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SUNDAY, June 30, 2024
Dul Hijjah 24, 1445
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ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

SINCE 1975

BLOW TO HARD-LINERS

Iranian reformist wins first round

- Pezeshkian beats Jalili for lst place
- 2 face each other in July 5 run-off

AFP Tehran

Masoud Pezeshkian, Iran's sole reformist candidate, has risen from relative obscurity to leading the votes in the first round of the country's presidential elections, stunning supporters and rivals alike.

Pezeshkian, 69, won the largest number of votes in a first round on Friday that saw him face off against three figures from the conservative camp, all vying to replace late president Ebrahim Raisi who died in a helicopter crash last month.

He garnered more than 10,400,000 votes, while ultra-conservative former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili came in second place with more than 9,400,000 votes. The two will compete against each other in a runoff vote next Friday.

In the lead-up to the elections, Iran's main reformist coalition threw its weight behind Pezeshkian, with former Presidents Mohammad Khatami and the moderate Hassan Rouhani declaring support for his bid.

Pezeshkian's push for Iran's presidency comes amid heightened regional tensions over the Gaza war, a dispute with the West over Iran's nuclear program and domestic discontent over the state of Iran's sanctions-hit economy.

The outspoken heart surgeon had publicly criticized the Raisi government over its handling of the death in custody of Iranian Kurd Mahsa Amini, who had been arrested for allegedly violating the country's strict dress code for women.

Pezeshkian was born on Sept. 29, 1954, in the city of Mahabad in the northwestern province of West Azerbaijan.

He has represented Tabriz in parliament since 2008, served as health minister in Khatami's government, and supervised sending medical teams to the front during the Iran-Iraq war.

FASTFACT

Pezeshkian garnered more than 10,400,000 votes, while ex-nuclear negotiator Jalili came in second place with more than 9,400,000 votes.



Israeli left-wing activists take part in an anti-government demonstration in the coastal city of Tel Aviv on Saturday, demanding an end to the Gaza war. SPA

MIDDLE EAST WAR

Israeli ground, air attacks pummel Gaza

Saudi Arabia condemns Israeli approval of settlement expansion in West Bank

Arab News Jeddah

Explosions, airstrikes and gunfire rattled northern Gaza on Saturday, the third day of an Israeli military operation that has uprooted tens of thousands of Palestinians and compounded what the UN called "unbearable" living conditions in the territory.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad said they were engaged in ongoing fighting with Israeli forces there.

Israel's military said its operations were continuing in Shujaiya where fighting "above and below the ground" left a "large number" of militants dead.

A UN spokeswoman, Louise Wateridge, said she had just returned to central Gaza after four weeks outside the territory.

"It's really unbearable," she said, describing a "significantly deteriorated" situation.

"There's no water there, there's no sanitation, there's no food," and people are returning to live in "empty shells" of buildings.

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, condemned Israel's decision to expand settlements in the occupied West Bank.

Its Foreign Ministry affirmed the "Kingdom's categorical rejection of the ongoing Israeli violations of international law."

It also warned of the "dire consequences" if Israeli authorities continued with the settlement expansion plans.

Israel's hard-line finance minister said on Thursday that the government would promote West Bank settlements and punitive measures against the Palestinian Authority in response to Palestinian moves against Israel on the international stage.

A senior Hamas official, Osama Hamdan, said there has been no progress in ceasefire talks with Israel over the Gaza war.

NUMBER

37,834

Palestinians have been killed in Israel's Gaza offensive.

Related reports Pages 6 & 7

The Brief

MEDAL HAUL

Five Saudi students from Mawhiba have won medals at the Junior Balkan Mathematical Olympiad 2024. **P4**

SAUDI DOCTORS

Saudi doctors are training their Indonesian colleagues in pediatric heart surgery and helping expand access to children's cardiac care. **P8**

CAR INDUSTRY

Saudi automotive industry is experiencing significant growth, driven by government-led initiatives. **P11**

PLIGHT

Yemeni pilgrims stuck in KSA after Houthis seize planes

American, British jets pound militia targets in Taiz, Hodeidah amid escalating ship attacks

Saeed Al-Batati Al-Mukalla

At least 1,000 Yemeni pilgrims are stranded in Saudi Arabia after the Houthis seized Yemenia Airways flights that would carry them from the Kingdom to Houthi-held Sanaa, the Yemeni government said on Saturday.

Last week, the Houthis seized three Yemenia aircraft at Sanaa airport and prevented them from returning to Saudi Arabia's Jeddah airport to carry Yemeni pilgrims home, causing the Yemeni government to accuse the Houthis of "hijacking" the planes and worsening Yemenis' misery.



The Houthis have seized three Yemenia jets at Sanaa airport. Social media

The Houthi Ministry of Transportation admitted on Thursday that the planes were seized, and vowed to take control of Yemenia Airways, reschedule flights from Yemeni airports, including those controlled by the Yemeni government, and repair planes at Sanaa Airport, accusing the Yemeni government of plundering the company's revenues.

In other developments, US and British jets struck Houthi targets in two Yemeni provinces as the militia escalated their drone, missile, and drone boat attacks on ships.

Houthi media reported that US and UK planes carried out four airstrikes on Hodeidah airport in the western province of Hodeida, as well as four more airstrikes on locations in Mawiyah district of the southern province Taiz over the last 24 hours.

The latest round of airstrikes occurred after the Houthis claimed to have targeted ships in the Red Sea and Mediterranean with ballistic missiles, drones, and explosive-laden drone boats.

2 Riyals • Vol. XLIX
No. 207• 16 pages



During my official visit to Brazil, I met with ambassadors of the GCC countries in Brazil and heard their ideas for strengthening Gulf relations.

Jasem Al-Budaiwi
GCC secretary-general

Radar

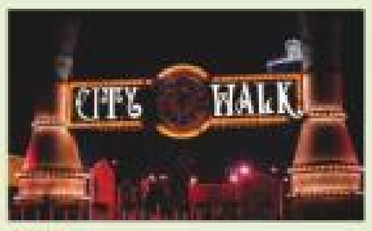
KSA today



Riyadh

Padel

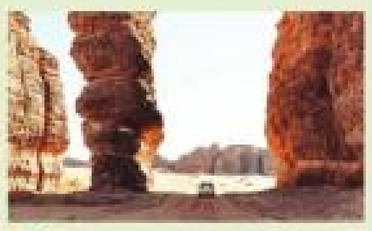
Sports enthusiasts are invited to try a game of padel, a racket sport of Mexican origin, typically played in pairs on an enclosed court slightly smaller than a doubles tennis court. Further details can be found on experiences.suplift.com.



AlUla

City Walk

City Walk returns for the fourth consecutive year with games, activities, retail shops and restaurants, offering an ideal entertainment destination for families. Doors open at 6 p.m.



Baha

Night safari

Embark on an exploration of Sharaan Nature Reserve, using UV torch lights to safely observe scorpions, snakes and other nocturnal wildlife. To book the trip, visit experiencealula.com.



Aseer

Al-Habala Park

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

The Register

THE PICTURES THAT MARK THE DAY



Saudi Minister of Communications and Information Technology Abdullah Al-Swaha on Saturday met US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo in Washington.

The two sides discussed strengthening the strategic partnership between their countries to support the growth of the digital economy in the region, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

The Kingdom's Ambassador to the US Princess Reema bint Bandar was also present at the meeting.

What's Trending

Today's hot topics explained by ***Ameera Abid***



UP FOR GRABS

Ripley Castle

The Ripley Castle estate in Harrogate, England, which has been owned by the Ingilby family for more than 700 years, will go up for sale later this year.

Its current owners, Sir Thomas and Lady Ingilby, will, according to a report by the BBC, likely be selling the 14th-century castle, its grounds and coffee shops, as well as the Boar's Head public house.

"Most of the estate's enterprises will continue to trade as normal and our valued clients, employees and tenants will be advised at the earliest opportunity of any changes to this plan," the family said in a statement.

A price has not been determined by estate agent Carter Jonas, but they said that the details will be available "after October."

The castle was acquired by Thomas Ingilby in the late 1300s as the dowry for his marriage to heiress Edeline Thwenge.

'LIVING MY CHILDHOOD DREAM'

Smokey Robinson

American R&B and soul singer-songwriter Smokey Robinson performed at New York's historic Apollo Theater for the first time in almost a decade on Saturday night.

The 84-year-old music legend, whose career spans eight decades, is known as the artist that shaped R&B for future generations.

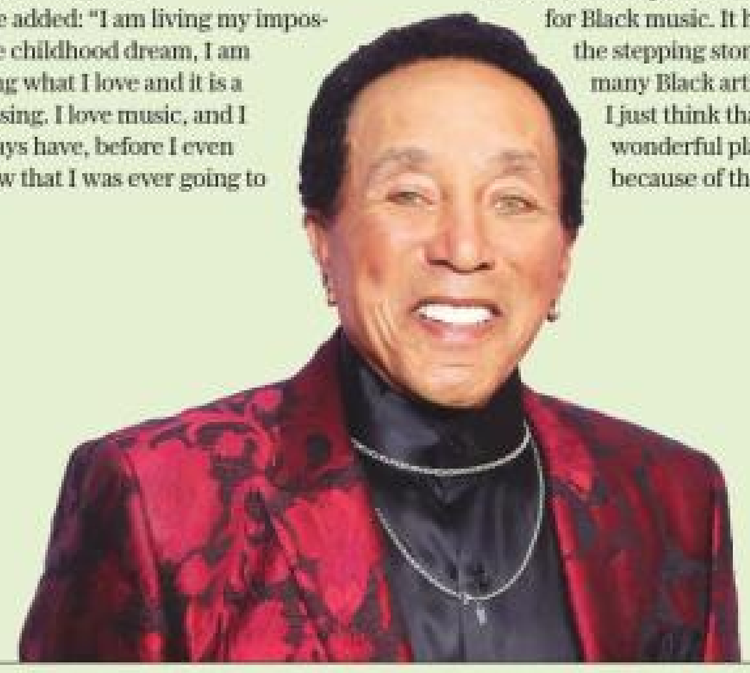
Referencing a break he took back in 1972, he told PEOPLE in a new interview, "I tried retiring one time and it didn't work for me, man."

