and five were wounded in an Israeli strike near the city of Tulkarm, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

The Israeli military said forces operating in Shejaia had killed several Palestinian gunmen over the past day and found military infrastructure inside a UN school as well as dozens of weapons and "valuable intelligence documents."

On Saturday, the military announced the death of two Israeli soldiers in northern Gaza.

In another raid in Shejaia, the forces located a "terrorist war room" at a clinic, said the military, which again accused Hamas of "embedding itself in civilian structures for terror purposes."

Hamas denies using civilian sites such as schools and hospitals for military purposes.

The armed wing of Hamas and the allied Islamic Jihad reported fierce fighting in both Shejaia and Rafah, saying their fighters had fired anti-tank rockets and mortar bombs against Israeli forces operating there.

More than eight months into Israel's air and ground war in Gaza, militants continue to stage attacks on Israeli forces, operating in areas that the Israeli army said it had gained control over months ago.

Israeli tanks pushed deeper into several districts in the east, west, and center of Rafah, near the border with Egypt, on Sunday, and medics said six people had been killed in an Israeli strike on a house in Shabboura in the heart of the city.

• **Related reports** Pages 6&7



A Palestinian boy hugs his mother as she speaks to her daughter on Sunday at their home that was shelled in Israeli bombardment in southern Gaza Strip. AFP



Frankly Speaking Page 3

NEW HOPE

Yemeni sides resume prisoner swap talks in Oman

Saeed Al-Batati Al-Mukalla

Yemen's internationally recognized government and the Houthi militia resumed prisoner exchange negotiations in the Omani capital on Sunday, raising hopes for a fresh deal that may free hundreds of war detainees.

Sponsored by UN Yemen envoy Hans Grundberg and the International Committee of the Red Cross, five Yemeni government delegates and the same number of Houthi delegates met in Muscat on Sunday for the first session of negotiations to reach a new prisoner exchange agreement as rights organizations urged the end of war prisoners' suffering.

Majed Fadhail, a spokesperson for the government delegation, told Arab News that the Yemeni government seeks to achieve a deal that would lead to the release of all of the abductees held by the Houthis, including prominent politician Mohammed Qahtan.

Abdulkader Al-Murtada, head of the Houthi National Committee for Prisoners' Affairs, said upon his arrival in Muscat that he hoped this round of talks would be fruitful and lead to a new agreement.

The Geneva-based SAM human rights organization and the Mothers of Abductees Association, which represents thousands of female relatives of war prisoners, issued a joint appeal to the Yemeni government and the Houthis to reach an agreement to release all prisoners and reunite them with their families.

The Brief

SAUDI FILMS

The Saudi Film Commission has joined the Association of Film Commissioners International, a global network of film boards. **P4**

DELHI AIRPORT

The deadly roof collapse at New Delhi's airport has triggered concerns over India's multibillion-dollar infrastructure drive. **P8**

JOBS DRIVE

Saudi Arabia's overall unemployment rate stabilized at 3.5 percent in the first quarter of 2024, marking a yearly decrease of 0.8 percentage points. **P12**

'BLUE TREASURE TROVE'

A deeper understanding of life in the Red Sea

Saudi diver Faisal Abdulsalam reflects on beauty to be found in the depths

Tareq Al-Thaqafi Makkah

Professional diver Faisal Abdulsalam says that beneath the surface of the Red Sea lies a "blue treasure trove teeming with life and secrets."

He believes that the Red Sea is one of the world's most beautiful — its climate is perfect, while its rich marine life, clear visibility and numerous historical shipwrecks make it a diver's paradise. But beyond its natural beauty, the Red Sea offers other benefits too.

Abdulsalam explained to Arab News that being underwater is transformative for him, dispelling negative energy and restoring his zest for life.

"Seawater is rich in magnesium, which helps relax muscles and reduce stress," he said.

"Free diving as a sport and the sea's natural properties provide multi-faceted benefits for mental, physical, and cognitive health."

This combination, he said, provides "benefits for mental health, along with opportunities for meditation and discovering God's creations."



Abdulsalam, whose relationship with the sea was sparked in childhood by his father, went on to develop a love of free diving.

"It is not just Saudi divers who are drawn to these waters," he said of the Red Sea. "Divers from every corner of the globe are … drawn by its vibrant coral reefs and warm beaches."

He has also increasingly spotted the presence of endangered species, such as turtles, which are being cared for by Saudi Arabia's various conservation efforts for marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

Detailed report Page 5

2 Riyals • Vol. XLIX
No. 208 • 16 pages



Another first as we host the inaugural Esports World Cup in Riyadh. The start of a new era for esports with Saudi Arabia creating the global platform the sport deserves.

Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki
Saudi sports minister

Radar

KSA today



Aseer
Al-Habala Park

Enjoy cable car rides, lush greenery with hidden waterfalls, and a variety of dining options for families seeking both tranquility and adventure. For more details, check visitsaudi.com.



Dhahran
Art Studio

Practice art, attend workshops and talk to local artists at the Art Studio in Ithra Tower. Activities are held daily except on Sundays, from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m., until the end of June. More details on ithra.com.



Jeddah
Sea journey

Enjoy a boat trip to the Red Sea island of Bayada, a few hours from Jeddah, where you can visit beautiful sites and stop for a snorkeling session. See the Hala Yalla app for more information.



Taif
Rose factory

Discover the process of rose oil extraction and explore the authentic scents of Taif's roses amid heritage activities and the beauty of nature. For booking and more details, visit Hala Yalla app.

The Register
THE PICTURES THAT MARK THE DAY



Riyadh Gov. Prince Faisal bin Bandar met with the recently appointed Ambassador of Sri Lanka Omar Lee Ameer Ajwad on Sunday in Riyadh.

During the meeting, they discussed bilateral ties and cooperation.

Ajwad praised the Kingdom's recent developments and the success of the 2024 Hajj season. Prince Faisal wished the Sri Lankan ambassador success in his diplomatic mission.

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



'STAY TUNED'

Jin

South Korean singer and songwriter Kim Seokjin, who is professionally known as Jin, is attempting to fill the void left behind by BTS members having to serve in the army.

Following his recent discharge from the military, BTS' Jin has confirmed to fans that he has been working on different projects which will be released and aired soon.

A fan posted on Weverse, a South Korean social media app developed by BigHit Entertainment, and asked Jin what he had been up to recently. Jin replied: "I have been recording and filming variety shows and I am steadily carrying out the plans I had established during my time in the military."

'TOO OLD FOR THIS'

Rihanna

Barbadian singer and beauty mogul Rihanna shared a glimpse into her playful and sweet dynamic with American rapper A$AP Rocky, her partner and the father of her children.

The clip, which she shared on Instagram, showed the "We Found Love" singer, 36, enjoying her time with Rocky, 35, rapping "TGIF" by GloRilla and playfully dancing.

Rihanna put on the mini performance in the video, while Rocky watched with his hands on his hips and a humorous look of disapproval on his face.

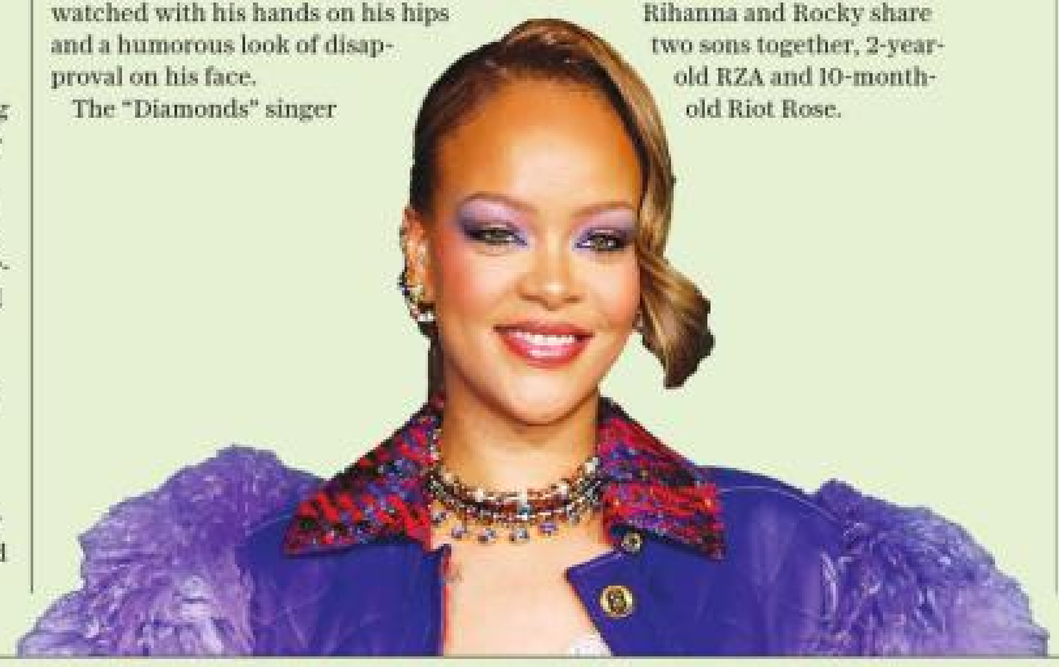
The "Diamonds" singer responded by kicking it up a notch, dancing even more raucously and whipping around her jacket before throwing it toward the camera.

The video showed Rihanna chuckling and picking up the jacket while Rocky shook his head before saying: "I'm too old for this."

Rihanna captioned the video "Happy Friday," which received sweet comments from fans and fellow artists.

Keke Palmer wrote "I love this," while Willow Smith said they were "the most iconic" couple.

Rihanna and Rocky share two sons together, 2-year-old RZA and 10-month-old Riot Rose.



Today's Number

2.7m

Saudi aid agency KSrelief, pumped 2,790,000 liters of drinking water and 2,728,000 liters of non-drinking water into tanks, as part of its efforts water supply and environmental sanitation project in Al-Khawkah directorate of Hodeidah, Yemen, Saudi Press Agency reported.

Review

Jayla

SULAFA ALKHUNAIZI

Saudi beauty brand Jayla offers a range of body and skincare products.

From perfumes to body scrubs, the products for women and men are made using top-notch ingredients, ideal for anyone looking to elevate their bodycare routine at an affordable price.

Many of Jayla's bodycare collections are inspired by iconic perfumes, including two of Chanel's — Coco Mademoiselle and Chanel No.5. Inspired by Coco Mademoiselle, the "Class Bouquet" collection contains four body products: whipped soap, scrub, body oil, and body butter. Each product in this collection smells like an elevated version of the original perfume.

The collection has a beautiful concoction of perfume notes: musk, mandarin, Turkish rose and vanilla. Jayla also has collections inspired by Dior perfumes: Miss Dior, Gris, and Poison.

Their scented oils and body butters are rich in vitamins leaving the skin deeply nourished and with a divine sillage and aroma that lasts all day.

Their sugar-based scrubs are mixed with a blend of shea, mango and cocoa butter, leaving the skin soft and perfumed.



The Region
The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Jeddah

- Spanning a colossal 30,000 square meters, Inflata City in Bahrain, an inflatable haven designed for kids and adults alike, is an indoor heart-pounding experience featuring a massive obstacle course perfect for thrill-seekers of all ages. The venue also includes a food court and carnival games. It will run until July 13. For more details, check visitqatar.com.

- The ultimate fitness experience at Dubai Sports World returns at the Dubai World Trade Centre in Zaabeel Halls. Eleven sports will be featured on more than 40 courts and pitches, along with adrenaline-pumping challenges, an active fun zone, and free access to the gym. Until Sept. 8.

- Al-Jasra Handicraft Centre is the ideal place to immerse yourself in the rich tapestry of Bahrain's cultural heritage. Visitors can participate in a range of workshops in traditional crafts, like copper shaping, and in doing so help preserve the country's cultural legacy. The workshops run until Aug. 31.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

July 1	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghreb	Isha
Makkah	4:11	5:38	12:22	3:42	7:05	8:35
Madinah	4:02	5:32	12:23	3:43	7:12	8:42
Riyadh	3:33	5:04	11:55	3:15	6:45	8:15
Abha	4:10	5:34	12:11	3:34	6:48	8:18
Dammam	3:13	4:46	11:41	3:07	6:35	8:05

FRANKLY SPEAKING with Katie Jensen

The Interview



Arab News Dubai



(Main and below) Firas Maksad, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute in Washington, DC, told 'Frankly Speaking' host Katie Jensen that the arguments posed by the candidates during the debate should not be considered their official stance. AN photos

FIRAS MAKSAD
SENIOR FELLOW AT THE MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE

The Arab verdict on US election debate

Prominent Middle East analyst assesses Biden-Trump debate, how Gaza might affect the US election outcome, and possible scenarios for an Israel-Hezbollah conflict

If the statements made by US President Joe Biden and his rival Donald Trump during Thursday's election debate are anything to go by, it will be bad news for the Palestinian people no matter who wins the White House race in November.

Indeed, in the first televised head to head of the US election campaign, Biden reiterated his commitment to siding with Israel in the war in Gaza and accused Hamas of resisting efforts to end the conflict.

For his part, Trump called Biden "a weak and a very bad Palestinian" — using the name of the national group as a slur — and argued that Israel should be given a free hand to finish the job in Gaza.

Firas Maksad, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute in Washington, DC, says the arguments posed by the candidates during the debate should not be considered their official stance.

"This is American electioneering at its worst," Maksad said during an appearance on the Arab News current affairs show "Frankly Speaking." "We all know that American elections tend to be the silly season.

"Candidates will say anything to get elected pretty much, only to turn around and change their position, or at least adjust their position, and in favor of a more nuanced one once they are in fact in the Oval Office. So, I think much of what was said (ought to be taken) with a grain of salt."

Maksad said it was "quite shameful" for Trump to use the term Palestinian in a "derogatory" way in a bid to undermine Biden by painting him as being relatively pro-Palestinian. "This, while both candidates were falling over themselves to demonstrate their support for Israel."

If those watching the debate were hoping to learn more about where the rivals stood on the big foreign policy questions of the day, they would have been sorely disappointed as Biden and Trump focused mainly on domestic issues.

There were, however, some minor indications of similarities and differences on Middle East policy.

"President Biden — very much in favor of diplomacy. Some might say even accommodating Iran in the region, its aspirations," said Maksad. "President Trump — much more confrontational when it comes to Iran, looking to contain its influence in the region.

"But that's not to say that there aren't similarities, too. I think, when it comes to regional integration, a possible normalization between Saudi Arabia and Israel, you see a bipartisanship on these issues here in Washington, DC."

Gaza, meanwhile, has become a deeply polarizing issue in the US, even beyond the Arab and Muslim communities, with protests taking place on university campuses across the country.