He added: "I am living my impossible childhood dream, I am doing what I love and it is a blessing. I love music, and I always have, before I even knew that I was ever going to have a career."

He recalled his childhood and said he was fortunate to have grown up "in a home where there was always music."

He explained: "I had two older sisters and my mom, and they were always playing music — blues, gospel, jazz, classical, everything. I grew up with a great dose of music, and I've always loved music. Music is very, very, very essential throughout my life and in my life. So yeah, man, I am a music lover."

On returning to the Apollo's stage, he said, "The Apollo is traditional for Black music. It has been the stepping stone for so many Black artists, and I just think that it's a wonderful place for me because of that."



Today's Number

84k

The municipality in Madinah removed 84,000 cubic meters of construction and demolition waste from various sites, 166 illegal billboards, and 1,455 square meters of graffiti as part of its plans to preserve the urban landscape, Saudi Press Agency reported.

Who's Who



Dr. Carina Lanfredi

Dr. Carina Lanfredi is an executive director at Diriyah Gate, a position she has held since May 2023.

She is responsible for revamping and restructuring the group's procurement contract and claims management function, aligning local needs with core corporate objectives, and enhancing governance and redefining process flows.

In addition, she contributed to strengthening partnerships and resolving large-scale claims and disputes.

Before taking on this role, she worked as a contract and claims management consultant between 2020 and 2023 and led a team of five on cross-sector projects in five countries.

Some of her duties included providing strategic consultancy and guidance, as well as advice to improve business efficiencies.

Lanfredi was the group executive director of Veon Procurement in the Netherlands from 2018 to 2020. Her duties included restructuring contract management functions on three continents: Europe, Africa and Asia.

During the period between 2002 and 2017, she worked at Thyssen-Krupp, Bilfinger AG and Siemens in Germany in several leadership roles.

The Region

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Jeddah

- The "Imaginary Art" show in Dubai is an AI-enhanced multisensory dining experience celebrating eight iconic artists from the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Created by chef Vladimir Mukhin, the event features an eight-course menu in which each dish is inspired by a different artwork. Held at Krasota Dubai until the end of the month.

- Join the workshops at the Al-Jasra Handicraft Centre and help preserve Bahrain's cultural heritage. Running until Aug. 31, the sessions offer a hands-on experience of a variety of traditional crafts, including cement works, copper shaping and other artisinal techniques. For more details, visit calendar.bh.

- "A Sneak Peek" Exhibition at Qatar Auto Museum explores the past, present, and future of the automobile and its impact on global life and culture. It also celebrates the mission to drive culture forward and to inspire the next generation of innovators, designers, engineers, collectors, and policymakers through a shared passion for cars. The exhibition will run until Jan. 26, 2025.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

June 30	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghreb	Isha
Makkah	4:11	5:38	12:22	3:41	7:05	8:35
Madinah	4:02	5:32	12:23	3:43	7:12	8:42
Riyadh	3:33	5:04	11:54	3:15	6:44	9:14
Abha	4:09	5:34	12:11	3:34	6:48	8:18
Dammam	3:13	4:46	11:41	3:07	6:35	8:05



When I saw the enlarged photographs of the objects, I could clearly see the cartouche of a king.

Frederic Payraudeau
Egyptologist at Sorbonne University

Spotlight
RESEARCH & STUDIES THE MIDDLE EAST, BETTER EXPLAINED | ARAB NEWS

ARCHEOLOGY

Answer to an ancient Egyptian mystery

A fragment of a previously overlooked coffin was found to bear the name of one of Egypt's most famous rulers — Ramses II







The coffin, main, and mummy, above and below, of the Ancient Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II, were discovered near Luxor in 1881. Getty Images



The royal cartouche was found to include Ramses' name in hieroglyphics, above, as was a fragment of his sarcophagus, bottom. Supplied

Jonathan Gornall London

During excavations carried out at the ancient site of Abydos in Egypt in 2009, archeologists made an unexpected discovery — the remains of a lost Coptic monastery, believed to have been founded in the 5th century CE by the leader of the Coptic church, Apa Moses.

That was fascinating enough, but even bigger surprises would emerge.

Deep within the excavated ruins of the monastery, archeologists from the Egyptian Ministry of State for Antiquities made a discovery that shone a vivid light on the tensions that existed between the early Coptic church and the remnants of Egypt's "pagan" past.

Pressed into service as a humble doorstep within the monastery was a piece of red granite, measuring 1.7 meters long and half as wide.

On it was a partial inscription that revealed it was part of the sarcophagus of Menkheperre, the high priest of Amun-Ra who ruled the south of Egypt between 1045 and 992 BCE.

The find seemed to solve one mystery — where Menkheperre had been buried. Previously it was thought that he must have been entombed near his power base at Thebes, in a grave yet to be discovered. Now, it seemed, he had been laid to rest in Abydos.

The existence of a fragment of his sarcophagus, set within the floor of the monastery, as the authors of a paper published in 2016 surmised, owed something to Apa Moses' "persecution of local pagan temples," and was "perhaps the result of the fervor with which his followers dismantled pagan structures and tombs throughout Abydos."

And that is where the story might have ended, but for Frederic Payraudeau, an Egyptologist at Sorbonne University in Paris.

Ayman Damrani and Kevin Cahail, the Egyptian and American archeologists who had discovered the fragment, recognized from the outset that the sarcophagus had had another occupant before Menkheperre.

They saw that earlier inscriptions had been overwritten and suggested the original owner might have been an unknown royal prince.

The fragment, made of hard red granite, represented "a much greater allocation of time and resources involved in its construction," they wrote, than would have been expended on the sarcophagus of even a high official.

This suggested the original owner "had access to royal-level workshops and materials," and might have been a prince by the name of Meryamunre or Meryamun.

"I was not really convinced by the reading of the inscriptions," said Payraudeau.

"I already suspected that this fragment was from the sarcophagus of a king, partly because of the quality of the object, which is very well carved, but also because of the decoration."

This consisted of scenes from the Book of Gates, an ancient Egyptian funerary text reserved almost exclusively for kings.

"It is known in the Valley of the Kings on the walls of the tombs, and on the sarcophagi of the kings, and it was used only by one person, who was not a king, in a later period.

"But this is an exception, and it would have been very strange for a prince to have used this text — and especially a prince that we hadn't heard of."



The photographs published with the paper were of too low quality to confirm his suspicions, so he asked the author to send him high-resolution copies. "And when I saw the enlarged photographs of the objects, I could clearly see the cartouche of a king."

A cartouche is an oval frame, underscored at one end and containing a name written in hieroglyphics, that was used to indicate royalty. This one read "User-Maat-Ra Setep-en-Ra."

Translated roughly as "The justice of Ra is powerful, Chosen of Ra," it was the throne name of one of the most famous rulers of ancient Egypt — Ramses II.

Ramses II, who ruled from 1279 to 1213 BCE, is regarded as one of the most powerful warrior-pharaohs of ancient Egypt, known to generations of subsequent rulers and their subjects as the "great ancestor."

His was the longest reign in Egyptian history and he is depicted in more than 300 often colossal statues found across the ancient kingdom.

Upon his death, after a reign that lasted 67 years, he was buried in a tomb in the Valley of the Kings. Because many of the tombs were later looted, one of his successors, Ramses IX, who ruled from 1129 to 1111 BCE, had many of the remains moved for safekeeping to a secret tomb in Deir El-Bahari, a necropolis on the Nile opposite the city of Luxor. There they lay undisturbed for almost 3,000 years until their chance discovery by a goat-herder in about 1860.

It was not until 1881 that Egyptologists got wind of the extraordinary find, and there among the more than 50 mummies of pharaohs, each labeled with the details of who they were and where they had been originally buried, was Ramses II. He was in a beautifully carved cedarwood coffin. Originally, this would ordinarily have been placed inside a golden coffin — lost to antiquity — which in turn would have been housed within an alabaster sarcophagus, which itself was then placed inside a stone sarcophagus.

Small fragments of the alabaster sarcophagus, which had presumably been shattered by looters, were found in his original tomb in the Valley of the Kings. Of the granite sarcophagus, however, there was no sign — until now.

In addition to ordinary grave robbers, even the authorities took part in the looting, recycling sarcophagi for their own use. That is how Menkheperre came to be buried in a sarcophagus previously used by Ramses II. Payraudeau is not convinced that the use of a fragment of the sarcophagus in the building of the 5th-century CE Coptic monastery was necessarily an act of disrespect.

"When they built this monastery, they didn't know that they were reusing the sarcophagus of Ramses, because by this time no one had been able to read hieroglyphs for about 500 years."

The one remaining mystery now was where in Abydos Menkheperre was originally buried.

FAST FACTS

- **Ramses II, who ruled from 1279 to 1213 BCE, is regarded as one of the most powerful warrior-pharaohs of ancient Egypt.**
- **His was the longest reign in Egyptian history and he is depicted in more than 300 colossal statues across the ancient kingdom.**

HONOR

Saudi students win medals at junior math Olympiad

Success is part of achievements in various global contests

Arab News Riyadh

Five Saudi students from the King Abdulaziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity (Mawhiba) have earned international acclaim by winning medals at the Junior Balkan Mathematical Olympiad 2024.

The competition, held in Turkiye from June 25-30, featured 130 students from 22 countries.

Abdullah bin Tariq Al-Amer, from the Eastern Province Education Department, secured a silver medal. Bronze medals were awarded to Mohammed Shaiban, from the Jubail Industrial City Royal Commission Education Department; Bilal Al-Hujaili, from the Madinah Education Department; Fatimah Al-Marhoon, from the Eastern Province Education Department; and Arar Al-Ajami, from the Riyadh Education Department.

Amal Al-Hazaa, general director of Mawhiba, said that the victory underscores the collaborative efforts between the organization and its strategic partner, the Ministry of Education, in achieving the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030.

Al-Hazaa praised the capabilities of the Saudi students, acknowledging their numerous international achievements, which contribute to building the country's future and enhancing its human capital.

This marks the 13th participation of the Saudi team in the Junior Balkan Mathematical Olympiad. Over the years, the Saudi team has amassed a total of 58 medals, including nine gold, 22 silver, and 27 bronze.

Saudi Arabia's success at the junior Olympiad is part of a broader series of achievements in various global competitions, represented by the Ministry of Education and Mawhiba.

Students selected for the competition underwent a series of rigorous tests conducted by Mawhiba during an intensive training period. Team members received several years of focused training under the guidance of national and international trainers.

The Junior Balkan Mathematical Olympiad, organized annually by one of the Balkan countries and Cyprus, held its inaugural competition in Yugoslavia in 1997. Each participating country fields a team of up to six students under the age of 15 at the start of the competition, which takes place over a single day.

FASTFACTS

- **This marks the 13th participation of the Saudi team in the Junior Balkan Mathematical Olympiad.**
- **Over the years, the Saudi team has amassed a total of 58 medals, including nine gold, 22 silver, and 27 bronze.**



The delegation met with Matlubakhon Sattoriyon, Tajikistan's culture minister, and several ministry officials. SPA

BOOSTING TIES

Shourah Council meets top officials in Tajikistan

Arab News Riyadh

A delegation from the Shourah Council's Saudi-Tajik-Uzbek Parliamentary Friendship Committee recently met with top officials during an official visit to Tajikistan.

Led by Mohammed Al-Jarba, the committee chairman, the delegation met with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan Farrukh Sharifzoda at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dushanbe.

The deputy minister welcomed the Saudi delegation, praising the strong relations between the two countries and lauding Saudi Arabia's global leadership, Saudi Press Agency reported.

Al-Jarba expressed gratitude for the warm reception and affirmed the depth of the bilateral ties.

During the visit, the delegation also met with Matlubakhon Sattoriyon, the culture minister, and several ministry officials.

Sattoriyon highlighted the importance of deep-rooted cultural relations between the two countries, and praised Saudi Arabia's international leadership.

They discussed cultural collaboration and the importance of showcasing the rich historical heritage of both nations. The meeting also explored avenues for cooperation in the cultural sector.

HIGHLIGHT

The delegation visited the Nurek hydroelectric power plant, where they met with plant officials, toured the facilities, and received a briefing on the construction phases, dams, and services provided by the plant.

*The*Space

Moody's affirms KSA's credit rating at A1



TALAT ZAKI HAFIZ

Global credit rating agency Moody's has affirmed Saudi Arabia's credit rating at A1 with a positive outlook.

The rating is based on the Kingdom's strong economy supported by its vast hydrocarbon endowment, improving institutions, policy effectiveness and robust balance sheet, including large foreign currency buffers.

It is also based on an assessment of the significant progress made by the government since 2016 in implementing its broad-based reforms agenda and the effectiveness of its macroeconomic and fiscal policies.

Moody's expects the Kingdom to continue implementing large diversification projects in support of nonhydrocarbon economic growth as they are designed to be modular and commercialized in phases.

The agency said the positive outlook also reflected the economic and investment reforms in various non-oil sectors that would, over time, lead to a material decline in the Kingdom's economic and fiscal reliance on hydrocarbons.

Despite the strong rating, Moody's cited several potential sovereign risks attached to the cyclical declines in oil demand and prices and longstanding regional geopolitical risks.

For example, the agency assumes that all voluntary oil production cuts in Saudi Arabia will remain in place until the end of this year, before they are gradually unwound from 2025 in line with global demand growth. At the same time, subdued oil production will weigh on the government's fiscal balance, which Moody's expects will remain in deficit at about 3-4 percent of gross domestic product in 2024-25, compared to a deficit of 2 percent in 2023.

The agency expects the Kingdom's real GDP to expand by 2-2.5 percent in 2024 and by about 5 percent in 2025, led by robust economic activity in the nonhydrocarbon sector.

I believe that Moody's has fairly rated the Kingdom's credit strength, considering the fluctuations in global oil prices and the Kingdom's voluntary oil cuts of 1.5 million barrels to support OPEC+ cuts until the end of this year, aiming to achieve and sustain a stable oil market.

The agency expects the Kingdom to continue implementing large diversification projects in support of nonhydrocarbon economic growth.

Moody's assumes that oil prices will average $82 per barrel in 2024 and $75 in 2025. Based on its assumption, the Kingdom's public debt is likely to rise to about 30 percent of GDP in 2025 from 26 percent in 2023, which is still within the government's target.

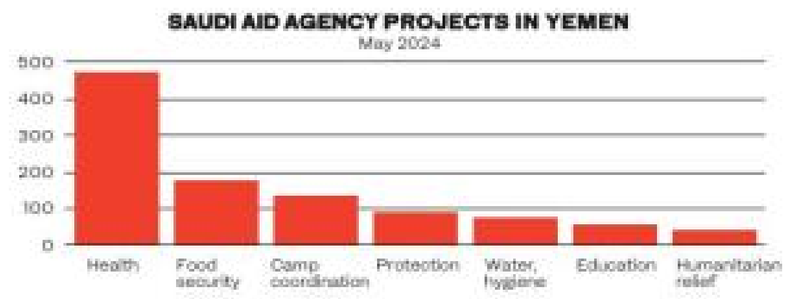
The government will continue to have a strong balance sheet given its sizable financial assets, which will mitigate the effect of the increase in the public debt.

The Kingdom's positive outlook reflects its successful economic and financial reforms in line with Vision 2030, which seeks to significantly reduce the country's economic and fiscal reliance on oil revenues.

Finally, the diversification of the Kingdom's economy and the large foreign currency buffers will support its economy and financial position in the event of unexpected global economic shocks.

Talat Zaki Hafiz is an economist and financial analyst. **X: @TalatHafiz**

The Day's FIGURES



Source: ksrelief.org

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Culture

Over 30 farmers take part in Tabuk honey festival

More than 30 farmers and beekeepers are taking part in the Honey and Agricultural Products Festival at Tabuk Park.

Organized by the local arm of the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, the five-day event provides a platform to promote the region's agricultural products and teach people about beekeeping, making honey and lots more.

There are also lots of activities for families to enjoy, including handicrafts and painting.

The ministry said it was keen to support local farmers and help them overcome challenges.

Honey has long held a special place in Saudi culture, cultivated by beekeepers across the region. **SPA Tabuk**

Serving visitors

Madinah roads go through repair works

The field teams of Madinah Municipality are continuing their work to maintain and repair the road network in the holy city.

This week they helped to maintain 214,280 linear meters of main and internal roads, while repairing 2,366 sq. meters of potholes and depressions, in addition to removing several illegal speed bumps.

Field teams also conducted 875 tours for general cleaning, disinfecting some 7,186 locations with chemicals.

The teams also attempted to study the quality of materials while carrying out their projects. They looked at 32 samples of surfaces, including four asphalt samples, 27 concrete and one soil. **SPA Madinah**

Residency laws

13,445 violators of Saudi laws arrested

A joint field campaign to monitor and apprehend violators of residency, work, and border-security laws in all regions of the Kingdom, carried out from June 20 to 26, has resulted in the arrests of 13,445 people.

Authorities apprehended 3,230 people for violating Saudi border-security regulations, and 1,452 others for violating the Kingdom's work rules.

According to officials, 1,063 people were caught trying to enter the Kingdom illegally, of whom 36 percent were from Yemen, 62 percent from Ethiopia, and 2 percent from other countries. Another 66 people were caught trying to leave the Kingdom illegally. **Riyadh**

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INTERMIX RESIDENCY

Saudi culture, landscape in the spotlight at Riyadh showcase

15 local, global artists present work inspired by fusion of visual arts, fashion

Nada Alturki Riyadh

The open studio at the second Intermix Residency offers entry into a realm of creative exploration in which artists from across the globe put the Kingdom's natural landscapes and cultural elements at the center of their work.