Asked whether the war is likely to influence the outcome of the election, however, Maksad said it was low down on the list of priorities for the majority of US voters.

"I think it's both unimportant but also very crucial," he said. "If you take the laundry list of issues for most Americans that they care about, priorities, I don't think Gaza features anywhere near the top."



Candidates will say anything to get elected pretty much, only to change their position ... in favor of a more nuanced one once they are in fact in the Oval Office.

Since the conflict in Gaza began in the wake of the Oct. 7 Hamas-led attack on Israel, there have been fears that the war would spill over into the wider region. Lebanon, in particular, is seen as being especially vulnerable following months of tit-for-tat exchanges between Israel and Hezbollah.

Maksad, who is himself Lebanese and an expert on the nation's troubled past, believes there are three likely scenarios, as all-out war appears increasingly inevitable.

"One is the current diplomatic efforts that are being spearheaded by Amos Hochstein, President Biden's envoy on this issue, point person on this issue, who will be visiting areas and coordinating very closely with the French presidential envoy on this matter," he said.

A diplomatic breakthrough of this kind would mean finding a way for Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah to step back from his position of a permanent ceasefire in Gaza.

"That might be through some Israeli withdrawal from the disputed points along the Blue Line, the border between Israel and Lebanon, northern Gaza being something to watch out for," Maksad said.

WATCH FRANKLY SPEAKING

Find the full interview at arabnews.com/FranklySpeaking

Scan this code to visit

"But if the diplomatic breakthrough that we're all looking, and hoping, for in the coming weeks does not materialize, scenario two here is a limited war ... limited to the deep populated areas of northern Israel and southern Lebanon.

"And the US and French diplomacy would then kick in to try and bring things back with the diplomatic track. And that could help dislodge the current stalemate."

The "catastrophic scenario," meanwhile, would be a situation that "starts out as an attempt at a limited conflict, a limited war in northern Israel and south Lebanon, very quickly expands to population centers like Beirut and Haifa and beyond that. And we see the 2006 scenario on steroids where Israel is flattening entire blocks of southern Beirut."

The UK's Daily Telegraph newspaper recently suggested that Rafic Hariri International Airport in Beirut is being used by Hezbollah to store and smuggle weapons. Although Hezbollah has denied the allegation, there are fears Israel may use the claims as a justification to bomb the airport.

"I'm not too sure that Israel needs a justification to bomb Beirut international airport," said Maksad. "They have done so in the past. They've done so repeatedly. They've cratered the runways. They have done so as far back as the 1960s when the PLO was the major concern operating out of Lebanon.

"So, there's a long track record there of Israel targeting Lebanese infrastructure. And I'm not too sure that this particular article in the Telegraph is what the Israelis are looking for.

"But that said, also given my Lebanese ancestry, I mean, I think every Lebanese knows that the airport is by and large under the influence and control of Hezbollah or Hezbollah's allies."

He added: "Whether in fact the Telegraph article is accurate in that it's being used as a storage base for Hezbollah missiles is something that's beyond my capability in terms of being able to assess that."

As turmoil rages in the Middle East at the very moment that the US is turning its attention inward to the looming election, doubts have been raised about the possibility of securing the hotly anticipated deal between the US and Saudi Arabia.

"I see very low prospects of the Saudi-US deal being able to move forward," said Maksad. "In fact, it will continue to be tethered to an Israeli leg with a precondition of a viable, non-reversible pathway towards a Palestinian state.

"But the politics is simply not there on the Israeli side, but also on the Palestinian side. This is the proposition that is entirely devoid of reality on the Israeli and Palestinian side.

"That said, the deal itself, the bilateral aspects of this deal, are largely negotiated and done. Whether it relates to a defense treaty or civil nuclear cooperation or commerce and AI and cyber, those issues have all been successfully negotiated by both the US and by Riyadh.

"But the issue is that if you are seeking a treaty which requires congressional, mainly Senate ratification, it is difficult to see that being passed in the Senate short of normalization with Israel.

"And normalization with Israel, given the very clear Saudi preconditions on the Palestinian state, or a pathway to a Palestinian state, are simply not there."

News Saudi Arabia

EDUCATION

Mawhiba launches summer program for gifted students

Training to enhance students' abilities and skills: official

Arab News Riyadh

The King Abdulaziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity, "Mawhiba," today launched its 2024 summer enrichment initiatives, the Saudi Press Agency reported.



The programs offer intensive scientific enrichment in research, scientific and technical fields. SPA

These encompass the Mawhiba Academic Enrichment Program, the Mawhiba Research Enrichment Program, the Mawhiba Universal Enrichment Program, and the Mawhiba Ambassadors Program. The programs will be conducted across more than 100 sessions in 16 cities.

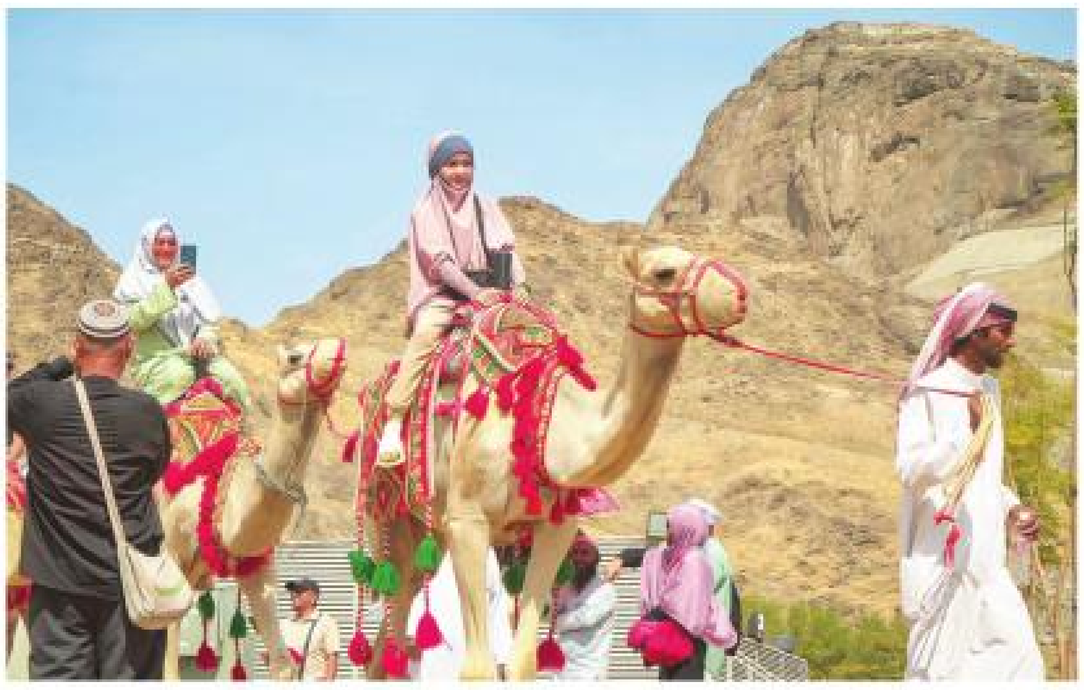
The programs, which began on Sunday, will run for three, four, or six weeks, depending on the specifics of each program. About 13,000 students are participating, including 450 students from Arab countries such as Syria, Jordan, Palestine, the UAE, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Iraq, the Sultanate of Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Yemen, Egypt and South Africa.

According to the SPA, the programs offer intensive scientific enrichment in research, scientific and technical fields. Students will gain numerous scientific and personal skills, as well as engage in activities and field trips at the program's headquarters and elsewhere.

There are 12,219 students participating in the academic enrichment program, which spans 68 programs in 16 cities. Additionally, 480 students are enrolled in the universal enrichment program, and 485 students are taking part in the research enrichment program, which comprises 14 distinct programs.

HIGHLIGHTS

Students will gain numerous scientific and personal skills, as well as engage in activities and field trips at the program's headquarters and elsewhere.



Glorious history Held at the Hira Cultural District in Makkah, Makkah Caravan activities provided an enriching experience for visitors and pilgrims, simulating the ancient pilgrimage caravans. The activities allowed visitors to explore places located along the pilgrimage routes used in the past, including deserts, oases, and archeological sites, shedding light on their rich histories. SPA

ENTERTAINMENT

Saudi Film Commission's agreement with AFCI to elevate KSA film industry

Arab News Riyadh

The Saudi Film Commission has officially joined the Association of Film Commissioners International, a global network of more than 360 film boards from more than 40 countries, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

Also known as AFCI, the association supports, empowers and connects film boards the world over, fostering sustainable and integrated development in the international film industry, according to SPA. Through this membership, the Saudi Film Commission gains access to a range of services, including global networking with film authorities, insights into international best practices, special training and development programs, and the latest updates on industry advancements.

Joining the association allows the Saudi Film Commission to elevate the Kingdom's film industry and position Saudi cinema on the global stage. This membership also empowers national production companies and local talent, facilitating the exchange of experiences and knowledge with international counterparts.

The Space

Civility was missing in first Biden-Trump debate



FAISAL AL-SHAMMERI

During the presidential campaigns in the US, it is customary for the candidates to debate each other at least once. The debates address the relevant problems for America and the world. But the debates do not make the final decisions on how many Americans vote. Candidates hope to change the minds of undecided voters.

The first debate for the 1960 election between Kennedy and Nixon had 66 million viewers out of a population of 179 million. The 1980 debates between Carter and Reagan had 80 million viewers out of a population of 226 million. The debate between George W. Bush and Al Gore in 2000 was watched by 46.6 million people, and the debate between Obama and Romney in 2012 had 67 million viewers. The Trump–Hillary Clinton debate in 2016 had 84 million viewers. CNN revealed that 47.9 million viewers watched the debate between Biden and Trump a few days ago. The debate between these two candidates in 2020 had 73.1 million views.

The debates address the relevant problems for US and the world. But these do not make the final decisions on how many Americans vote.

The June 27 debate showed two old candidates. Biden is 81 and Trump is 78. But Trump looked healthier than Biden, who struggled with his words. For instance, Biden said that "Trump invaded Ukraine." Of course, he meant Putin not Trump. The debate made history because it was the first time a sitting president and a former president had ever debated. The two disagreed over abortion, immigration, foreign policy, inflation and more. The two candidates were expressing their differences over the issues.

What defines presidential debates in the US is the format, the style and the substance. All these factors contribute to the degree of civility in the debate. Trump denied that the election in 2020 was fair. He said: "I would accept the results of the 2024 election if it's fair and legal." Biden replied: "You're a whiner, and you lost the first time."

But Biden did not answer the question on the national debt. He tackled that issue by saying that it would be better to raise taxes on the rich. Then, he moved to a new government spending program, Medicare. But he misspoke, saying: "We finally beat Medicare." Trump took advantage of this. "Well, he's right: He did beat Medicare," he said, adding: "He beat it to death." Trump later said: "I really don't know what he said at the end of that sentence. I don't think he knows what he said, either."

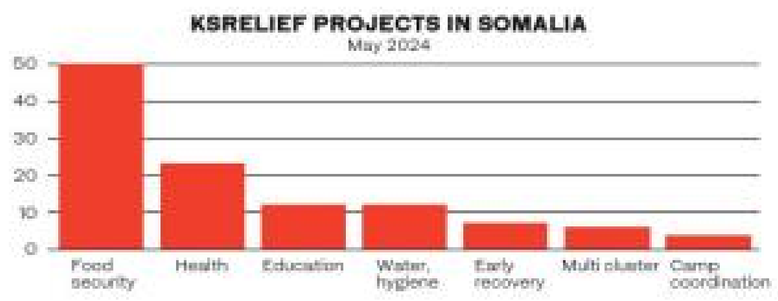
However, Biden also severely attacked Trump. He said: "I've never heard so much malarkey in my life." Then he charged that Trump described the American war dead as "suckers" and "losers." And in reference to his son, Beau, who served in Iraq, he said, pointing to Trump: "My son was not a sucker. You're a sucker. You're the loser."

Biden's offensive lines included the following sentences. Trump "encouraged those folks to go to Capitol Hill, and he sat there for three hours watching," Biden said, referring to the Jan. 6 Capitol attack in 2021 . Afterward, Biden intensified his attack on Trump by accusing him of bad ethics. He said: "You have the morals of an alleycat."

On the economy, Biden made it known that Trump "is the only president other than Herbert Hoover who had lost more jobs than he had when he began." He tried to portray Trump as a candidate who favored the rich. He confused the words "trillionaire" and "billionaire."

• Faisal Al-Shammeri is a political analyst. X: @Mr_Alshammeri

The Day's FIGURES



Source: ksrelief.org

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Linguistics

Saudi efforts to promote Arabic in Korea highlighted

The Saudi Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission organized a seminar at the Seoul International Book Fair 2024, where the Kingdom is the guest of honor.

Abdulaziz Al-Dayel, cultural attache at the Saudi Embassy, led the seminar, titled "Saudi Arabia's Role in Teaching Arabic in Korea," emphasizing the historical significance of Arabic and Saudi Arabia's efforts to promote it globally. **SPA Seoul**

Transformation

Virtual court sees 110,000 requests in 2024

The Saudi Ministry of Justice has said the Virtual Enforcement Court in the Kingdom has received more than 110,000 requests that were automatically processed and completed during 2024, while the number of services provided to enforcement parties reached more than 2 million.

The Virtual Enforcement Court reduces enforcement procedures from 12 steps to two without human intervention, saving resources and visit times. **SPA Riyadh**

Tourism

Rural farms in Madinah attract visitors

The Madinah region continues to attract visitors to numerous rural farms that have become popular natural retreats.

These locations have been developed to accommodate individuals and groups, providing guided tours and entertainment programs, along with a variety of food outlets.

Visitors to the rural farms can take part in a range of activities and programs. These include educational sessions on farming methods and crop care. **SPA Madinah**

Follow Arab News Briefs all through the day @ArabNews

UNDER THE SURFACE

Deep feelings: into the blue with Saudi diver

Faisal Abdulsalam discusses Red Sea's beauty, encounters with marine life

Tareq Al-Thaqafi Makkah

In the depths of the Red Sea lies a world of wonder that professional Saudi diver Faisal Abdulsalam describes as a "blue treasure trove teeming with life and secrets."

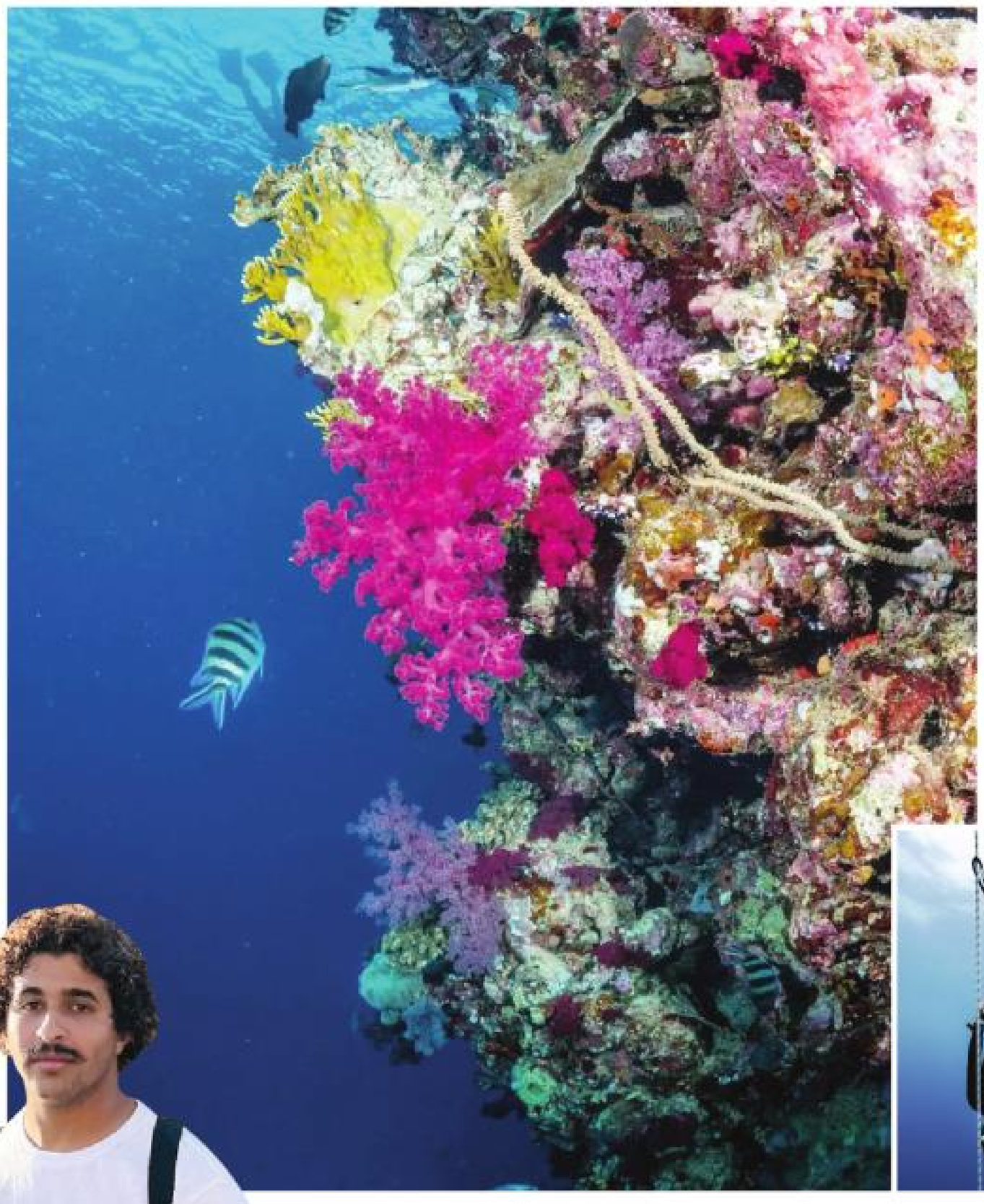
Abdulsalam, who spends a lot of time underwater, told Arab News that the experience is transformative for him, dispelling negative energy and revitalizing his life.

The allure of the Red Sea extends far beyond our borders, Absulsalam said. "It is not just Saudi divers who are drawn to these waters. Divers from every corner of the globe are constantly on the lookout for chances to plunge into our waters, drawn by its vibrant coral reefs and warm beaches," he said.

Of his interest in diving, he said: "My relationship with the sea began in childhood with my father, as our outings were mainly sea trips and recreational activities.

"As I grew older, my love for sea trips did not fade. I found that free diving was the best option for exploring the sea and its depths."

Abdulsalam learned free diving, which involves holding one's breath while descending without breathing apparatus, from Ishak Abdulkhaleq, known as the deepest diver in Saudi Arabia.



Main: A recent documentary film by Red Sea Global and Warner Bros. Discovery explores the underwater beauty of the Red Sea. SPA

Inset: Faisal Abdulsalam, a diver who spends a lot of time underwater, told Arab News that the experience is transformative for him, dispelling negative energy and revitalizing his life. Supplied





It is well known among divers that we have access to a blue treasure full of secrets and bustling with beautiful creatures.
Faisal Abdulsalam
Saudi diver

He noted that professional training is important and recommended specialized centers, such as the Jeddah Free Diving School, for those aspiring to dive professionally.

Beyond its natural beauty, the Red Sea offers unexpected therapeutic benefits. Abdulsalam recounted his personal experience with depression, sharing how spending time by the sea became a significant remedy.

"Seawater is rich in magnesium, which helps relax muscles and reduce stress," he explained. "The combination of free diving as a sport and the sea's natural properties provides multi-faceted benefits for mental, physical, and cognitive health. This combination provides threefold benefits for mental health, along with opportunities for meditation and discovering God's creations."

Describing his most memorable underwater encounter, Abdulsalam recalled his first shark sighting. "I was amazed and carried a lot of fear, but it did not approach me and swam by calmly. It was a beautiful moment of facing my fear."

Abdulsalam said that the Red Sea is one of the world's most beautiful seas. Its suitable diving climate, rich marine life, clear visibility, and numerous historical shipwrecks make it a diver's paradise.

He also noted the increasing presence of endangered species like turtles, which are being taken care of by Saudi Arabia's various conservation efforts for both marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

However, Abdulsalam feels that public beaches directly facing the open sea are still quite lacking. He said most Saudi beaches are private or located near shipping lanes, detracting from their tourist appeal. "They are not as lively or enjoyable as the open sea with its natural beauty," he said.

Abdulsalam hopes for future development of large public beaches with proper safety measures and awareness systems to ensure safe enjoyment of the marine environment.

"It is well known among divers that we have access to a blue treasure full of secrets and bustling with beautiful creatures. We are amazed by the Red Sea's beauty and its uniqueness," he said.

'ONCE AGAIN'

Cairo Nights brings Egypt's lively urban culture to Jeddah

Nada Jan Jeddah

City Walk is back with the theme "Once Again," and boasting a new zone, Cairo Nights, which is a portal into the lively streets of the Egyptian capital.

This year's season includes new attractions and zones, while others have been renamed and rearranged to bring a fresh new experience for visitors.

Cairo Nights' alleys are lined with shops brimming with authentic Egyptian goods, and sellers tempting visitors with their offerings.

Located on the side of the Red Sea Mall gate, the zone presents a fresh scene and vibe, with the sounds of Egyptian music and the fragrance of the country's cuisine floating by.

On entering, the Arabic Theater on the right displays a poster advertising the Egyptian comedy play "Musical School" on its billboard. You see a cafe called Qahwat El-Set, or "The Lady's Coffee," opposite, where pictures of acclaimed Egyptian singers decorate the walls and traditional tables and chairs add a nostalgic atmosphere.

The Khan Al-Khalili alley is filled with shops selling all that is related to Egypt, from figurines of respected singers and miniatures of the pyramids and the Great Sphinx of Giza to traditional instruments like the drum and oud, paintings, tableware, belly-dancing outfits, and snacks.



Cairo Nights' alleys are lined with shops brimming with authentic Egyptian goods, and sellers tempting visitors with their offerings. AN photo

Right where the alley ends on the left side, Locanda Royal Hotel awaits those looking for a fun time with friends and family. The experience takes visitors through an interactive story told by a new narrator at each stop. A certain task must be fulfilled before moving to the next one.

Next to the hotel, a house of horror stands tall offering visitors "Raya and Sakina," a terrifying experience inspired by the story of the infamous Egyptian sisters. The scarers inside the house are all dressed in Egyptian clothes, consisting of a gown called a jalabiya, and traditional headwear.

The zone is filled with other attractions and dining locations, like Tant Restaurant and Gaw open cafe where a large statue of the singer Umm Kulthum is proudly displayed.

Cairo Nights will run for this season only — along with other zones including China Town, Bubbly, and Fun Land — until Aug. 17.

FAST FACT

- Cairo Nights will run for this season only — along with other zones including China Town, Bubbly, and Fun Land — until Aug. 17.
- Attractions include a house of horrors offering visitors 'Raya and Sakina,' a terrifying experience inspired by the story of the infamous Egyptian sisters.

CONFLICT

Sudan facing crisis 'beyond imagination': Martin Griffiths

UN humanitarian chief says 750,000 people at imminent risk of famine

Arab News London

Sudan is facing a humanitarian crisis "beyond imagination," according to Martin Griffiths, the UN's undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs, with 750,000 people at imminent risk of famine and conditions set to deteriorate further.



People fleeing violence in the southeastern town of Sennar arrive in Gedaref in eastern Sudan where they are seeking refuge. File/AFP

In an interview with The Guardian, Griffiths contrasted the intense media coverage and diplomatic focus on Gaza with the unfolding and largely overlooked human-made tragedy in Sudan.

Statistics released by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification on Tuesday reveal that 495,000 Palestinians in Gaza are facing catastrophic conditions, characterized by an "extreme lack of food, starvation, and exhaustion of coping capacities" over the next six months.

In Sudan, however, an estimated 755,262 people are facing similar "phase 5" catastrophic conditions, with an additional 8.5 million people in "phase 4" emergency conditions, marked by acute malnutrition, high disease levels, and a rapidly increasing risk of hunger-related deaths.

"These are staggering numbers. It's beyond imagination," Griffiths said. "I think historically it is a huge moment."

Griffiths concurred with US officials' estimates that, without improved access to humanitarian relief and increased international donations, the situation in Sudan could surpass the historic famine in Ethiopia, which resulted in the deaths of 1 million people between 1983 and 1985, according to UN estimates.

"Sudan is comparable in horror, in potential tragedy, if not worse. But it's not moving in the right direction, and it's not getting international attention on the level it should," Griffith said.

"There was massive international attention (on the Ethiopian famine), and massive generosity ... whereas in Sudan, partly because journalists aren't given visas to get to places, it's very difficult to get the story out."

The 2024 Sudan humanitarian needs and response plan, launched late last year, called for $2.7 billion to address the crisis.

> **Sudan is not moving in the right direction, and it's not getting international attention on the level it should.**

However, as of this week, only 17 percent of the required funds had been raised, reflecting the average global response rate for humanitarian appeals.

"Tragically, it's not that unusual these days," he said.

"It's partly because the needs have grown, but the funding hasn't."

A critical issue in western Sudan's Darfur region is the blockade of aid at the Adre crossing from Chad by Sudanese armed forces.

Griffiths mentioned ongoing diplomatic efforts to resolve the blockade, potentially through an inspection regime to ensure no arms accompany the food aid.

However, he cautioned that time is running out to prevent the worst-case scenarios.

"The worry is that we are not going to get the seeds in to do the planting season, and it's going to get worse," he said.

In Gaza, Griffiths noted that the number of Palestinians facing catastrophic famine had halved since March, when over a million people were at risk. He attributed the improvement to the influx of humanitarian aid in March and April, demonstrating that "aid works" and can swiftly rescue people from famine, starvation, and disease.

However, since the limited opening of crossings into Gaza in early spring, Israel's offensive on Rafah has displaced over a million people into central Gaza, closed the main aid access point, and exacerbated gang violence and insecurity, now the primary obstacles to food distribution.

INVESTIGATION

Two detained after attack outside Israeli Embassy in Belgrade

AFP Belgrade

Two men were remanded in custody after a Serbian police officer killed a man who shot him with a crossbow outside the Israeli Embassy in Belgrade in a "targeted terrorist act," a minister said on Sunday.

The assailant shot the officer while he was on duty in front of the Israeli Embassy early on Saturday.

The policeman opened fire in self-defense, and the attacker later died.

The assailant, from Mladenovac, near Belgrade, lived in Novi Pazar, a historical and political center of Serbia's Bosniak Muslim minority, police said.

The authorities said a number of people known to the security services were suspected of being linked to the attack.

"Searches were conducted at several locations in Serbia, and dozens of people were questioned," Interior Minister Ivica Dacic told the state-run RTS broadcaster on Sunday.

The prosecutors will establish whether they were linked with the "targeted terrorist attack," he added.

"What is indisputable about all those people is that they belong to the Wahhabi extremist movement."

Two men were remanded in custody, the minister said.

Security was stepped up to the highest level throughout the country, and the police operation continued, Dacic said.

"It is an operation against extremists and terrorists, people directly involved in the attack, but .... also against those for whom there are indications they might belong to terrorist groups."

LOW TURNOUT

Iran election shows declining voter support amid calls for change

AFP Tehran

The first round of Iran's presidential election revealed shrinking support for reformists and conservatives even though some voters are pushing for change by backing the sole reformist candidate, analysts say.

Masoud Pezeshkian, the reformist contender and ultraconservative Saeed Jalili, led the polls held on Friday to replace the late President Ebrahim Raisi, who died in a helicopter crash last month.

Friday's vote, marked by a historically low turnout, "clearly shows that both reformists' and conservatives' bases have considerably shrunk," said Ali Vaez of the International Crisis Group think tank.

In the lead-up to the election, Iran's main reformist coalition supported Pezeshkian, with endorsements by former presidents Mohammed Khatami and Hassan Rouhani, a moderate.

"The reformists brought out the big guns and tried their best to mobilize their base," Vaez said on social media platform X, but "it was simply insufficient."

Likewise, the conservatives failed to garner sufficient votes "despite the tremendous resources they deployed," he added.

Vaez pointed out that the combined votes of Jalili and conservative parliamentary speaker Mohammed Baqer Qalibaf, who came in third, totaled 12.8 million.

That figure was well below Raisi's nearly 18 million votes in the 2021 election.

Of the 61 million eligible voters, only about 40 percent cast ballots, marking a record-low turnout in the country where some people have lost faith in the process. More than 1 million ballots were spoiled.

For Vaez, the decline in turnout, from around 49 percent in 2021, was "a real embarrassment for the leadership" in Iran, where ultimate political power lies with the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.



Presidential candidate Saeed Jalili attends a meeting in Tehran. AP

FASTFACT

The combined votes of Saeed Jalili and Mohammed Baqer Qalibaf totaled 12.8 million.

Political commentator Mohammed Reza Manafi said Pezeshkian's lead reflected a push for "fundamental changes" regarding the economy and relations with the rest of the world.

However, those favoring Pezeshkian "do not expect a miracle or a quick solution but hope he can gradually prevent conditions from worsening," Manafi added.