Some 15 creators worked together over 10 weeks to develop their own artistic vision inspired by the fusion of visual arts and fashion, and centered around themes of transformation, innovation, and sustainability.

Italian visual artist Ivo Cotani told Arab News: "The residency (has) pushed me forward a lot. I've seen (it) not just in my productions, but (by) being myself in my art. I feel more mature and comfortable with what I'm doing."

His artwork "I Am Nature" is a combination of various mediums and is inspired by local flora and fauna. His studio showcases small ceramic sculptures of oryxes, camels, eagles and other animals, abstract floral paintings, and animal-like flower masks made with the help of two artisans.

He added: "Whenever I work, I'm always relating to the land in some way. I have been looking at nature and the desert, and I also visited AlUla and saw the tombs and eagles there. From there I started creating and studying the animals of the desert. I was thinking of embodying nature in some way, and then I thought of masks."



The open studio's artworks delve into the intricacies of human experience, exploring how individuals embody memories, emotions, and interpretive codes that shape relationships between oneself, daily life, and the natural world, producing an archive of experiments, research, and possibilities.

Saudi visual artist Maram Alsuliman's "Fragments of the Missing" reflects her sustainability theme, she uses objects that are discarded, like date seeds and broken coffee cups, to create abstract shapes that are then screen printed onto bags. The natural black dye is made from broken-down date seeds.

Alsuliman added: "My dad used to bring dates back from Najran in these plastic bags. For him he was carrying food, but I wanted to use them to carry my traditions."

Alla Alsahli, a Syrian Palestinian designer born and raised in the US, incorporates material manipulation and repetition to tell stories that are rooted in culture and space. Her Intermix project explores the idea of preservation through architecture in Riyadh and beyond. Inspired by the triangular geometrical patterns of Najdi traditional mud buildings, Alsahli creates fashion pieces out of clay, rope and fabric.

Her first ensemble joins each handmade ceramic piece with thread to hold it together. The other is constructed using the throw-away muslin fabric, which is used as a prototype by most designers, linked together by rope. The process of connecting each element to the other symbolizes a hope of preservation.



Egyptian fashion designer Somaia Abolezz's abstract wearable installations demonstrate elements of the caravan journey from Egypt to Makkah.

Inset: Kuwaiti artist Maha Alasaker uses her own body as a loom for weaving as she contemplates the complex relationship between body and land. AN photos

HIGHLIGHT

The Intermix Residency program is fully funded and initiated by Saudi Arabia's Visual Arts Commission in collaboration with the Fashion Commission, and hosted in JAX District within Diriyah.

POETIC TRADITION

UNESCO-inscribed oral tradition reflects enduring bond between Arabs and camels

Arab News Riyadh

Alheda'a, a folk art passed down through generations across Arabian societies, embodies the deep connection between camels and locals.

Camel herders use Alheda'a — a combination of sounds, gestures, and sometimes musical instruments — to communicate with their camels. These rhythmic expressions, inspired by poetry, form a unique vocabulary that camels seem to understand and obey.

According to a report by the Saudi Press Agency published on June 29, herders use Alheda'a to guide their camels through the desert, find pastures for grazing, and prepare them for watering, milking, and riding. It also allows them to quickly gather the herd together in case of sandstorms.

Historical accounts credit Mudar bin Nizar with having invented Alheda'a. After a fall from his camel, he kept crying "Waidah! Waidah!" (Oh, my hand!). The camels began moving, thus beginning the tradition of using vocal cues to guide camels.

Early Alheda'a mimicked natural camel noises — herders would urge their animals along with sounds including "Heh," "Doh," and "Dah." These vocalizations, along with rajaz (short, improvised poems), are still used today, but their use varies depending on the environment.



Camel herders use Alheda'a — a combination of sounds, gestures, and sometimes musical instruments — to communicate with their camels. SPA

Over time, Alheda'a has evolved into a more poetic artform, with distinct styles and vocabulary. It has incorporated deeper meanings, sung verses, and balanced rhythms.

Saudi folk heritage researcher Ibrahim Al-Khaldi told the SPA that Alheda'a was "essential" for nomadic caravans. It typically involved two people reciting simple rhyming verses in unison, a practice that helped encourage the camels while extracting water from wells.

For larger water-extraction tasks, where gathering distant camels was crucial, up to four people might recite Alheda'a. Their voices, carried in the quiet of the desert night or dawn, would travel a great distance.

The chairman of the Saudi Society for Camel Studies, Dr. Mohammed Al-Otaibi, told the SPA that Alheda'a existed in pre-Islamic times. The short, impactful chants helped gather camels, guide their movements, and direct them back to their resting places.

Inscribed in 2022 on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, Alheda'a has various specific chants — for departure, travel, watering, gathering, and drawing water from wells.

Camels hold a unique place in Arab society. Recognizing this rich cultural heritage, the Camel Club was established in Saudi Arabia under the directives of King Salman in 2017.

The Ministry of Culture even declared 2024 "Year of the Camel," in honor of an animal seen as a cultural treasure, a pillar of national identity, and a valuable part of Arab heritage.

ANALYSIS

The reasons behind the thawing of ties between Ankara and Damascus



Children play outside tents at a camp for people displaced by conflict in Syria's northern Aleppo province. The refugees face an uncertain future. File/AFP

Menekse Tokyay Ankara

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has signaled a possible restoration of relations with Syria's Assad regime in a surprising move that marks a significant departure from years of hostility between the two nations.

Erdogan's comments, which were made after Friday prayers, suggest a willingness to revive diplomatic ties with Damascus, emphasizing historical precedent and family ties as potential foundations for future engagement.

"There is no reason why it should not happen," Erdogan said.

"Just as we kept our relations very lively in the past, we even had talks between our families with Assad. It is certainly not possible to say that this will not happen in the future. It can happen; the Syrian people are our brothers."

The Turkish leader's comments echo similar sentiments recently expressed by Syrian President Bashar Assad, who has indicated his willingness to pursue steps toward normalization, provided they respect Syria's sovereignty and contribute to counter-terrorism efforts.

The remarks came during a meeting with Alexander Lavrentiev, Russian President Vladimir Putin's special envoy to Syria.

The concurrent statements are seen as part of a broader effort to reconcile Ankara and Damascus, but the path to rapprochement remains fraught with uncertainty and complexity.

Erdogan, then prime minister of Turkiye, hosted Assad in 2009 for a family holiday in the Aegean resort of Bodrum, and they enjoyed amicable visits to nurture their friendship.

But since severing all ties with the Assad regime in 2011, Turkiye has been a vocal supporter of his opponents in Syria and called for the ousting of Assad from power.

Ankara's involvement has escalated with several cross-border military operations and the establishment of a safe zone in northern Syria, in which Turkish troops are stationed.

The Turkish and Syrian foreign ministers met in Moscow last year, marking the highest-level contact between the two countries since the start of the Syrian Civil War.

But the talks, along with an earlier meeting between the two countries' defense ministers, did not bring about any change in bilateral relations.

Oytun Orhan, coordinator of Levant studies at the Ankara-based think tank ORSAM, says there is a glimmer of hope for a resumption of the dialogue process.

He told Arab News: "There have been some developments in recent weeks. It is said that Turkish and Syrian officials could meet in Baghdad with the mediation of Iraq, and surprising developments in Turkish-Syrian relations are expected in the coming period."

Efforts were being made to bring the parties together, he added.

Orhan believes that with Russia's softening position in Ukraine, the Kremlin has begun to pay more attention to Turkish-Syrian relations, and the Gaza conflict also requires new regional dynamics and presents new security challenges for the Assad regime, which necessitates closer Turkish-Syrian relations.

He said: "Discussions about a possible US withdrawal after the upcoming presidential elections are another factor to consider."

The Assad regime has recently been in talks with the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units and "is trying to corner Turkiye by signaling that it could reach an agreement with the YPG if Turkiye does not accept its conditions, while at the same time opening channels with Turkiye," he added.

Ankara considers the Kurdish People's Protection Units, or YPG, a terrorist group closely linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, which has been waging a decades-long insurgency in southeast Turkiye.

Experts say that both parties are trying to consolidate their positions in line with regional changes and consider their red lines for domestic security concerns.

MIKATI VISITS SOUTHERN LEBANON

Lebanese prime minister hails army as 'guardian of our homeland's security'

Israel's Defense Minister Galant claims his country is 'not looking for war' with Hezbollah

Najia Houssari Beirut

Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati said on Saturday that the Lebanese army is "the protector and guardian of the nation."

He assured the army that it has the full support of the government, adding: "I know that you are going through so many difficulties, but, God willing, they will pass."

Mikati was visiting southern Lebanon for the first time since the beginning of hostilities between Hezbollah and the Israeli army on Oct. 8. The prime minister visited the South Litani Sector army base at the Benoit Barakat barracks in Tyre, where he met with the sector's commander, Brig. Gen. Edgard Lawandos, and other officials.

"The Israeli threats we are facing are a form of psychological warfare," Mikati said in a statement after his visit. "Everyone is asking whether or not there will be a war. Yes, we are in a state of war, and there is a large number of martyrs, including civilians and non-civilians, in addition to many destroyed villages, due to the Israeli aggression."

Mikati's visit to the south coincided with the start of official exams in Lebanon. He and Education Minister Abbas Halabi visited official exam centers in Tyre. Among those sitting their exams are students who have fled with their families from border villages. Mikati said: "Would (we have the) ability to carry out exams in the south without the army's presence?"