Iran has been reeling from the economic impact of international sanctions, contributing to soaring inflation, high unemployment, and a record low for the Iranian rial against the US dollar.

The vote also came amid heightened regional tensions over the Gaza war between Israel and Hamas and diplomatic tensions over Iran's nuclear program.

Pezeshkian, an outspoken heart surgeon who has represented the northwestern city of Tabriz in parliament since 2008, came out on top thanks to his "clean record without any accusations of financial corruption," said Manafi.

Official figures showed Pezeshkian had 42.4 percent of the vote, against 38.6 percent for Jalili.

The reformists have urged "constructive relations" with Washington and European capitals to "get Iran out of its isolation."

In contrast, Jalili is widely recognized for his uncompromising anti-West stance.

He is a former nuclear negotiator and a representative of Khamenei on the Supreme National Security Council, Iran's highest security body.

During his campaign, he rallied a substantial base of hard-line supporters under the slogan "no compromise, no surrender" to the West.

He staunchly opposed the 2015 nuclear deal with the US and other world powers, which imposed curbs on Iran's nuclear activity in return for sanctions relief.

At the time, Jalili argued that the pact violated Iran's "red lines" by accepting inspections of nuclear sites.

The deal collapsed in 2018.

In a Sunday column in the ultraconservative Javan daily, political expert Ali Alavi hailed Jalili's "honesty and truthfulness, unlike the others."

The candidate also received support from Ghalibaf, who, after Saturday's result, urged his support base to back Jalili in next Friday's runoff.

Two ultraconservatives who dropped out a day before the election have also endorsed Jalili.

But on Sunday, the reformist newspaper Etemad quoted former vice president Isa Kalantari as warning against a continued conservative grip on the government.

WEST BANK AGGRESSION CONDEMNED

Arab League raps Israeli decisions as 'complete overturn of Oslo pact'

International intervention urged to stop illegal settlements and continuous violation of Palestinian rights

Gobran Mohamed Cairo

Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit strongly condemned Israeli Cabinet decisions to revoke the Palestinian Authority's powers in Area B, restrict authority officials' movement, and initiate settlement construction in the West Bank.

He said these decisions represent a complete and final overturn of the Oslo Accords, returning the situation to a pre-agreement state and reinforcing a blatant occupation.

Gamal Roshdy, spokesman for the secretary-general, said that Aboul Gheit called on the international community to recognize the Israeli government as a "right-wing, racist administration uninterested in peace."

He emphasized the Israeli government's goal to dismantle the Palestinian Authority, solidify the occupation in the West Bank, and eliminate Palestinian control, including in Area B under the Oslo Accords.

Roshdy said that the recent decisions reflected the Israeli government's complete submission to the extreme right, represented by the minister of finance.

These decisions aim to embarrass and insult the international community, which has shown a trend toward expanding recognition of the Palestinian state by undermining all components of the two-state solution.



Riot police are engulfed by fire after protesters threw Molotov cocktails outside the Israel Embassy in Mexico City during a demonstration. AFP

He said that such actions further inflame the situation in the West Bank, turn back the situation to before the Oslo Accords, and seek to subjugate the Palestinians under a direct occupation regime that can only be described as apartheid.

Egypt also criticized the Israeli government's decision to legalize five settlements in the West Bank.

In a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egypt condemned the Israeli government's decision to approve the legalization of five settlements in the West Bank and to plan the construction of thousands of new settlement units as a continuation and apparent insistence on a policy of violating international law and UN Security Council resolutions, foremost among them Resolution 2334.

FASTFACT

Egypt has condemned the Israeli government's decision to approve the legalization of five settlements in the West Bank and to plan the construction of thousands of new settlement units.

Egypt strongly denounced Israel's exploitation of the ongoing war in the Gaza Strip to further illegal settlement expansion and attempt to alter the legal status of the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.

Egypt said that Israel's continued illegal actions aim to undermine the chances of a two-state solution, which is based on respecting the inalienable legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and is the only path to comprehensive and lasting peace.

It called on the international community to intervene to stop Israel's illegal actions and practices and the continuous violation of Palestinian rights.

Egypt also called for more intense efforts to immediately end the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.

TERRORISM

String of Nigeria suicide attacks kill at least 18

AFP Kano

At least 18 people were killed and 19 seriously wounded in suicide attacks targeting a wedding, a hospital, and a funeral in north-eastern Nigeria on Saturday, authorities said.

The region has been scarred by more than a decade of violence by Boko Haram, which did not immediately claim responsibility for the string of attacks. In one of three blasts on Saturday in the town of Gwoza, a woman with a baby strapped to her back detonated explosives in the middle of a wedding ceremony, according to a state police spokesman.

"At about 1545 (1445 GMT), a woman carrying a baby on her back detonated an improvised explosive device, or IED, she had on her at a crowded motor park," said Borno State police spokesman Nahum Kenneth Daso.

Women suicide bombers also targeted a hospital in the same town, which lies across the border from Cameroon. Another attack was later carried out at the funeral for victims of the wedding blast, authorities said.

At least 18 people were killed and 42 others injured in the spate of attacks, according to the Borno State Emergency Management Agency or SEMA.



Victims of a recent wave of suicide attacks are treated at a hospital in Maiduguri. Nigeria has been scarred by more than a decade of extremist violence. AFP

"So far, 18 deaths comprising children, men, females and pregnant women" have been reported, agency head Barkindo Saidu said in a report.

Nineteen "seriously injured" people were taken to the regional capital, Maiduguri, while 23 others were awaiting evacuation, Saidu said in the report.

A member of a militia assisting the military in Gwoza said two colleagues and a soldier were also killed in a separate attack on a security post. However, authorities did not immediately confirm this toll.

Although Boko Haram has lost ground in recent years, jihadists continue to attack rural communities in Nigeria regularly.

For the insurgency, Boko Haram has repeatedly deployed young women and girls to carry out suicide attacks.

The group seized Gwoza in 2014 when its militants took over swathes of territory in northern Borno.

The town was taken back by the Nigerian military with help from Chadian forces in 2015, but the group has continued to launch attacks from mountains near the town.

FASTFACT

The resurgence of suicide bombings in Borno raises significant concerns about the security situation in the region.

Boko Haram has carried out raids, killing men and kidnapping women who venture outside the town in search of firewood and acacia fruits.

The violence has killed more than 40,000 people and displaced around 2 million in Nigeria's northeast.

The conflict has spread to neighboring Niger, Cameroon and Chad, prompting the formation of a regional military coalition to fight the militants.

SEVEN CANDIDATES

President Ghazouani well ahead in Mauritania election

AFP Nouakchott

Incumbent Mohammed Ould Ghazouani was set to win a comfortable majority in the Mauritanian presidential election, the electoral commission said on Sunday, with most of the ballots counted.

Mauritanians voted on Saturday to choose between seven candidates vying to lead the sprawling nation, which has largely withstood the tide of extremism in the region and is set to become a gas producer.

With 90 percent of the votes counted by Sunday afternoon, National Election Commission Ceni forecast that former general Ghazouani would garner more than 55 percent of votes.

That would allow him to comfortably see off rival and human rights campaigner Biram Dah Abeid, who Ceni predicted would win 22 percent of the vote.

Abeid said on Sunday that he would not recognize the results of "Ghazouani's Ceni."

"We will only recognize our results, and therefore, we will take to the streets" to refuse the electoral commission count, although he insisted their response would be "peaceful."

Ghazouani's other main rival, the leader of the Tewassoul party, Hamadi Ould Sid' El-Moctar, was currently counted as holding 13 percent of the vote.

He said he would "remain attentive" to any breach of voting regulations.

Overall turnout was estimated at 55 percent.

A 2019 election brought Ghazouani to power, marking the first transition between two elected presidents since independence from France in 1960 and a series of coups from 1978 to 2008.

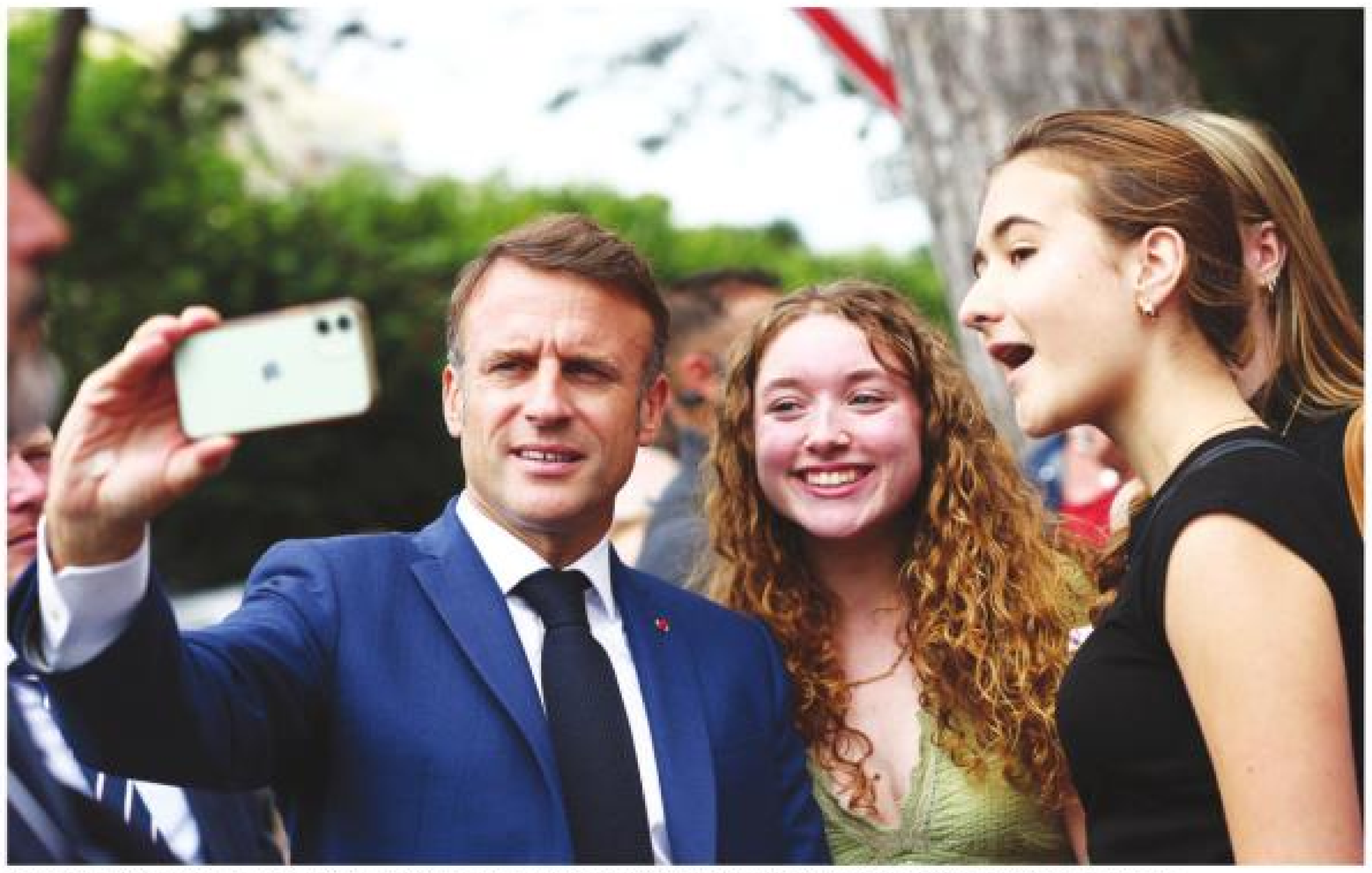
While the Sahel has in recent years seen a string of military coups and escalating extremism, particularly in Mali, Mauritania has not seen an attack since 2011.

Ghazouani has made helping the young a key priority in a country of 4.9 million people, where almost three-quarters are under 35.

The opposition strongly contested the legislative elections a year ago, which were won by Ghazouani's party.

The African Union has sent a team of 27 short-term observers, while the EU has sent three election experts.

News International



French President Emmanuel Macron takes a selfie with supporters after voting in Le Touquet-Paris-Plage, northern France, on Sunday. AP

PARLIAMENTARY VOTE

Strong turnout in France's high-stakes elections

Second round will take place on July 7

Reuters Paris

French voters flocked to the polls on Sunday in the first round of a snap parliamentary election.

President Emmanuel Macron stunned the country when he called the vote after his centrist alliance was crushed in European elections this month by Marine Le Pen's National Rally.

Participation was high, underlining how France's rumbling political crisis has energized the electorate. By midday, turnout was at 25.9 percent, compared with 18.43 percent two years ago — the highest comparable turnout figures since the 1981 legislative vote, Ipsos France's research director Mathieu Gallard said.

France's electoral system can make it hard to estimate the precise distribution of seats in the 577-seat National Assembly, and the final outcome will not be known until the end of the second round of voting on July 7.

France has had three periods of "cohabitation" — when the president and government are from opposite political camps — in its post-war history, but none with such radically divergent worldviews competing at the top of the state.

A clear National Rally victory would bring uncertainty as to where France stands on the Russia-Ukraine war. Le Pen has a history of pro-Russian sentiment and while the party now says it would help Ukraine defend itself against Russian invaders, it has also set out red lines, such as refusing to provide long-range missiles.

Opinion polls have suggested the National Rally has a comfortable lead of 33 percent-36 percent of the popular vote, with the New Popular Front in second place on 28 percent-31 percent and Macron's centrist alliance in third on 20 percent-23 percent.

The New Popular Front includes a wide range of parties, from the moderate center-left to the hard-left, eurosceptic, anti-NATO party France Unbowed, led by one of Macron's most vitriolic opponents, Jean-Luc Melenchon.

How the poll numbers will translate into seats in the National Assembly is hard to predict because of how the election works, said Vincent Martigny, professor of political science at the University of Nice and the Ecole Polytechnique.

Candidates can be elected in the first round if they win an absolute majority of votes in their constituency, but that is rare. Most constituencies will need a second round involving all candidates who received votes from at least 12.5 percent of registered voters in the first round. The top scorer wins.

"If you have a very high level of participation you might have a third or fourth party that is getting into the struggle. So then of course there's a risk of split voting and we know that the split vote favours the National Rally," Martigny said.

UNMITIGATED DISASTER

Delhi airport accident raises concerns over India's infrastructure drive

Sanjay Kumar New Delhi

The recent deadly roof collapse at New Delhi's main airport was the latest in a series of construction safety incidents in the country, triggering concerns over India's multibillion-dollar infrastructure drive.

A portion of a canopy and pillars at a departure terminal in the Indira Gandhi International Airport, one of the country's busiest, collapsed following heavy rain on Friday morning, killing at least one person and injuring several others.