The prime minister's visit comes at a time when Israel is threatening to expand the war in Lebanon while countries in the region and beyond are cautioning against escalation.

"The psychological warfare is escalating, but, hopefully, our country will overcome this phase and will have permanent stability on the border thanks to your courage, bravery, and sacrifice," Mikati told the troops.

According to the latest update from the National Early Warning System Platform, which is managed by the National Council for Scientific Research, one Lebanese soldier has been killed and five wounded in Israeli attacks. Hezbollah lost 372 fighters, while 124 civilians have been killed and 355 injured.

The total area burned by internationally prohibited phosphorous bombs fired by the Israeli army as of June 13 is 1,698 hectares, according to the update.



A civil defense worker inspects a destroyed house that was hit by an airstrike in Chebaa, a town in southern Lebanon near the border with Israel. File/AFP

FASTFACT

The Gaza war has led to soaring tensions on Israel's northern border with Lebanon, leading Iran on Saturday to warn of an 'obliterating' war if Israel attacked Lebanon.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said during his visit to Israeli forces near the northern border with Lebanon on Saturday that "Israel isn't looking for war with Hezbollah." But, he added, "The Israeli army is ready for war."

Gallant continued: "This has always been the best choice, and we are not looking for war, but we are ready for it. If Hezbollah chooses war, we know what to do. If they choose peace, we will respond appropriately."

Gallant's remarks came while Israeli hostilities continued.

A military drone targeted a motorcycle on the road between Houla and Mays Al-Jabal, killing its driver, while another raid targeted forests between Habbariyeh and Kfarshouba. Israeli artillery also bombed areas between Dahira and Alma Al-Shaab.

Lebanese Forces MP Ghada Ayoub praised Mikati's visit to the south.

Ayoub said: "Welcome Prime Minister Najib Mikati to southern Lebanon, even if your visit is late."

She said his visit showed that there "is no actual sovereignty without the protection of the Lebanese army and that the only legitimacy is for the Lebanese army."

She added: "There's also no stability and safety unless the Lebanese army takes over all Lebanese borders under the Taif Agreement, the Lebanese constitution, and the relevant international resolutions."

Ayoub said that Mikati's statement regarding the army is "a response to those who doubt the Lebanese army's strength and readiness."

The Lebanese-American Coordinating Committee said in a statement: "The escalating fears of an expansion of the war find their roots in the lack of a sustainable solution to the outstanding border issues between Lebanon and Israel, which continues to occupy Lebanese territories, in addition to the failure to implement the provisions of Resolution 1701, which has been widely violated since 2006."

It added: "This necessitates pushing toward a full operational commitment to its stipulations, as well as its annexes in Resolution 2650, which all members of the UN Security Council approved."

The committee pointed out its "continuous communication with the US administration," and called for intensified diplomatic efforts.

It also stated that Resolution 1701 is closely linked to Resolutions 1680 and 1559, all of which stem from "the spirit of the Lebanese constitution and the Taif Agreement affirming the Lebanese state's right to exercise exclusive sovereignty over all its territories."

The statement added: "This requires the Lebanese authorities to adhere to the constitution and international resolutions and to empower the legitimate armed forces with the necessary equipment and personnel to perform their duties in this context in coordination with UNIFIL forces, while simultaneously initiating a process to neutralize Lebanon from regional and international conflicts."

ASPIRATIONS

Reform challenges on agenda for new Egyptian government

New Cabinet 'could lead to tangible changes on the ground,' researcher says

Mohammed Al-Shammaa Cairo

The new Egyptian government, which is expected to announce its Cabinet members soon, faces numerous challenges, experts and analysts say.



Students study for their high school certificate exams at the Library of Alexandria. The results help determine which students are accepted to universities. Reuters

The recent announcement about changes to the government has sparked optimism and anticipation among Egyptians. People are hopeful of seeing improvements, including better living conditions and enhanced economic prospects.

Experts agree that economic reform is the most difficult challenge facing the government.

These challenges could help reshape and redefine current policies, which are crucial in setting the government's direction.

This alignment must consider the domestic developments, global economic crises and the deep geopolitical tensions and conflicts surrounding the country externally.

Economist Mohamed Sayed Gamal said: "The state must continue on the path of economic reform, focusing on attracting and increasing local and foreign investments, encouraging private sector growth and making every effort to curb rising prices, inflation and regulate markets."

The new government must aim to reduce inflation to its lowest levels by the end of 2026, he said.

"A primary goal is to reduce the overall budget deficit and public debt while achieving a surplus by maintaining balanced financial stability amid the current crisis. This includes supporting productive sectors and those most affected by economic crises, improving infrastructure quality, and maintaining fair pricing policies for goods and services."

Gamal Abdel Hamid, a researcher at the Al-Ahram Center for Studies, said: "Injecting new blood into the Egyptian government could lead to tangible changes on the ground, positively impacting citizens and increasing public support."

The most critical challenge was national security, he said.

The Egyptian state is committed to maintaining its national security amid regional and international challenges, focusing on combating terrorism and ensuring stability.

"The Egyptian state is committed to maintaining its national security amid regional and international challenges, focusing on combating terrorism and ensuring stability.

"The new government should continue to engage with the issues previously tackled by the former government, including the recent Gaza conflict, where Egypt played a crucial role as a trusted mediator through its diplomatic mechanisms and relevant state institutions."

Another significant challenge was human development, Abdel Hamid said.

It tops the new government's priority list as per President Abdel Fatah El-Sisi's directives, especially in the health and education sectors.

Abdel Hamid said the new government "must continue to exert more effort to implement developmental projects to improve health, educational and social infrastructure and enhance service delivery mechanisms to meet the population's growing needs."

Samira Al-Adl, a researcher at the Family Development Center, said: "One of the important challenges for the upcoming government is building a fair, cohesive society characterized by equality in economic, social and political rights and opportunities, with the highest degree of social integration."

GREEN CAUSE

Egypt launches new phase of '100 Million Trees' initiative

Layla Mohamed Cairo

Several Egyptian ministries have initiated the "100 Million Trees" campaign across the country in response to its climate challenges and rising population, as part of a nationwide strategy to increase per-capita green space.

The project involves "reviewing and monitoring new tree plantings, tracking existing plantings, and creating a detailed plan for the types of trees planted in each governorate based on their unique characteristics," according to a statement. Tree species with high economic value that promote investment in green projects are being targeted by the program.

The Environment Ministry is stepping up preparations for the initiative's second phase this week. Omar Rayan, an official at the ministry, told Arab News that the second phase would be implemented in cooperation with ministries including Local Development, Housing, Water Resources and Irrigation, Agriculture, and Higher Education.

Rayan highlighted the government's commitment to criminalizing encroachment on agricultural land and to implementing several afforestation initiatives nationwide.

According to the Egyptian prime minister's website, the initiative will cost 3 billion Egyptian pounds ($62.5 million). It targets around 9,900 locations, and covers areas totaling 6,600 acres to be developed as forested areas or gardens utilizing treated wastewater.

The Ministry of Local Development is responsible for planting 80 million trees over the seven-year period from 2022 to 2029, while the Ministries of Environment and Housing are responsible for the remaining 20 million.

Ahmed Al-Fakharany, an official at the Ministry of Local Development, told Arab News that the second phase will see 15 million trees planted by the ministries of agriculture, environment, and housing.

He said governorates were preparing reports on the number and types of trees required for this phase.

"The role of the Ministry of Local Development is to arrange for the supply of trees, study locations for new gardens in cities and districts, and ensure local units and directorates plant trees that enhance aesthetic appeal and environmental conservation," Al-Fakharany said.

He added that Cairo leads the governorates in the initiative so far, having planted 1.5 million trees.

FASTFACT

Cairo leads the governorates in the initiative so far, having planted 1.5 million trees.

RESTORATION WORK

Five Daesh bombs found hidden in iconic Iraq mosque: UNESCO

AFP Mosul

A UN agency said it had discovered five bombs in a wall of Mosul's iconic Al-Nuri Mosque, planted years ago by Daesh, during restoration work in the northern Iraqi city.

Five "large-scale explosive devices, designed to trigger a massive destruction of the site," were found in the southern wall of the prayer hall on Tuesday by the UNESCO team working at the site, a representative for the agency said.

Mosul's Al-Nuri Mosque and the adjacent leaning minaret nicknamed Al-Hadba or the "hunchback," which dates from the 12th century, were destroyed during the battle to retake the city from Daesh.

Iraq's army accused Daesh, which occupied Mosul for three years, of planting explosives at the site and blowing it up.



Renovation work is in progress at the Al-Nuri Mosque in the old town of Iraq's northern city Mosul. File/AFP

UNESCO, the UN cultural agency, has been working to restore the mosque and other architectural heritage sites in the city, much of which were reduced to rubble in the battle to retake them in 2017.

"The Iraqi armed forces immediately secured the area, and the situation is now fully under control," UNESCO added.

One bomb was removed, but four other 1.5-kg devices "remain connected to each other" and are expected to be cleared in the coming days, it said.

"These explosive devices were hidden inside a wall, which was specially rebuilt around them: it explains why they could not be discovered when the site was cleared by Iraqi forces" in 2020, the agency said.

Gen. Ahseen Aal-Khafaji, spokesperson for the Joint Operations Command of various Iraqi forces, confirmed the discovery of "several explosive devices from Daesh jihadists in Al-Nuri Mosque."