The collapse also caused a temporary suspension of operations at the airport's Terminal 1, which is used for domestic flights, impacting the travel plans of thousands of people.



Rescuers work at the collapsed terminal roof of New Delhi's main airport after heavy rains on Friday. AFP

It joins a growing list of infrastructure incidents in India in recent years that have raised questions about the rapid pace of megaproject development in the country under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Narayan Moorthy, a Delhi-based architect, blamed it on many factors, including "slipshod work culture," frequent use of poor-quality materials, "reckless hurry towards the end of projects so that some politician can inaugurate it on a pre-decided and politically significant date," and lack of maintenance after construction.

"This whole cocktail comes together to result in unmitigated disasters, like the collapsed airport roof in Delhi that killed one hapless soul and injured many others ... Similar is the case of the roof of the brand-new Jabalpur airport that thankfully had no human casualties but exposes our systemic rot," he told Arab News.

"We have much to be ashamed of in the quality of our supposedly 'world-class' constructions."

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Inclement weather

Storms, rain in Switzerland cause flooding

Storms in southern Switzerland caused a landslide that left two people dead and one missing, and a bridge over a small river collapsed, police said Sunday. Storms and heavy rain affected southern and western Switzerland on Saturday and overnight, with the worst-hit areas in the Italian-speaking Ticino canton (state), on the southern side of the Alps.

Police said there was a significant landslide in the Fontana area of the Maggia Valley, which is near the city of Locarno. They said in a statement that the bodies of two people were recovered and were being identified, while rescuers were searching for another person who remained missing. **AP**

Heat wave

Greece fighting dozens of tough wildfires

A large wildfire broke out southeast of Athens on Sunday afternoon, amid warnings that the worst of the summer heat is yet to come.

Accustomed to scorching summers, Greece faces a tough wildfire season after its warmest winter and earliest heat wave on record, with temperatures hitting 44 C. According to Athens News Agency, the fire started in the Plaka area of Keratea district Sunday morning and was burning close to houses, while strong winds were blowing in the area. Some 56 firefighters, with two teams on foot and 17 vehicles, were deployed to extinguish the blaze, assisted by eight planes and two helicopters. **AFP**

The Day's FIGURES



Source: Statista

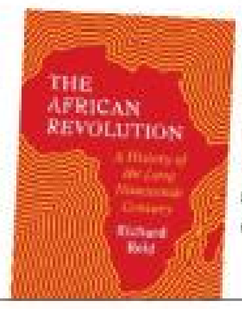
What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

'The African Revolution'

RICHARD REID

Africa's long 19th century was a time of revolutionary ferment and cultural innovation for the continent's states, societies, and economies. Yet the period preceding what became known as "the Scramble for Africa" by European powers in the decades leading up to World War I has long been neglected in favor of a Western narrative of colonial rule.



Ongoing war

Russia claims two more east Ukrainian villages

Russia on Sunday claimed two more east Ukrainian villages as its forces have had the upper hand over Kyiv on the battlefield for months.

Moscow has claimed new villages in the east of Ukraine regularly for weeks, as outgunned and outmanned Ukrainian forces struggle to hold them back. Russia's Defence Ministry said its forces have pushed further westwards into the Donetsk region. The village — which lies north-west of occupied Ocheretyne — is now the most western point of the region that Moscow holds. Moscow also said its forces captured the small village of Spirne, further north in the Donetsk region near the border with the neighboring Lugansk region. **AFP**

Afghan crisis

Taliban officials attend UN-led meeting

A Taliban delegation on Sunday attended a United Nations-led meeting in Qatar on Afghanistan after organizers said women would be excluded from the gathering. The two-day meeting is the third UN-sponsored gathering on the Afghan crisis in the Qatari capital of Doha. Zabihullah Mujahid, the chief spokesman for the Taliban government who leads its delegation, wrote on social media platform X that the delegation met with representatives from countries including Russia, India and Uzbekistan on the sidelines of the meeting.

The Taliban were not invited to the first meeting, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said they set unacceptable conditions for attending the second one in February. **AP**

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إِذا ساءَ صُنْعُ المَرْءِ ساءَتْ حَياتُهُ
فَما لِصُرُوفِ الدَّهْرِ يُوسِعُها سَبّا
(محمود سامي البارودي)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

When an individual misbehaves, his life takes a turn for the worse. Misbehavior is the reason for that, so he must not curse life.

Mahmoud Sami Al-Baroudi

(19th-century Egyptian poet, prime minister and military commander)

Opinion

Afrocentric tour ignites Egyptian identity debate

DR. ABDELLATIF EL-MENAWY

The Afrocentric movement has sparked a significant debate in Egypt about the origins of ancient Egyptian civilization. This movement, based on ideologies dating back to the 19th century, aims to raise public awareness of African culture and its contributions to human civilization. However, it often stirs controversy with its claim that the roots of ancient Egyptian civilization are African and that its greatest achievements were built on the shoulders of Black Africans. This assertion frequently triggers widespread and sometimes angry reactions within Egypt.

Recently, images circulated on social media in Egypt showed an Afrocentric group visiting the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square, Cairo. They were accompanied by a tour guide explaining the history of ancient Egyptian civilization from an Afrocentric perspective. This incident provoked intense discussions on social media and in the Egyptian media, with many expressing strong opposition to the views promoted by this movement.

One notable opinion came from renowned Egyptian archaeologist Dr. Zahi Hawass. He asserted that the explanations given by the Afrocentric tour guide were baseless, describing them as "just nonsense." Hawass accused the Afrocentric movement of causing confusion by spreading false and misleading information, attributing the Egyptian civilization to alleged African origins. He clarified: "We are not against Black people at all, but we are against this group that entered the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir to announce ideas with no basis in truth."

Proponents of the Afrocentric movement argue that various pieces of evidence, including historical texts, artistic descriptions and genetic studies, support the African origin of ancient Egyptians. They frequently cite historical texts by ancient writers like Herodotus, who described Egyptians as having Black skin and curly hair, characteristics more aligned with sub-Saharan Africans than with Mediterranean or Middle Eastern peoples. Artistic descriptions in ancient Egyptian art are also contentious, as members of the movement interpret paintings and inscriptions as depicting African features. Furthermore, genetic studies add another layer to the debate, with some research suggesting that ancient Egyptians had genetic ties with Africans, though the interpretations of these studies are often complex and debated within the scientific community.



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These claims usually provoke strong reactions in Egypt, where many Egyptians take pride in their pharaonic heritage and consider it a unique product of the Nile Valley. They also see these claims as challenging long-standing national narratives.

News of the Afrocentric delegation's museum visit even reached the Egyptian parliament, where lawmaker Ahmed Bilal Al-Barlasi submitted an inquiry to the minister of tourism and antiquities. Al-Barlasi described the movement as "African Zionism."

In my view, the controversial visit by the tourist delegation should open the door to a broader discussion about Egyptian identity and its place within the Arab and African worlds. Egypt is a country with a complex and multilayered identity, situated at the crossroads between Africa and the Arab world.

Historically, Egypt has been a melting pot of diverse cultures and influences, from the pharaonic era through the Greek, Roman and Arab periods. In modern times, Egypt's identity has become more integrated with Arab heritage, a fusion solidified by the spread of Islam and the Arabic language.

Nevertheless, Egypt's African roots cannot be denied, as the Nile River, which flows from the heart of Africa, is the lifeline of Egyptian civilization. I believe it would be best to open a broader discussion about Egyptian identity without bias toward any one identity. Egypt is a composition of the layers formed throughout its history. We cannot exclude one layer in favor of another; it is not logical to discard the Mediterranean layer in favor of the Arab one or the African layer in favor of the Greek one.

In modern times, Egypt's identity has become more integrated with Arab heritage, a fusion solidified by the spread of Islam and the Arabic language



COURTESY: AWAD RABBANI/ASHARQ AL-AWSAT

The late Raisi did not have the popularity that would have allowed him to be the strongest candidate to succeed Khamenei

Could Rouhani or Larijani be Iran's next supreme leader?

HASSAN AL-MUSTAFA

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's death in May in a helicopter accident, along with his accompanying delegation, increased the mystery surrounding the identity of the potential successor to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who is 85 years old. Khamenei, despite his remarkable activity and many public appearances, has dealt with several health issues in recent years.

Raisi was one of the names widely proposed as his successor and he was described as the "next leader" prior to his death. However, I believe that these predictions were not realistic, as Raisi lacked the charisma needed for leadership, in addition to his limited administrative experience. The late Raisi did not have the popularity that would have allowed him to be the strongest candidate to succeed Khamenei. However, he would have perhaps played an important role in the transition process during the post-Khamenei phase.

After excluding Raisi due to his death, the name of Mojtaba Khamenei, the son of the current leader, was widely circulated in the media. In a previous article for Arab News, I explained the factors that will prevent Mojtaba from succeeding his father and occupying a position of leadership and authority.

There are two other possible names remaining: the former head of Iran's judiciary, Sadeq Larijani, and former President Hassan Rouhani. What are the odds of these two men becoming supreme leader?

Larijani is a religious scholar and jurist — able to deliver formal religious decrees — who belongs to a noble family. But his experience and his family status did not enable Larijani to continue in the Assembly of Experts, as he came last among five candidates who ran for the position in Mazandaran Province this year.



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This decline in Larijani's role was expected, especially after he publicly expressed his dissatisfaction when the Guardian Council in 2021 disqualified his brother Ali Larijani from presidential elections.

It appears that the influence of the Larijani family is declining and that the hard core of the radical movement does not want them. This makes Sadeq Larijani's chances of being the next "leader of the revolution" very low.

What about Rouhani?

In January, the Guardian Council rejected Rouhani's candidacy for membership of the Assembly of Experts. This move aimed to prevent Rouhani from forming a large block of candidates from Tehran and that would have significant influence inside the body, which is about to assume the important role of preparing the post-Khamenei phase.

Therefore, Rouhani will also not be Khamenei's successor. This is because radical religious scholars, fundamentalist politicians and prominent officials in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps perceive him as someone who cannot be trusted to preserve the values of the revolution and who would seek to make a deal with European governments and the US.

Neither Larijani nor Rouhani will assume the position of leader of the revolution in the post-Khamenei phase, despite having significant educational and administrative qualifications, especially Rouhani, who is also a jurist.

Most probably, the alternative will be a leadership council instead of just one person.

A name from the background, supported by radical jurists and the IRGC, could also be suggested. This might already be in the preparation phase, behind the scenes and away from the spotlight, so as not to ruin his chances of assuming an important position in the regime.

Opinion

Realizing a growth agenda for the UK

MOHAMED A. EL-ERIAN

As in many other developed countries lately, the two major political parties in the UK have embraced economic growth as their top policy priority. Following the volatile 49-day experience of Liz Truss' government and its "dash for growth" in 2022, however, both parties emphasize that there are no financial shortcuts. Instead, the focus is on devising measures to boost productivity, resource allocation and growth over the long term. In this respect, the opposition Labour Party is ahead of the ruling Conservatives, though both are still working out the details of actual implementation.

Buoyant, durable, sustainable and inclusive growth is essential for a country where the older generations risk seeing their children end up worse off than they are. That has not happened in many decades. Only growth can deliver the resources needed to enhance living standards, improve public services, support sustainable energy initiatives, limit the scale of generalized tax increases and combat inequality of wealth, income and opportunity.

The country's already weak growth potential could deteriorate even further if the problem is left to fester

In short, it is all about increasing the safe speed limit for economic growth. The Bank of England estimates the UK economy's potential growth may be as low as 1 percent. At that speed, much that ails the country is likely to get worse, rather than better, over time. Moreover, this already weak growth potential could deteriorate even further if the problem is left to fester.

There is no singular silver bullet initiative that can change this outlook. Many British politicians are still haunted by the Truss saga, when the newly arrived prime minister tried to use unfunded tax cuts as a stimulus, only to create a damaging episode of financial instability that forced a change in government. It is now widely acknowledged that, after so many years of insufficient investment and sagging productivity, achieving high-quality growth requires a comprehensive policy approach that builds on many intermediate objectives.

The Labour Party has gone further in specifying such structural reforms. Its program includes proposals to revamp the planning system, boost infrastructure, improve trade links, crowd in domestic and foreign private investment (including through an energized National Wealth Fund), remove tax distortions and pursue sector-specific initiatives. The party has also identified promising public-private partnerships geared toward enhancing investible funds, while encouraging innovation and efficiency.



Mohamed A. El-Erian, president of Queens' College at the University of Cambridge, is a professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. ©Project Syndicate

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The challenge now is to devise a detailed execution plan, one that includes a high-frequency monitoring system to provide real-time feedback and allow for timely course corrections, if needed. Any economic policy roadmap must favor comprehensive over piecemeal reforms. Such reforms should be implemented simultaneously, rather than sequentially, and they should come sooner rather than later.

The challenge now is to devise a detailed execution plan, one that includes a high-frequency monitoring system

One must hope that the current Labour leadership has not ruled out too much policy flexibility in its pursuit of a decisive victory in Thursday's general election. Some of the most powerful measures that it is proposing will require resources upfront, but their growth and financial benefits will materialize only over time. The next government will also find itself confronting a more complicated, increasingly fragmented international system; and it will need to secure consistent buy-in from the private sector.

Another related task is to improve the functioning of existing growth engines while also supporting the development of the sectors and industries that will drive growth in the future. Striking a proper balance may prove to be the most difficult part of the challenge, given the country's resource constraints and the fact that some key initiatives are better pursued at a regional level. With its lack of sufficient robust regional initiatives to drive innovation in artificial intelligence, life sciences and sustainable energy, the EU currently faces a similar problem.

Promoting high, durable, sustainable and inclusive growth was never going to be easy after so many years of neglect. The need to revamp the UK's existing growth engines and simultaneously kick-start new ones makes the task even more complicated. But to paraphrase US President John F. Kennedy's famous moonshot speech, the winning party must do these and "other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard."

How to address irregular migration from Africa

LINGUERE MOUSLY MBAYE

Irregular migration from Africa has been a growing concern since the mid-2000s and continues to dominate news headlines. According to the International Organization for Migration, 40,868 migrants attempted the dangerous journey from West Africa to the Canary Islands in 2023. Of these, 39,910 reached their destination, more than double the number recorded in 2022.

The resurgence of irregular migration, particularly from West Africa and other parts of Africa, underscores the urgent need to understand and address its root causes. While most African migration occurs within the continent, the increasing trend of irregular migration to Europe is characterized by severe human rights violations, significant loss of life and economic inefficiencies in migrants' home countries, as well as in transit and destination countries.

Political instability, macroeconomic shocks, violent conflict and a lack of opportunity often fuel migration pressures. In recent years, these issues have been compounded by climate change, which has exacerbated food and water insecurity and destroyed lives and livelihoods. With rising debts squeezing African governments' already-strained budgets and undermining poverty-reduction efforts, many Africans risk perilous journeys in search of a better life abroad.

Political instability, macroeconomic shocks and a lack of opportunity often fuel migration pressures

Tackling irregular migration requires creating conditions for a fulfilling life in Africa. Empowering young Africans, in particular, is critical to reducing irregular migration. In many African societies, success is often associated with relatives who have migrated, leaving those who stay behind feeling marginalized. This form of "social death" drives more people to migrate, despite the risks.

But while irregular migration flows from Africa to Europe continue, a growing number of young diaspora Africans are returning to the continent, viewing it as a land of opportunity and showing that migration, if it is well managed, can be beneficial. By tapping into the diaspora's great potential, young Africans can gain money, skills, knowledge and experience, which they can bring back and invest in their communities, fostering economic and social development and in the process helping to redefine success within potential migrants' home countries.

To restore hope, improving young people's job prospects is crucial. A 2019 policy research document by the African Development Bank estimated that, to accommodate its growing population and keep unemployment rates from rising, Africa would need to add nearly 1.7 million jobs per month until 2063.



Linguere Mously Mbaye is principal fragility and resilience officer at the African Development Bank Group. ©Project Syndicate

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With 70 percent of its population under the age of 30, sub-Saharan Africa's demographic dividend represents an immense opportunity, especially as developed economies grapple with aging populations. But this opportunity will materialize only if young people have good jobs, adequate social protection systems and decent living conditions.

Although education systems across Africa have improved, the continent's young people still suffer from a lack of marketable skills and limited access to financial assets, shortcomings that are exacerbated for young women by gender inequality. At the same time, increased connectivity has made young Africans more aware of opportunities elsewhere, raising their expectations and demands.

The continent's young people still suffer from a lack of marketable skills and limited access to financial assets

In addition to seeking economic opportunities, people often migrate in search of social justice and freedom. Young people, who make up most of Africa's population, frequently find themselves economically and politically marginalized by older generations, which can generate frustration and social tensions that lead many young Africans to view migration as a form of emancipation. To avoid this scenario, African countries must ensure that the concerns of young people are heard and that their ideas, creativity and experiences are valued.

Addressing irregular migration effectively also requires a paradigm shift in how immigration policies are discussed, designed and implemented. Too often, destination countries devise these policies without considering migrants' agency and backgrounds.

By bridging the gap between evidence and policymaking, both destination and transit countries can ensure that their policies are attuned to migrants' specific needs.

But the best way to tackle irregular migration is to provide potential migrants with viable, safe alternatives. To this end, African policymakers must focus on expanding the choices available to young people, providing them with the skills and opportunities needed to drive economic growth and sustainable development in Africa. If successful, these policy shifts could transform migration from an act of despair into a deliberate choice that benefits all: migrants, their home countries and destination countries.

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

Founded in 1975 by
Hisham & Muhammad Ali Hafiz

Editor-in-Chief
Faisal J. Abbas

Deputy Editor-in-Chief
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EDITORIAL: general@arabnews.com
MARKETING: marketing@arabnews.com

TOLL FREE NUMBER: 8002440076

PRINTED AT: HALA PRINTING CO., RIYADH

Bahrain 200 Fils; Iran 200 R; Egypt LE 3; India 12 Rs; Indonesia 2000 R; Japan 250 Y; Jordan 250 Fils; Kuwait 200 Fils; Lebanon 1000 L; Morocco 2 D; Oman 200 P; Pakistan 15 Rs; Philippines 25 P; Qatar 2 QR; Singapore $3; Syria 20 L; Thailand 40 BHT; UAE 2 AED; UK 50 P; US $1.50; Republic of Yemen R 50; Sudan 25 P.

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Business



We (Saudi Aramco) are the company with the lowest emissions of almost all international companies ... whether in terms of second emissions such as carbon dioxide or even methane.

Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman
Saudi energy minister

By generating (an) anticipated 2 billion cubic feet per day of sales gas by 2030, this bold initiative will strengthen Saudi Arabia's position as one of the top national gas producers in the world, ushering in a new era of energy for the Kingdom.

Amin Nasser
Aramco CEO



An additional 15 one-time complete contracts, worth around $8.8 billion, have been awarded to commence the phase 3 expansion of the master gas system, which delivers natural gas to customers across Saudi Arabia. Supplied

STRATEGIC EXPANSION

Saudi Aramco finalizes deal for phase 2 of Jafurah gas field scheme

Company has granted 16 agreements for phase 2 development at Jafurah, worth around $12.4 billion

Nadin Hassan Riyadh

Saudi Aramco has finalized agreements for the second phase of its Jafurah gas field development and the third stage of the expansion of its master gas system, awarding contracts exceeding $25 billion.

The company has granted 16 agreements for phase 2 development at Jafurah, worth a combined total of around $12.4 billion.

An additional 15 one-time complete contracts, worth around $8.8 billion, have been awarded to commence the phase 3 expansion of the master gas system, which delivers natural gas to customers across Saudi Arabia.

Additionally, 23 gas rig agreements valued at $2.4 billion and two directional drilling contracts worth $612 million have been granted.

In addition, between December 2022 and May 2024, 13 tie-in contracts at Jafurah, totaling $1.63 billion, were also awarded.

Aramco's CEO Amin Nasser said the agreements signaled a new phase of development for two megaprojects that "will take our world-class national gas capabilities to the next level."

Nasser added: "The first project is the third expansion of the master gas system. The system has been the backbone of industrial development in the Kingdom for nearly five decades."

This phase involves adding 17 new gas compression trains and expanding the pipeline network by 4,000 km.



Aramco's CEO Amin Nasser said the agreements signaled a new phase that 'will take our world-class national gas capabilities to the next level.' Supplied

This infrastructure enhancement will increase the network's capacity by 3.15 billion standard cubic feet per day and extend its reach to several new cities nationwide. Cities from Jeddah to Jizan and Al-Kharj to Sudair will now receive gas from the system, catalyzing industrialization, stimulating economic growth, and generating new job opportunities for Saudis.

This expansion aligns with the Kingdom's goal to derive 50 percent of its electricity from gas by 2030, and will provide ample feedstock for the petrochemical sector.

Nasser said: "The second project is phase 2 of development at Jafurah, the largest unconventional gas field in the Middle East.

"By generating (an) anticipated 2 billion cubic feet per day of sales gas by 2030, this bold initiative will strengthen Saudi Arabia's position as one of the top national gas producers in the world, ushering in a new era of energy for the Kingdom."

Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said on the sidelines of the signing ceremony: "The project will be linked to 40 facilities, including electricity and water treatment plants and petrochemical production plants."

The minister added that work with Aramco had developed and increased gas exploration and drilling projects.

He added: "We also seek to expand, taking into account the expansions that will come to our economy after 2030, and we have a duty to start working on them from now so that we are ready for the 2040 goals."

The minister expressed confidence in achieving a significant reduction in the cost of energy production across various methods.

Prince Abdulaziz said: "No one will beat us in reducing the cost of energy production in all its forms."

The minister discussed a strategic project with natural gas reservoirs that promises to deliver about 2 million standard cubic feet of gas daily, catering specifically to peak demand periods and allowing for storage during off-peak times.

CLOSING BELL

TASI closes in red to reach 11,696 points

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's Tadawul All Share Index fell on Sunday, declining 50.12 points, or 0.43 percent, to close at 11,679.50.

The total trading turnover of the benchmark index was SR5.3 billion ($1.416 billion) as 102 of the listed stocks advanced while 119 retreated.

Similarly, the MSCI Tadawul Index slightly decreased by 8.60 points, or 0.58 percent, to close at 1,461.59.

The Kingdom's parallel market Nomu also fell by 156.24 points, or 0.59 percent, to close at 26,145.76. This comes as 37 of the listed stocks advanced while as many as 28 retreated.



The Kingdom's parallel market Nomu fell by 156.24 points, or 0.59 percent, to close at 26,145.76. Shutterstock

The best-performing stock of the day was Al Taiseer Group Talco Industrial Co., whose share price surged 9.92 percent to SR57.60.

Other top performers include Modern Mills for Food Products Co. and Miahona Co., whose share prices soared by 9.90 percent and 8.38 percent, to stand at SR49.95 and SR28.45 respectively.

In addition, top performers included Astra Industrial Group and Saudi Manpower Solutions Co.

FASTFACT

The total trading turnover of the benchmark index was SR5.3 billion ($1.416 billion) as 102 of the listed stocks advanced while 119 retreated.

The worst performer was Saudi Automotive Services Co., whose share price dropped by 5.73 percent to SR52.60.

Other bottom performers were Raydan Food Co. as well as Bupa Arabia for Cooperative Insurance Co., whose share prices dropped by 4.74 percent and 3.97 percent to stand at SR29.15 and SR246.80, respectively.

Additional poor performers include Al Sagr Cooperative Insurance Co. and Etihad Atheeb Telecommunication Co.

In the parallel market, Nomu, Saudi Top for Trading Co. was the highest gainer, with its share price surging by 10.42 percent to SR6.89.

Other top gainers in the parallel market were Enma AlRawabi Co. and Armah Sports Co., with their share prices surging 9.31 percent and 6.93 percent to reach SR20.90 and SR57.10, respectively.

KEY INDICATORS

Kingdom's unemployment rate stabilizes at 3.5% in Q1

Data from Saudi Census 2022 highlights positive trend in the Kingdom's labor market

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's overall unemployment rate stabilized at 3.5 percent in the first quarter of 2024, marking a yearly decrease of 0.8 percentage points, the latest data showed.

According to the Labor Force Survey conducted by the General Authority for Statistics, the unemployment rate for Saudi nationals reached 7.6 percent in the first quarter, a slight decrease of 0.2 percentage points from the previous quarter and a yearly drop of 1.1 percentage points compared to the first quarter of 2023.

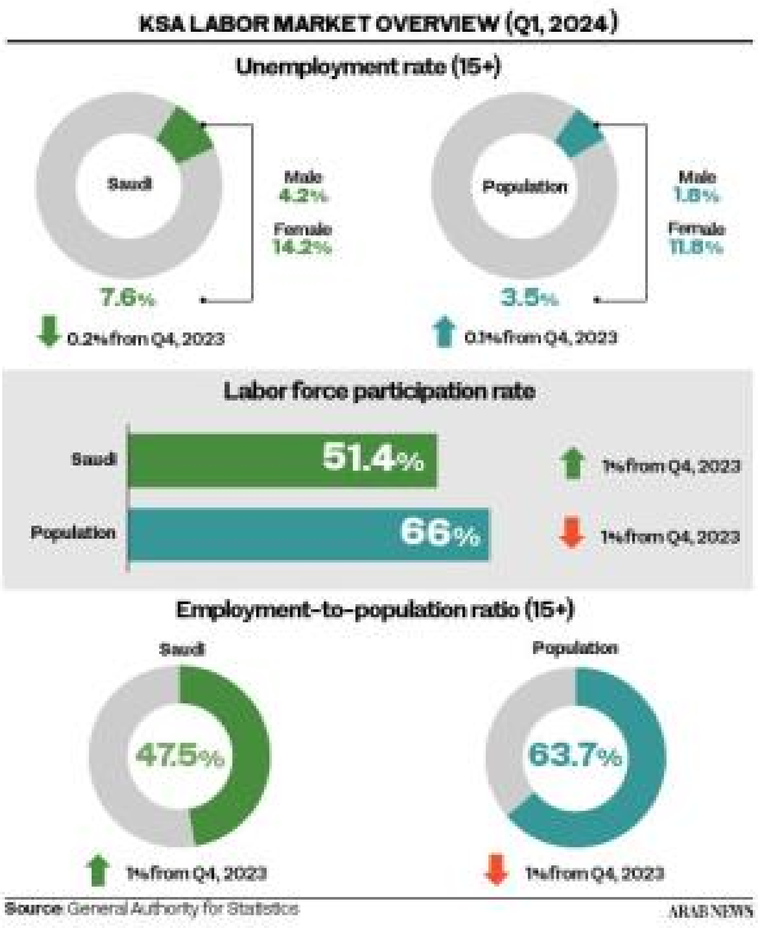
This figure, derived from population estimates of the Saudi Census 2022, highlights the positive trend in the Kingdom's labor market.

These statistics underscore the Kingdom's ongoing efforts to bolster employment opportunities and foster economic growth. As the Kingdom continues to implement Vision 2030, these improvements in employment metrics are anticipated to support the nation's socio-economic development and long-term growth.

Further analysis revealed an encouraging trend in labor force participation among Saudis, which increased by 1.0 percentage points from the fourth quarter of 2023, reaching 51.4 percent in the first quarter of this year. Additionally, the employment-to-population ratio for Saudis also saw an upward trend.

The stable overall unemployment rate, coupled with rising participation and employment ratios among Saudi citizens, reflects the positive impact of various labor market reforms and economic diversification initiatives undertaken by the government.





In the first quarter of 2024, the labor market indicators in the Kingdom indicated improvements, with the employment-to-population ratio for Saudi women increasing by 0.6 percentage points to 30.7 percent. SPA

The employment-to-population ratio for Saudis also showed an upward trend, increasing by 0.1 percentage points to reach 47.5 percent, a rise of 0.5 percentage points compared to the first quarter of 2023.

In the first quarter of 2024, the labor market indicators in the Kingdom indicated improvements, with the employment-to-population ratio for Saudi women increasing by 0.6 percentage points to 30.7 percent. Additionally, the labor force participation rate for Saudi females rose by 0.8 percentage points to 35.8 percent. However, the unemployment rate for Saudi females increased by 0.3 percentage points to 14.2 percent compared to the first quarter of 2023. Among Saudi male workers, both the employment-to-population ratio and labor force participation rate increased by 1.2 and 1.0 percentage points, reaching 63.6 percent and 66.4 percent, respectively. Concurrently, the unemployment rate decreased by 0.4 percentage points to 4.2 percent compared to the first quarter of 2023.

According to the GASTAT survey, a significant 95.9 percent of unemployed Saudi nationals are open to working in the Kingdom's private sector.

Furthermore, 80.1 percent of unemployed Saudi women and 91 percent of men expressed readiness to work eight hours or more per day.

The data revealed that 62.5 percent of unemployed Saudi women and 45.8 percent of men are willing to commute for up to one hour.

Notably, the most prevalent job search method among Saudis involves seeking assistance from friends and relatives, with 87.5 percent of job seekers relying on this approach.

NATIONAL INVESTMENT

KSA sees 5.6% rise in FDI in first quarter

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia saw a 5.6 percent increase in net flow of foreign direct investment in the first quarter of 2024 compared to the previous year, the official data showed.