He said provincial deminers requested help from the Defense Ministry in Baghdad to defuse the remaining munitions because of their "complex manufacturing."

Construction work has been suspended at the site until the bombs are removed.

It was from the Al-Nuri Mosque that Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, the then-leader of Daesh, proclaimed the establishment of the group's "caliphate" in July 2014.

The terrorists took over large swaths of territory in Iraq and Syria.Iraqi forces backed by a US-led coalition drove Daesh, out of Mosul in 2017.

The Al-Nuri Mosque was destroyed and rebuilt in 1942 in a renovation project, with only the ancient minaret remaining from the original structure.

BACKGROUND

UNESCO, the UN cultural agency, has been working to restore the mosque and other architectural heritage sites in the city, much of which were reduced to rubble in the battle to retake them in 2017.



Indonesian Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin welcomes KSrelief's team of cardiac surgeons in Medan, North Sumatra, on Saturday. Supplied

HUMANITARIAN HELP

Saudi team trains Indonesian doctors in pediatric heart surgery

Surgeons, support staff sponsored by KSrelief arrived in Medan last month

Sheany Yasuko Lai Jakarta

Saudi doctors are training their Indonesian colleagues in pediatric heart surgery and helping expand access to children's cardiac care in the country's northwest, the Indonesian Ministry of Health said on Saturday.

The 22-member surgical team arrived at Adam Malik Central General Hospital in Medan, North Sumatra province last month under a residence program arranged by Saudi aid agency KSrelief.

They began by performing free heart procedures on adult patients and last week switched focus to children with congenital heart disease, which in Indonesia often remains untreated due to a shortage of specialist wards.

An estimated 12,000 Indonesian children are born with heart disease each year. Only half of them are treated for it.

"The capacity of our doctors and hospitals is only 6,000 of the 12,000 each year. So, every year 6,000 children cannot be served and many of them die," Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin said.

"We've been collaborating with foreign institutions willing to send their doctors to Indonesia to, in the first place, provide services that we have not been able to provide in certain regions and, in the second place, to speed up the specialist training of our doctors to carry out the much needed procedures."

The Saudi team comprises surgeons, nurses, perfusionists and respiratory therapists from the King Faisal Cardiac Center in Jeddah and the King Abdullah International Medical Research Center in Riyadh.

FASTFACT

Only 50% of Indonesian children born with heart disease receive treatment.

The transfer of knowledge program sponsored by KSrelief supports Indonesia's health system transformation plan, under which all regional government hospitals should become capable of carrying out open-heart surgery and pediatric heart surgery. Until now, cardiac procedures on children have been referred to hospitals in the capital, Jakarta, which is nearly 2,000 km away from Medan.

For many parents, like Rominu Marpaung, the cost of travel is impossible to bear.

Marpaung's 15-year-old son, Binsar, was diagnosed with a leaky heart valve five years ago and referred for surgery in Jakarta, but the family could not afford to send him.

On Tuesday, he was operated on by the visiting Saudi team.

"Up until now, I was taking Binsar only for outpatient treatment. I took him to so many hospitals," Marpaung said.

"Thank you to the team of doctors for helping my child."

GASTRONOMY

Philippine food tourism sets sights on travelers from GCC

Ellie Aben Cebu City

The Philippines is tapping into its diverse culinary heritage to attract visitors, especially from Gulf Cooperation Council countries, its tourism chief said, as the country hosted the UN's first regional forum on food travel.

The conference in Cebu was held in conjunction with the UN Tourism's annual joint meeting of the Commission for East Asia and the Pacific, and the Commission for South Asia. Co-organized by the Philippine government, the forum was focused on policies to advance the culinary tourism of the Asia-Pacific region.

"We greatly value the opportunity to expand Philippine tourism to the Middle Eastern market, especially by way of our Filipino flavors," Tourism Secretary Christina Frasco told Arab News on the sidelines of the UN meetings on Friday.



Philippine Tourism Secretary Christina Frasco speaks during the UN Tourism's meeting in Cebu, Phillippines Friday.

She added that tourism arrivals from GCC countries had more than recovered following the global pandemic. The COVID-19 outbreak dealt a major blow to the Philippine tourism industry — a main contributor to the economy — but after shutdowns in 2020 and 2021, it is back on track, and is forecast to soon meet its pre-pandemic level of 8.26 million visitor arrivals in 2019.

Part of the strategy to revive the sector was expanding the country's halal tourism portfolio, which last month — for a second consecutive time — won the Philippines the Emerging Muslim-friendly non-Organization of Islamic Cooperation Destination award at the annual Halal in Travel Global Summit in Singapore.

The predominantly Catholic country, where Muslims constitute about 10 percent of the nearly 120 million population, has welcomed more than 2 million international travelers since the beginning of the year.

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

'Gender apartheid'

Taliban say women's rights are internal issue

Taliban authorities said on Saturday that demands over women's rights were "Afghanistan's issues" to solve, ahead of United Nations-led engagement talks where the exclusion of Afghan women has sparked outcry. The Taliban government, which has imposed restrictions on women since seizing power in 2021 that the UN has described as "gender apartheid," will send its first delegation to the third round of talks starting in Qatar on Sunday. Civil society representatives, including from women's rights groups, will attend meetings with the international envoys and UN officials on Tuesday, after the official talks. **AFP**

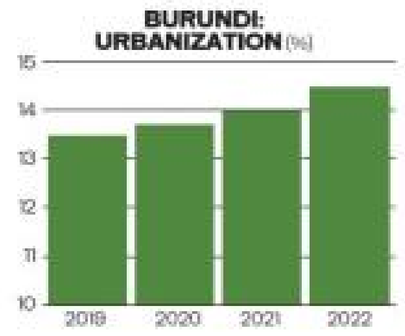
Tragic incident

Nepal landslides kill 9, including 3 children

At least nine people, including three children, were killed after heavy monsoon rains in west Nepal triggered landslides, an official said on Saturday. Five members of a family were sleeping when their house was washed away by a landslide in Malika village in Gulmi district, about 250 km west of Kathmandu, according to Dizan Bhattarai, a spokesman for the National Disaster Rescue and Reduction Management Authority.

"Bodies of all five have been recovered," Bhattarai told Reuters, adding that the family included two children. **Reuters**

The Day's FIGURES



Source: Statista

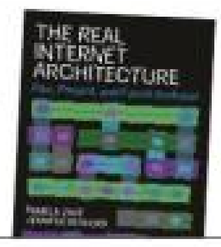
What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

'The Real Internet Architecture'

PAMELA ZAVE AND JENNIFER REXFORD

This book meets the long-standing need for an explanation of how the Internet's architecture has evolved since its creation to support an ever-broader range of the world's communication needs. The authors introduce a new model of network architecture that exploits a powerful form of modularity to provide lucid, insightful descriptions of complex structures, functions, and behaviors in today's Internet.



Ongoing war

Ukraine drone attack kills 5 in Russian village

A Ukrainian drone attack on a house in a Russian border village killed five people, including two children, the regional governor said Saturday.

The drone hit a house in the village of Gorodishche, a tiny village in Russia's Kursk region, just a few meters from the border with Ukraine.

"To our great grief, five people were killed ... including two small children. Another two members of the family are in a serious condition," Kursk Governor Alexei Smirnov said in a post on Telegram.

Both sides have used drones, including larger self-detonating craft with ranges of up to hundreds of kilometers, extensively throughout the conflict which began in February 2022. **AFP**

Mount Lewotobi

Indonesia's volcano erupts twice in a day

Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki in Eastern Indonesia erupted twice on Saturday, volcanology authorities said, sending thick, dark clouds into the air.

The first eruption took place at 11:04 a.m. local time and lasted nearly 11 minutes, according to a statement from the Indonesian volcanology agency. The second was at 2:41 p.m. and lasted a little over 10 minutes, spewing volcanic material 900 meters above the crater.

"Residents and visitors around Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki are prohibited from conducting any activity within the 3-kilometer radius from the centre of eruption," the agency said. The mountain, located on the popular tourist destination of Flores Island, had several major eruptions in January. **AFP**

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وإذا رُزِقتَ بمَنْ يُحبُّكَ صَادقًا
حَافظْ عليهِ فَمِثلُهُ لا يُوجَدُ
(الدكتور محمد الشيحاني)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

If you are blessed with someone who truly loves you, keep them because such people rarely exist.

Dr. Mohammed Al-Shi'ani
(Contemporary Saudi poet and academic)

Opinion

Can we envision a world without nuclear weapons?

YOSSI MEKELBERG



Yossi Mekelberg is a professor of international relations and an associate fellow of the Middle East and North Africa Program at international affairs think tank Chatham House.
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For full version, log on to www.arabnews.com/opinion

During a week in which Russian President Vladimir Putin concluded a visit to North Korea with the signing of a mutual defense pact between Moscow and Pyongyang that is likely to make the latter's military nuclear program even more brazen, I happened to visit the Japanese city of Hiroshima, the first city to be hit by an atomic bomb.

It left me extremely moved but also contemplative about why on earth we still possess nuclear weapons. On Aug. 6, 1945, at 8:15 a.m., an American B-29 bomber, the Enola Gay, dropped an atomic bomb on the city, instantly killing at least 70,000 people. By the end of the year, the death toll had reached 140,000. The bomb vaporized people almost a kilometer from ground zero, and burned the exposed skin of people kilometers away as a result of the intense infrared energy that was unleashed.

Catastrophic fires ravaged a circular area with a radius of more than 3 km, as the city literally burned to the ground. The results would be similar three days later when the US bombed a second Japanese city, Nagasaki, this time causing 100,000 deaths directly attributable to the initial blast.

The horrific effects of the bombs on the Japanese people and their environment continued to be felt for many years, including premature deaths, lifelong trauma, and a significant links between radiation exposure and major congenital defects, malformations, stillbirths, and neonatal deaths.

All this leaves no room for doubt about the dangerous futility of humanity's toying with nuclear proliferation. Worse, we have learned the wrong lessons from the fact that, despite the presence of huge arsenals of nuclear missiles with sophisticated delivery systems, these weapons with the power to destroy humanity have, thankfully, never been employed again.

We can perhaps learn the lessons of history but we can never, even remotely, assume that they will never repeat themselves. During the bipolar superpower system of the Cold War era, both the US and the Soviet Union understood that the use of their nuclear capabilities would be irrational and could only result in mutual assured destruction (or MAD), and so an extremely high level of deterrence was established.

Neither side ever pushed the button, so to speak, but that is not to say the superpowers did not teeter on the brink of cataclysm, even if ultimately they managed to remain one step clear of the nuclear abyss. For two weeks during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, Moscow and Washington came very close to launching nuclear missiles at one another, before common sense prevailed.

Can anyone guarantee that a world with nuclear weapons is truly a safe one? A world that is inherently unstable, as is the current state of international affairs, in which most countries in possession of nuclear weapons suffer from unreliable political systems, with leaders who are increasingly authoritarian and have scant respect for accountability and transparency?

A world of nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence is not a safer world but an accident waiting to happen, whether technically or politically.

After nearly 80 years of a nuclear era during which the bomb has not been used since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we should not be lulled into a false sense of security and assume it will never be used.

In recent years a number of negative precedents have been set, including a permanent member of the UN Security Council invading a neighboring country without provocation and threatening to use nuclear weaponry in the process.

This, and the very existence in the world of about 12,100 nuclear warheads, should deeply concern all of us. After all, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki the world witnessed the horror that "only" two such weapons could unleash when launched, ultimately, on the orders of one person alone.

We can perhaps learn the lessons of history but we can never, even remotely, assume that they will never repeat themselves



COURTESY: AMJAD RASMI/ARAB NEWS AL JAWSAT

There is no firm consensus on why Macron chose to call a snap election given the risks that are in play

Macron 'rolls the dice' with a gigantic political gamble

ANDREW HAMMOND



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

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

American writer Mark Twain is widely credited as the originator of the phrase: "History never repeats itself but it often rhymes." This alludes to the potential patterns that can be observed in certain events over time.

While the French political system is very different to that of the US, parallels were being drawn as early as 2017 between the careers of Presidents Emmanuel Macron and Barack Obama. Though their terms in office did not overlap, they share many similar personal characteristics, including charisma and the perceived status of "insurgent" in the ways they won control of their nations' top political offices.

In 2017, the dynamic, daring Macron upended the longstanding French political duopoly of the right-of-center Republicans and the left-of-center Socialists to win power. Obama also rocked the political boat in the US, yet even at the start of Macron's first presidential term, some commentators wondered whether there might be another, later parallel to be drawn between the two leaders: the "end game" of their respective presidencies.

More specifically, whether just as the populist, right-wing maverick Donald Trump succeeded Obama as US president in 2017, Macron's popularity might decline to such a degree in the 2020s that his successor would be the far-right, euroskeptic leader of the National Rally, Marine Le Pen, who finished in second place at the 2017 and 2022 elections.

Fast forward to 2024, and the possibility of Le Pen becoming the next French president is increasingly plausible. For those who did not see this coming, the European Parliament election results this month suggested it was a growing possibility; her National Rally party won the most votes by far across France, double the amount for its closest rival, Macron's centrist alliance. In so doing, the National Rally came first in more than 90 percent of communes, or local districts.

It was this debacle that prompted Macron on June 9 to take the biggest gamble of his presidency so far by dissolving the National Assembly, the lower house of the nation's parliament, and calling a snap national election. It will take place in two stages, on June 30 and July 7.

It is possible that Macron's centrist alliance might defy the polls, which predict it will come third behind a victorious National Rally, which is seeking to co-opt the votes of moderate, right-of-center Republicans. Second place would likely go to the united left, comprising the radical, leftist Unbowed France, the Greens and the Communists.

There is no firm consensus on why Macron chose to call a snap election given the risks that are in play. However, there might possibly be some method to what many consider his political madness.

Firstly, the president has lacked a parliamentary majority since the 2022 election and was heading for a no confidence motion later this year over the budget that would have probably seen his centrist government fall anyway.

A second probable reason why Macron decided to call an election is his belief that if the National Rally does win and forms a government with powers over domestic policy, including tax and spending, this could undercut the party's popularity as it faces the reality of wielding power in a tight fiscal context. This might reduce the possibility of a Le Pen presidential victory in 2027.

While the results on July 7 will give the first indication of whether he is vindicated for his roll of the dice or not, a full assessment of the outcomes of his decision might not be clear until the 2027 elections.

Opinion

A golden opportunity for peace in the South Caucasus

LUKE COFFEY



For more than three decades, Azerbaijan and Armenia have been locked in a state of war. Sometimes this has been in the form of a frozen conflict with little fighting. At other times the hostilities have been intense, costly, and bloody. Hopefully, the relationship between these two neighbors in the South Caucasus is finally on the verge of changing for the better.

During the chaotic collapse of the Soviet Union, ethnic Armenians living in Azerbaijan's Karabakh region attempted to secede using extra-constitutional methods. Soon after, Armenian military forces entered Azerbaijan, backing the ethnic Armenian militias, and a bloody war ensued. By 1994, a shaky ceasefire had been agreed.

> **The best thing that could happen would be a normalization of ties between Armenia and its neighbors**

This remained in place, for the most part, until the second Nagorno Karabakh war in September 2020. At this time, Azerbaijan launched a major military operation to take back the territory lost to Armenia in the early 1990s. By November, a Russia-led diplomatic effort brought an end to the fighting. Azerbaijan had taken back most, but not all, of the territory it had lost to Armenia, which was decisively defeated on the battlefield. By the end of 2020 more than 2,000 Russian peacekeepers were deployed to the remaining parts of Karabakh that remained under the control of the de facto Armenian authorities.

In September last year, fighting once again broke out, as a result of which Azerbaijan took back the remainder of Karabakh. Fearing a genocide, which in the end did not happen, tens of thousands of ethnic Armenians fled across the border to Armenia. Interestingly, the Russian peacekeepers sat idly by and did nothing during the brief period of fighting.

Fast forward almost a year and peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia is closer than it has ever been. Last month the two sides opened negotiations in Almaty, Kazakhstan, to reach a lasting resolution to their decades-old conflict. The talks were notable because, for once, there was no Russian, American, or European involvement.

So far those talks have yielded positive results. For example, Armenia returned to Azerbaijan four villages along the border that had remained uninhabited but controlled by Yerevan since the fighting in the 1990s. Even though many Armenians were unhappy with the move, it was an important gesture of peace by Yerevan.

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Since the meeting in Almaty there has also been a more positive and optimistic tone in the rhetoric used by both sides when discussing the prospects for peace. But there are still some major issues that need to be resolved.

The first is the final delineation of the border between the two countries. The return of the four Azerbaijani villages last month was a step in the right direction but led to the delineation of only 13 km of the border. While large sections will be easy to delineate, hundreds of kilometers remain disputed.

> **The relationship between Azerbaijan and Armenia is on the verge of changing for the better**

The border delineation process is also affected by the status of four remaining enclaves: the Armenian enclave of Artsvashen inside Azerbaijan, and the Azerbaijani enclaves of Barkhudarly, Yukhari Askipara, and Karki inside Armenia.

These are all small parcels of land that were once inhabited by their respective ethnic groups but are now uninhabited and under the de facto control of the other side. How this situation will be resolved remains to be seen but the enclaves will likely feature prominently in future talks.

The second issue that needs to be addressed is the Zangazur Corridor. As part of the November 2020 ceasefire agreement, Armenia pledged to "guarantee the security of transport connections" between Azerbaijan and its autonomous Nakhchivan region, an exclave nestled between Iran, Armenia and Turkiye.

Three and a half years later, a transport corridor connecting these two parts of Azerbaijan, via Armenia's Syunik province, is no closer to reality. This is a very serious matter for Azerbaijan. Such a transport corridor would allow Baku to avoid using Iranian territory and airspace to reach Nakhchivan, which is something it desperately desires due to a complicated relationship with Tehran.

The best thing that could happen to the South Caucasus would be a normalization of relations between Armenia and its neighbors. It is likely that billions of dollars of foreign investment have been denied to the region as a result of the ongoing conflict. A peace deal could change this.

Mounting costs of failing to address climate change

HAFED AL-GHWELL



Even the staunchest of naysayers have to admit that the reality of climate change has simply become impossible to ignore, as life-threatening heat waves around the globe test the very limits of the human capacity to survive. Several regions have reported record-breaking temperatures recently, while others grapple with devastating heat indexes reaching upward of 52 degrees Celsius. Amid these unprecedented conditions, the world reached an alarming milestone last year as global temperatures hovered at an estimated 1.5 C above preindustrial levels, and as high as 1.8 C in September.