According to the latest figures from the General Authority for Statistics, the net flow of FDI reached SR9.5 billion ($2.53 billion) in the first three months of this year, up from SR9 billion recorded during the same period last year.

This growth underscores Saudi Arabia's continuing appeal to international investors. These figures reflect the Kingdom's ongoing efforts to enhance its investment environment and support economic growth, in line with the objectives of Vision 2030.

FDI inflows during the first quarter amounted to around SR17 billion, marking a growth of 0.6 percent from the SR16.9 billion recorded in the first quarter of 2023. This moderate increase highlights the sustained confidence of foreign investors in the Saudi market.

Conversely, FDI outflows during the first three months of this year totaled about SR7.5 billion, representing a decrease of 5.1 percent compared to SR8 billion in the first quarter of 2023. This decline in outflows indicates a stronger retention of foreign capital within the Kingdom.



Saudi Arabia has enacted legal, economic, and social reforms aimed at stimulating FDI inflows. SPA

MARITIME CONNECTIVITY

Mawani unveils new shipping service to China, Egypt

Arab News Riyadh

A new shipping service is set to link Jeddah Islamic Port to four cities in China and one in Egypt, enhancing the Kingdom's connectivity with global markets.

The Saudi Ports Authority, also known as Mawani, announced the addition of the CBS shipping service through the Chinese shipping line NewNew Line.

This service will connect Jeddah Islamic Port with the Chinese ports of Tianjin, Qingdao, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, as well as Damietta in Egypt, through regular weekly voyages with a capacity of up to 4,000 standard containers.

This initiative is part of Mawani's broader efforts to improve Saudi Arabia's position in the maritime connectivity index, boost the operational efficiency of its ports, and strengthen the Kingdom's link to international markets.

These efforts are aligned with the National Transport and Logistics Strategy, which aims to establish Saudi Arabia as a global logistics hub and a central connecting point between the three continents.

The strategy is set to connect the Kingdom's ports on the coast of the Arabian Gulf with those on the Red Sea coast.



Mawani announced the addition of the CBS shipping service through the Chinese shipping line NewNew Line. Supplied

Since the beginning of 2024, Mawani, in collaboration with major global shipping lines, has added 14 new services to its roster.

The addition of the CBS service is a significant step in this direction, supporting national exports and imports and enhancing the Kingdom's maritime infrastructure.

Jeddah Islamic Port, a crucial logistics and commercial hub on the Red Sea coast, covers an area of 12.5 sq. km and features 62 berths.

The port is equipped with specialized stations and advanced facilities, including two container handling stations, an integrated logistics village for storage and re-export, two general cargo terminals, two ship repair and maintenance docks, and a range of marine service berths.

Additionally, the port has fully equipped terminals for receiving pilgrims and other visitors, making it a comprehensive maritime gateway for Saudi Arabia.

FASTFACT

This initiative is part of Mawani's broader efforts to improve Saudi Arabia's position in the maritime connectivity index, boost the operational efficiency of its ports, and strengthen the Kingdom's link to international markets.

Business News



IsDB's initiative aligns with its mission to promote comprehensive human development focused on fostering prosperity for all. Supplied

FINANCING PACKAGE

IsDB approves $369m for development projects

Projects in Turkiye, Turkmenistan, and Suriname receive significant boost

Arab News Riyadh

New development projects in Turkiye, Turkmenistan and Suriname will receive a significant boost with a $368.98 million financing package sanctioned by the Islamic Development Bank.

The financing includes $165 million to enhance inclusive, equitable and quality education in Turkiye.

Another $156.3 million will support Turkmenistan in improving access to high-quality oncology services. Additionally, $47.68 million has been earmarked to bolster Suriname's power transmission and distribution network, according to a statement.

Approved by IsDB President and Group Chairman Mohammed Al-Jasser, the financing aligns with the organization's mission to promote comprehensive human development, focusing on priority areas such as alleviating poverty, improving health, promoting education, enhancing governance and fostering prosperity.

The projects aim to foster sustainable development and socio-economic growth across IsDB member countries.

Al-Jasser highlighted the impact of the financing in improving transportation, health, education and energy.

The education-focused Turkiye project will see the construction and operationalization of green, resilient and sustainable schools in earthquake-affected and earthquake-prone areas.

It includes the construction of 33 schools, adding 808 classrooms and benefiting 24,640 students per year, enhancing disaster resilience for more than 319,206 people.

Three oncology centers will be built in Turkmenistan and healthcare providers will be trained.

The project will improve cancer treatment for 11,750 patients annually, significantly reducing cancer incidence and mortality rates.

The construction of power transmission and distribution networks in Suriname aims to eliminate bottlenecks, boost capacity and improve system performance.

It will connect 4,350 new households and 470 commercial units to the grid, meeting increasing national electricity demand and ensuring reliable power supply.

In March, energy and infrastructure projects in Nigeria and Malaysia received a funding boost following the approval of $225 million in IsDB financing.

The developments focused on socio-economic progress and sustainability across key sectors.

Nigeria was provided with a $125 million financing package supporting the Abia State Integrated Infrastructure Development Project.

FASTFACT

Approved by IsDB President and Group Chairman Mohammed Al-Jasser, the financing aligns with the organization's mission to promote comprehensive human development.

COLLABORATION

Egypt inks $33bn green ammonia deals with European developers

Arab News Riyadh

Egypt's sovereign fund has signed four agreements worth $33 billion in the field of green ammonia with European developers, a Cabinet statement said on Sunday.

Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly observed the signing of these agreements during the joint EU-Egypt Investment Conference in Cairo, marking a significant development in Egypt's renewable energy landscape.

The signing of these agreements not only underscores Egypt's commitment to sustainable development but also positions the country as a key player in the global renewable energy market, attracting substantial investments and fostering economic resilience.

The signing ceremony, attended by Egyptian Minister of Electricity and Renewable Energy Mohammed Shaker Al-Marqabi, and Hala El-Said, minister of planning and economic development, emphasized the collaboration between The Sovereign Fund of Egypt and several European developers. The first agreement, worth $11 billion, was inked with DAI Infrastructure to establish a green ammonia project at East Port Said. Ocior Energy secured the second agreement, totaling $4.25 billion, for a green ammonia project at Al-Sokhna Port aimed at European markets.



The signing thee agreements positions Egypt as a key player in the global renewable energy market. Supplied

The third agreement, valued at $3.46 billion, involved a partnership between Arab Energy and Voltalia to establish another green ammonia project at Al-Sokhna Port.

British Petroleum, Masdar, Hassan Allam Utilities, and Infinity Power Holding came together for the fourth agreement, amounting to $14 billion.

*Biz*Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Key indicator

China's June factory activity contracts

China's manufacturing contracted for a second month in June, an official factory survey showed on Sunday, keeping alive calls for further stimulus after recent indicators showed the economy struggling to get back on its feet.

The official purchasing managers' index, at 49.5 in June, was unchanged in May, below the 50-mark separating growth from contraction.

The index tends to paint a gloomier picture of the world's second-biggest economy than hard data. However, disappointing May industrial output numbers suggest factory owners have some reasons to be worried. **Reuters**

Export zones

China, Peru to upgrade trade agreement

China and Peru have achieved "substantial conclusion of negotiations" on the upgrading of a free trade agreement between both countries, Chinese state media said on Friday.

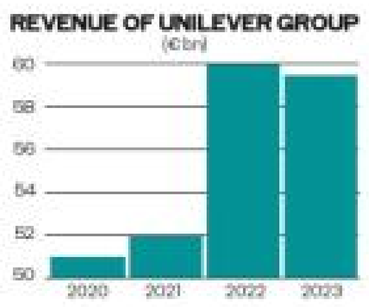
In a meeting with Peruvian President Dina Boluarte in Beijing, President Xi Jinping said both sides should coordinate and promote cooperation in fields such as minerals, energy, manufacturing, agriculture and others, state broadcaster CCTV said.

Peru and China signed a free trade agreement in 2009, which helped the South American nation boost its exports. **Reuters**

Chart of THE DAY

In 2023, the global revenue of Unilever Group amounted to nearly €60 billion.

Source: Statista



What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

Massacre in the Clouds

KIM A. WAGNER

In "Massacre in the Clouds," Kim A. Wagner meticulously recovers the history of a forgotten atrocity and the remarkable photograph that exposed its grim logic. His account of the massacre — where US soldiers killed 1,000 local men, women, and children, known as Moros, on top of an extinct volcano on the island of Jolo in the southern Philippines in March 1906, reveals the extent to which practices of colonial warfare were fully embraced by Americans with catastrophic results.



Road map

SK Hynix to invest $75bn by 2028 in AI

South Korea's SK Hynix, the world No. 2 memory chip maker, will invest 103 trillion won ($74.6 billion) through 2028 to strengthen its chips business, focusing on AI, its parent SK Group said on Sunday.

SK Group also said it plans to secure 80 trillion won by 2026 to invest in artificial intelligence and semiconductors.

The conglomerate outlined the plans following a two-day strategy meeting, aiming to revive the group after SK Hynix, its main money maker, and the group's electric vehicle battery arm suffered heavy losses. **AFP**

Stock listing

Boots chief quits after sale plan stalls

The boss of British health and beauty retailer Boots is quitting after US owner Walgreens Boots Alliance's plans for a sale or stock market listing of the chain stalled.

Sebastian James, who has run Boots since 2018, will remain in the post until November before taking up a new role elsewhere.

Sky News first reported James' exit, saying he had taken a role in the healthcare industry.

On Thursday, Walgreens warned on its profit outlook and said it had no plans to sell Boots. **Reuters**

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> Over the past five years, commercial 5G has achieved remarkable success and made an unprecedented impact on the global mobile industry.
>
> **David Wang**
> Executive Director and Chairman of ICT Infrastructure Managing Board, Huawei



Corporate

PRESS RELEASES | FROM THE WORLD OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE

CUTTING-EDGE SOLUTIONS

MWC Shanghai: Huawei embraces 5G-A for mobile AI era

Huawei, a global provider of telecommunications technology solutions, presented its cutting-edge 5G-Advanced and AI solutions at Mobile World Congress Shanghai 2024 under the theme "Advancing the Intelligent World." The company showcased its latest products and solutions that support commercial 5G-A deployment and the AI devices required for the mobile AI era.

The year 2024 marks the start of a new era of mobile AI empowered by the commercial launch of 5G-A and rapid advances in AI. Leading operators in the Middle East and China have started to deploy 5G-A networks, with some of them already launching differentiated experience-based 5G-A packages.

Huawei's Executive Director of the Board and Chairman of the ICT Infrastructure Managing Board David Wang delivered a keynote speech titled "Accelerating 5G-A and Shaping the Mobile AI Era." He said that the mobile AI era will transform human-machine interaction, content production, and mobile devices, revitalizing society and creating opportunities for the mobile industry.

Wang said: "This month marks the fifth year since 5G's commercial launch in China. Over the past five years, commercial 5G has achieved remarkable success and made an unprecedented impact on the global mobile industry." He added that Huawei looks forward to working with all industry stakeholders to seize the enormous opportunities presented by the mobile AI era to shape the intelligent world.



Huawei presented its cutting-edge 5G-Advanced and AI solutions at Mobile World Congress Shanghai 2024 under the theme 'Advancing the Intelligent World.'

Dr. Philip Song, chief marketing officer of Huawei Carrier Business Group, explained how Open Gateway will be essential for carriers to pursue experience-driven operations based on diverse 5G-A network capabilities. Open Gateway defines unified standards, billing modes, and a global ecosystem within an interoperable framework. It will become a new engine for 5G-A experience-oriented operations and spur the creation of new business models.

FASTFACT

Leading operators in the Middle East and China have started to deploy 5G-A networks, with some of them already launching differentiated experience-based 5G-A packages.

Yang Chaobin, Huawei's board member and president of ICT products and solutions, discussed how AI technology, particularly generative AI, brings new opportunities and requirements to telecom networks. He introduced Huawei's upgraded autonomous driving network solution, now powered by the company's Telecom Foundation Model. This solution provides five role-based copilots and five scenario-based agents to enhance network value in service enablement, maintenance, and experience assurance.

VEHICLE INSURANCE

King Fahd Causeway to Bahrain goes digital

United Insurance Company, the provider responsible for mandatory insurance for vehicles crossing the King Fahd Causeway to Bahrain, has announced that, effective July 1, short-term insurance policies (three, five, and 10 days) will be available exclusively through electronic channels.

The company said in a statement that the minimum insurance period available at physical insurance booths will be one month.

This initiative is designed to enhance the insurance services provided to vehicles using the King Fahd Causeway, streamline the process of obtaining insurance, and ensure a seamless crossing experience for travelers.

The new e-insurance service facilitates the issuance of insurance policies and the payment of fees online, allowing travelers to secure their insurance before reaching the King Fahd Causeway.



> **This measure is one of the initiatives we are implementing as part of our comprehensive digital transformation policy across all operations.**
>
> **Maysa Al-Kooheji**
> CEO of United Insurance Company

Maysa Al-Kooheji, CEO of United Insurance Company, said: "This measure is one of the initiatives we are implementing as part of our comprehensive digital transformation policy across all operations. This initiative continues the new phase of service development that began last January, marked by the launch of our new logo and visual identity."

RESILIENCY MARKERS

Study finds five capabilities that helped companies recover faster from cyberattacks

Commvault, a provider of cyber resilience and data protection solutions for the hybrid cloud, in collaboration with research firm GigaOm, released its 2024 Cyber Recovery Readiness Report.

This eye-opening global survey of 1,000 security and IT respondents across 11 countries directly addresses a fundamental question — what can businesses do to be more resilient in the face of cyberattacks? Commvault and GigaOm were able to pinpoint five key capabilities, also called resiliency markers, which when deployed together, helped companies recover faster from cyberattacks and experience fewer breaches compared to companies that did not follow the same path.

These five resiliency markers emerged after data analysis teams combed through survey results across a range of topics including: how often companies were breached; what resilience technologies were (or were not) deployed; and how rapidly businesses were able to recover data and resume normal operations. The resiliency markers are as follows:

1. Security tools that enable early warning about risk, including insider risk.

2. A known-clean dark site or secondary system in place.

3. An isolated environment to store an immutable copy of the data.

4. Defined runbooks, roles, and processes for incident response.

5. Specific measures to show cyber recovery readiness and risk.

In assessing the results, only 13 percent of respondents were categorized as cyber mature.

The survey found that cyber mature organizations, those that have deployed at least four of the five resiliency markers, recovered 41 percent faster than respondents with only zero or one marker.

Overall, cyber mature organizations reported experiencing fewer breaches compared with companies that have less than four markers.

Corporate Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Banking Excellence

GIB takes home 4 EMEA Finance Awards

Gulf International Bank has been honored with four wins at the EMEA Finance Annual Achievement Awards 2023, which recognize the leading capital markets deals and the banks behind them across Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

GIB was named Best Syndicated Loan House in the Middle East, as well as winning Best Sustainability-Linked Loan in EMEA for Bapco Energies' (Bahrain) $2.5 billion conventional and Islamic facilities, Best Sub-Sovereign Syndicated Loan in the Middle East for OQ Refineries' (Oman) $1.2 billion senior unsecured loan, and Best Syndicated Loan in the Middle East for Rawabi Holding's (Saudi Arabia) $1.913 billion dual tranche conventional and Islamic facilities.

Malware Attack

SMB cyber infections on the rise

A new Kaspersky report revealed that the number of infections experienced by the sector has risen by 5 percent over the first quarter of 2024, compared to the same period last year.

The number of users who encountered malware and unwanted software hiding in or mimicking software products was 2,402, with 4,110 unique files distributed under the guise of small- to medium-sized businesses-related software. This represents an 8 percent increase year on year and suggests an ongoing rise of attacker activity.

SMBs are increasingly being targeted by cybercriminals, according to the latest Kaspersky's report.

New Campus

Arada to bring UK school to Sharjah

Arada has announced a partnership with Bright Capital Investment to bring one of the UK's best-performing independent schools to the Masaar megaproject in Sharjah. With planned capacity for 2,700 students, Reigate Grammar School Masaar will be the first branch campus of a British school in Sharjah, offering a full K-12 program and complementing the existing rich variety of high-quality academic institutions in the emirate.



Portugal's coach Roberto Martinez deployed a 3-5-2 formation against the Czechs and Georgia which his players struggled to get to grasps with.

TENNIS

Djokovic battles to save legacy of Wimbledon's golden generation

AFP London

Novak Djokovic is poised to mount a one-man battle to preserve the legacy of Wimbledon's golden generation in the face of an increasingly successful new wave spearheaded by Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner.

However, the odds will be stacked against the seven-time champion and the holder of 24 Grand Slam titles when the tournament gets underway on Monday.

Arriving in London having recently undergone knee surgery, the 37-year-old Serb, runner-up to Alcaraz last year, has seen his Grand Slam powers eroded in 2024.

He was succeeded as Australian Open champion by Sinner with the Italian also taking his world No. 1 ranking.

Djokovic then saw his French Open crown pass to Alcaraz after he limped out of Paris suffering from a torn meniscus in his right knee.

If Djokovic equals Roger Federer's record of eight Wimbledon titles, he would become the oldest champion of the modern era.

"I have this incredible desire to play, just to compete," said Djokovic who will take on 123rd-ranked Vit Kopriva of the Czech Republic in his opener on Tuesday. "Just the thought of missing Wimbledon was not correct."



Novak Djokovic

With Federer now retired, Rafael Nadal skipping the tournament to focus on the Paris Olympics and Andy Murray playing in the aftermath of a back operation, there is definitely change in the air in south-west London.

Germany's world No. 4 Alexander Zverev on Saturday predicted this year's Wimbledon will be the "most open in 20 years."

The likelihood is that for the first time since 2002, the men's final on July 14 will not feature at least one of the "Big Four" who have swept up 19 of the last 20 titles.

Alcaraz, at 21 and 16 years Djokovic's junior, is already a three-time major winner.

He captured the US Open in 2022 while still a teenager, defeated Djokovic in a five-set final at Wimbledon in 2023 before seeing off Zverev in another five setter at the French Open this month.

Alcaraz, who opens Center Court action on Monday against 262nd-ranked Mark Lajal of Estonia, has a chance to complete a rare French Open-Wimbledon double in the same season.

"I know that it's going to be a really difficult and big challenge for me, but I think I'm ready to do it," said the Spaniard.

Sinner, 22, made the semi-finals at Wimbledon last year and celebrated his first grass-court title at Halle this month.

The top-seeded Italian has racked up four titles in 2024, losing just three of 41 matches. He faces Germany's Yannick Hanfmann in his Monday opener.

Wimbledon will also bid an emotional farewell to two-time champion Murray.

The 37-year-old British star, who famously ended Britain's 77-year wait for a Wimbledon men's champion with his 2013 victory, plans to bow out at the Olympics.

FOOTBALL

Martinez puzzles as Portugal face Slovenia in Euros last 16

Their performance raises questions on how far the team can go

AFP Frankfurt

Concerns are building among Portugal supporters over Roberto Martinez's approach as his side take on Slovenia in the Euro 2024 last 16 on Monday.

Portugal arrived in Germany among the contenders to win the tournament for a second time, but despite topping Group F, their performances lowered expectations over how far the Selecao can go.

They scraped a last-gasp 2-1 win over the Czech Republic, impressed in a 3-0 victory against Turkiye and then fell to a shock 2-0 defeat by debutants Georgia.

Martinez deployed a 3-5-2 formation against the Czechs and Georgia which his players struggled to get to grasps with, while their more familiar 4-3-3 worked well against Turkiye.

After qualifying for the Euros with a 100 percent record, Portugal's form since has been far patchier, with Georgia inflicting the first competitive defeat in Martinez's reign.

Slovenia were the first side to beat Martinez's Portugal in a March friendly, with his 3-5-2 system failing again that day.

But veteran Portugal defender Pepe said that the team needs to step up and follow Martinez's instructions better.

"I think we lost when we should have lost and now we need to learn from that," said the center-back ahead of the clash with Slovenia in Frankfurt.



Some in Portuguese media believe the players are puzzled by Martinez's plans and therefore are struggling to execute them. Reuters

"(We must learn) from what we didn't do as players, whether we followed what the coach asked us to do in general, and of course, try not to make mistakes in the next game."

However, some in Portuguese media believe the players are puzzled by Martinez's plans and therefore are struggling to execute them.

"We are left wondering whether Roberto Martinez has understood what went wrong against Georgia, and the Czech Republic, for that matter," read a column in newspaper A Bola.

"It's hard to see in the faces of (many players) a team that knows what it is doing, and perhaps more importantly, believes in it."

There are also concerns Martinez is too deferential to 39-year-old striker Cristiano Ronaldo, who did not score in any of the three group games.

Despite rotating virtually his whole team for the defeat by Georgia, Ronaldo still started and Martinez's reasoning did not particularly stand up to scrutiny.

"I think that to continue with the competitive rhythm it's not good to stop and then (have to) reactivate in six days' time," explained the coach ahead of Portugal's capitulation.

Martinez left Belgium after the 2022 World Cup where his team were eliminated in the group stage, scoring just one goal.

In that tournament his selection of Eden Hazard was questioned given his struggles for fitness and form at Real Madrid, with the winger later saying he felt younger players had deserved his spot. Portugal fans hope the Georgia result will be a wake-up call for Martinez, but the coach claimed his squad was now set up well for the knock-out rounds after sharing around minutes to reserves.

"The focus was on preparing all the players and now we are better prepared for the round of 16," said Martinez.

"We had players on the bench that had to play. "We don't like losing — it's the first competitive game that we have lost — but the aim was achieved because now we are better prepared."

Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

UFC 303

Alex Pereira retains light heavyweight title

Alex Pereira first became a champion kickboxer and then moved to the UFC and won title belts in the middleweight and light heavyweight divisions. And, after a convincing victory over top-ranked challenger Jiri Prochazka in UFC 303, he might not be done.

Pereira could move up to heavyweight and do what no UFC fighter has ever accomplished — win championships in three weight classes.

He put himself in position after delivering a vicious left kick to Prochazka's head and then pounded him. **AP**



Austrian GP

Russell wins after Verstappen, Norris clash

George Russell clinched Mercedes' first win of the season at Formula 1's Austrian GP after taking advantage of a late clash between McLaren driver Lando Norris and championship leader Max Verstappen in a Red Bull on Sunday. It was Russell's second GP win.

McLaren's Oscar Piastri was second, ahead of Ferrari's Carlos Sainz Jr.

Norris was trying to take the lead from Verstappen with just seven laps remaining. The incident left Norris' car unable to continue, and Verstappen was given a 10-second time penalty. **AP**

$53.5m deal

Juventus sign Brazil star Luiz from Aston Villa

Juventus signed Brazil midfielder Douglas Luiz from Aston Villa in a deal worth a reported £42.3 million ($53.5 million) on Sunday.

Luiz agreed on a five-year contract with the Italian club as he became the latest player to leave Villa Park due to the Premier League club's financial fair-play cost-cutting. Signed from Manchester City in 2019, the 26-year-old spent five years with Villa and was a key player in their surprise fourth-place finish in the Premier League last season. **AFP**

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When asked if he was Team Black or Team Green when it came to the Targaryen civil war, 'House of the Dragon' star Rhys Ifans said in a recent interview: 'Both sides are genocidal, crazy war criminals. I think we should all enjoy seeing how they die.'

& Finally

The Six

Joke Day

It's International Joke Day so we've rounded up six comedians changing the game.



Nasser Al-Rayess

The self-titled "shawarma king" is currently on a stand-up tour in the US, including stops in Chicago, Washington and New York.



Maysoon Zayid

The American Palestinian actress, comedian, writer, and disability advocate is the co-founder of the New York Arab American Comedy Festival and the Muslim Funny Fest.



Hadeel Marei

One of the most followed comedians across YouTube and Instagram, with more than 1.5 million subscribers on each platform, this Egyptian comic should be on your radar.



Eman Morgan

The Egyptian American stand-up comedian, who performs in both English and Arabic, appeared in the feature film "Just Like Us" on Netflix.



Ismael Loutfi

The American Syrian funnyman was a writer on Netflix's "Patriot Act with Hasan Minhaj" and has performed on "Jimmy Kimmel Live!"



Sammy Obeid

Sammy Obeid is a US Palestinian comedian described by The New York Times as specializing in "clever misdirection and ethnic humor."

CLOSE UP

Elyanna makes a statement at Glastonbury

Arab News Dubai

British band Coldplay seemed to make a strong political statement when they brought out Palestinian Chilean singer Elyanna during their headlining set at the UK's Glastonbury Festival on Saturday.

The band performed the track "We Pray" from their unreleased album "Moon Music" and were joined on stage by rapper Little Simz and vocalist Elyanna to cheers from the audience.

The song features the lyrics "we pray that we make it 'til the end of the day."

Later in the show, lead singer Chris Martin said it was important they could show a "beacon of togetherness."

At a Coldplay concert in Tokyo in November, Martin appeared to speak out against the Israel-Gaza war.

He told the audience that there were "so many terrible things happening," and that he believed "most people on Earth are full of love and full of kindness, compassion."

He added: "We don't believe in oppression, or occupation, terrorism or genocide, nothing like that."

In May, Elyanna made her television debut on "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert" and in 2023, Elyanna became the first artist to perform a full set in Arabic at California's Coachella music festival — she has also been vocal about the ongoing conflict on social media.

Meanwhile, pop star Dua Lipa lit up a chilly Glastonbury evening on Friday, transforming its famous Pyramid stage venue into an open-air night-club where thousands grooved to hits such as "Levitating" and "Houdini."

Headlining the iconic music festival in southern England for the first time, Lipa delivered a glittery, energetic performance featuring firework displays, five different outfits and an ensemble of break dancers and musicians, Reuters reported.

The 28-year-old British Albanian singer told the crowd how it had been a dream for her to sing on Glastonbury's Pyramid stage, where artists such as Paul McCartney, Beyoncé and David Bowie have performed over the festival's more than 50-year history.

"Little me would just be so beside herself right now," she said. "Honestly I couldn't believe it. I feel so grateful."

She joined Coldplay, R&B singer SZA and country music singer Shania Twain as headliners — a grouping with much more female talent after criticism over last year's male-dominated lineup.



Palestinian Chilean singer Elyanna made her television debut on 'The Late Show with Stephen Colbert' this year and performed at Coachella in 2023. File/Getty Images

Below: Coldplay's Chris Martin on stage at Glastonbury on Saturday. Getty Images



NEW FILM

Lil Nas X releases 'Beverly Hills Cop' theme

Arab News Dubai

Grammy Award winner Lil Nas X released the theme song for upcoming Netflix sequel "Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F," which premieres Wednesday on the streaming platform.

The track is titled "Here We Go!" and features the recognizable riff from the original 1984 movie's theme by Harold Faltermeyer.

The musician sat down for an interview with "Axel F" stars Eddie Murphy, Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Taylour Paige hosted by Netflix and spoke about the experience of recording the song.

The artist said it was "actually kind of insane," adding, "I was a bit emotional."

DC UNIVERSE

'Always a chance,' Chris Pratt says on DCU jump

Arab News Dubai

"Guardians of the Galaxy" star Chris Pratt isn't ruling out heading from the Marvel Cinematic Universe to the DC Universe. Following a visit to the set of James Gunn's "Superman: Legacy," the US actor said "there's always a chance" he could make the franchise leap.

"I just have to leave that to the fans and people like James to decide," Pratt told TMZ. "If it could fit into my schedule and it made sense, I would love it," he added. "Of course I love playing Star-Lord, and hopefully there's a chance that can come back ... if it's right and the fans would love it, I'd be more than happy to do it."



Chris Pratt

MIND MATTERS

From corporate battles to the home front, balancing mental health is key

Hiba Salem Dubai

Hiba Salem is a clinical psychologist and adult specialist at Sage Clinics in the UAE. Here, she writes on how to take care of one's mental health while juggling multiple roles — something that is a key concern as we reach the end of Men's Mental Health Awareness Month.

Creating a balance in mental health and well-being across our different life roles involves integrating strategies that address the multifaceted nature of human lives. Individuals often juggle roles such as employee, parent, partner, friend, and community member, which can create competing demands and stressors.

An essential part of creating synergy and balance across our different roles is to set clear boundaries. By setting clear and segmented roles, we can minimize spillover across the different roles. Boundaries should be clearly defined, with work activities, including work-related emails and texts, being restricted to certain hours outside personal time.



Hiba Salem is a clinical psychologist. Supplied

Prioritizing self-care and building healthy practices across physical, mental, and leisure areas of our lives is foundational to reducing burnout, cultivating purpose and value-driven living, and improving work-life balance.

Physical health impacts mood, energy levels, and overall cognitive function. Accordingly, regular exercise, a balanced diet, and adequate sleep are crucial for balanced self-care.

Post COVID-19 work setups have moved from the traditional workspace towards more remote and versatile integrations. Flexibility can help manage the demands of different life roles more effectively. Yet, more versatile working environments require clear limits regarding accessibility and connectedness outside working hours.

Crucial to time management is learning to delegate tasks both at work and home. Delegation not only eases the burden but also empowers others and builds trust within teams and family units.