> **The sweltering temperatures recorded this month are likely to be eclipsed in the coming weeks, setting new records**

The months since then further revealed a deeply troubling and accelerating trend, as temperatures between June 2023 and May 2024 averaged 1.63 C above historic norms. The implications could not be clearer.

Keep in mind that if the rise in global temperatures is to remain below the critical threshold of 2 C above preindustrial levels, the world needs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 9 percent each year. Yet energy-related carbon dioxide emissions increased by 1.1 percent in the past year alone, a disconcerting upward trajectory that added another 400 million tonnes to an already record high of 37.4 billion tonnes.

As the mercury rises, agriculture — the lifeblood of civilization — faces an existential threat. Unforgiving temperatures, coupled with crippling droughts, have become increasingly common in breadbasket regions. More frequent heat waves are having significant effects on agricultural production through direct impacts on crop yields.

For instance, it is estimated that each 1 C increase in the mean global temperature could result in reductions of 6 percent in crop yields for wheat, 3.2 percent for rice, and 3.2 percent for maize.

These effects are already being felt in regions critical to global food production, as frequent and prolonged extreme heat events diminish agricultural outputs and reduce food availability. As a result, prices soar, exacerbating food insecurity challenges among the poor who are forced to spend increasingly significant proportions of their meager incomes simply to survive.

Elsewhere, we are likely to see more "heatflation," a phenomenon in which sharp increases in the costs of food production as a result of climate-related disruptions cause globe-spanning food price shocks. Elevated food prices exacerbate poverty levels among those least able to adjust or adapt, at the same time as incomes shrink as a result of the collapse of entire agricultural sectors.

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The persistent climate-related emergencies we have witnessed offer irrefutable evidence that the window of opportunity for the application of more-moderate remedies has narrowed considerably in recent years.

The prognosis is increasingly grim as soaring heat indexes, growing carbon dioxide emissions, and the resulting threats to core pillars of survival, such as agriculture, paint a picture of a global threat that demands a unified and decisive response.

> **Heat waves and intense floods are the clearest indictment yet of the slow nature of the global response to the climate crisis**

Factor in geopolitical tensions, conflicts and regional convulsions and the window for action narrows even further. As a result, climate change interventions require not only urgent policy actions but a societal shift to confront what is the defining challenge of our time. Inaction is a luxury the world simply can no longer afford.

One might assume that given the well-documented risks, the demonstrable effects, a wide range of proposed solutions, and almost global buy-in, decisive action to tackle climate change would be significant and universal.

However, the recent spate of record-breaking heat waves, prolonged droughts and intense floods are the clearest indictment yet of the slow, bumbling nature of the global response to the climate crisis.

Despite the looming threat and mounting evidence of the risks, decisive action on a global scale remains elusive, hindered by a fragmented approach to climate policy that borders on willful inaction.

Amid the growing crises and a continuing lack of effective responses, a troubling reality persists. Much-anticipated larger interventions deemed necessary to steer the planet away from catastrophic climate disasters remain on the distant horizon, their implementation obstructed by protracted negotiations and entrenched bureaucratic inertia.

The sweltering temperatures recorded this month are likely to be eclipsed in the coming weeks, setting new records and benchmarks, with tragic results. To see whether or not the toll of this finally leads to decisive global action, we will have to wait until November when the world gathers in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, for COP29.

If precedent is anything to go by, it is unlikely we will see anything significant or groundbreaking between now and then, or at the conference or future gatherings.

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Saudi Research & Media Group

Established in 1987 by
Prince Ahmad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz

CEO
Jomana Rashid Alrashid

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
Noor Osama Nugali

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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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The Saudi automotive market is poised for rapid growth, outpacing many Western counterparts.
Karim Henain
Partner at Bain & Co.

Business



Sales of new cars across all original equipment manufacturers in Saudi Arabia surged by 23 percent last year over 2022, a figure that outpaces the global average of 10 percent. SPA

FAST FACT

Asian car manufacturers dominate the market, with Japanese, South Korean, and Chinese brands constituting a remarkable 88 percent of total sales. Notably, Chinese brands have experienced exceptional growth, soaring from 7,000 units in 2018 to 100,000 in 2022.

AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR

Saudi car industry speeds up growth amid push to be a production hub

Key drivers include a young population, increased female drivers, and a substantial influx of expatriates

Reem Walid Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's automotive industry is experiencing significant growth, driven by government-led initiatives, a strategic geographical location, and ambitious plans to become a manufacturing hub.

These factors are transforming the Kingdom into a pivotal player in the sector's global market.

According to Karim Henain, partner at Bain & Co., key drivers of this growth include a young population, increased female drivers, and a substantial influx of expatriates, leading to over 600,000 new car sales annually.

"The market is poised for rapid growth, outpacing many Western counterparts," Henain told Arab News.

He added: "Vehicle ownership rates in Saudi Arabia exceed those in Western markets, supported by larger family sizes, less developed public transport systems, and a strong culture of personal vehicle dependency."

According to Aly Hefny, show manager at Automechanika Riyadh, Messe Frankfurt Middle East, Saudi Arabia's strategic geographical location at the crossroads of major trade routes further enhances its stature as a regional automotive hub. He told Arab News that the Kingdom's government is taking a unique approach to leading direct investment initiatives within the automotive sector.

"Saudi automotive stakeholders, like their international counterparts, are proactively embracing innovation, investing in research and development, and prioritizing sustainability. These are crucial steps the Saudi government is taking to ensure long-term viability and competitiveness in the global market," the show manager added.

Manufacturing hub

The automotive sector, encompassing design, development, and production, as well as distribution, maintenance and repair, and customization, plays a crucial role in achieving the ambitious goals of Vision 2030. Henain mentioned that the Kingdom had set an ambitious goal to build an automotive manufacturing cluster, with deals already in place to establish a local footprint for original equipment manufacturers as well as tier-1 suppliers.

"The industry is still nascent and will take some time before it reaches the maturity of other more established automotive manufacturing clusters," he said.

He pointed out that the Kingdom is investing heavily in autonomous vehicle technology, with plans to introduce Robotaxis and Roboshuttles in the near future.

"These initiatives demonstrate the Kingdom's dedication to adopting and integrating state-of-the-art automotive technologies, positioning it as a global leader in the future of mobility," the Bain & Co. executive added.

Industry dynamics

The Saudi automotive industry is experiencing notable transformations, according to Matthias Zeigler, managing director of Volkswagen Middle East. Among the key dynamics shaping the sector is the alignment of global SUV preferences with Saudi customers' preference for larger, family-oriented seven-seaters.

"This focus on family transportation is further amplified by the robust infrastructure and extensive road network," Zeigler told Arab News.

He elaborated that consequently, comfort emerges as a crucial consideration, driving increasing interest in advanced comfort and safety features, as well as in-car connectivity.

"What is unique about the market is the notable brand loyalty among Saudi car buyers, prioritizing after-sales service and vehicle reliability," Zeigler disclosed.

In the vehicle mix, over 3 percent of the sold vehicles are luxury models, surpassing the global average of 2 percent, according to Henain of Bain & Co.

"SUVs, constitute about 36 percent of the market — slightly below the global average of 45 percent — with a preference for larger models, reflecting the demand for spacious vehicles suited for family use and the diverse terrain."

Henain highlighted that Asian car manufacturers dominate the market, with Japanese, South Korean, and Chinese brands constituting a remarkable 88 percent of total sales. Notably, Chinese brands have experienced exceptional growth, soaring from 7,000 units in 2018 to 100,000 in 2022.

Sami Malkawi, managing director of sales at Ford Middle East, emphasized Saudi Arabia's uniqueness as a market, highlighting the significant developments witnessed in the Kingdom's automotive industry over the past year.

He highlighted that sales of new cars across all original equipment manufacturers in Saudi Arabia surged by 23 percent last year over 2022, a figure that outpaces the global average of 10 percent.

"This is a reflection of the nation's impressive growth story in a year where its non-oil growth was estimated at nearly 5 percent as it pursued its ambitious Vision 2030 agenda, aided by substantial private and public sector investment," Malkawi told Arab News.

He stated that Ford is "deeply committed" to Saudi Arabia and has been making concerted efforts to help grow the Kingdom's automotive sector.

The managing director added: "Our focus — including a strong strategy to develop our product offerings while continuing to further improve customer experience — in conjunction with the Kingdom's impressive growth, saw us end 2023 with sales up 77 percent over 2022."

Electric vehicles

Meanwhile, aligning with global trends, Saudi Arabia has implemented ambitious plans for vehicle electrification as part of Vision 2030, aiming to achieve a 30 percent electric vehicle penetration by 2030.

These plans involve local manufacturing of Saudi electric vehicle brands and the establishment of an entity dedicated to developing the country's charging infrastructure.

"The KSA EV sector is nascent with less than 1 percent penetration, lagging behind UAE at around 3 percent, China at an estimated 22 percent, and Europe at near 10 percent, attributed to cheap fuel, underdeveloped charging infrastructure, and lesser appetite among consumers," Henain revealed.

Saudi automotive stakeholders are proactively embracing innovation, investing in research and development, and prioritizing sustainability.
Aly Hefny
Show manager at Automechanika Riyadh

This focus on family transportation is further amplified by the robust infrastructure and extensive road network.
Matthias Zeigler
Managing director of Volkswagen Middle East



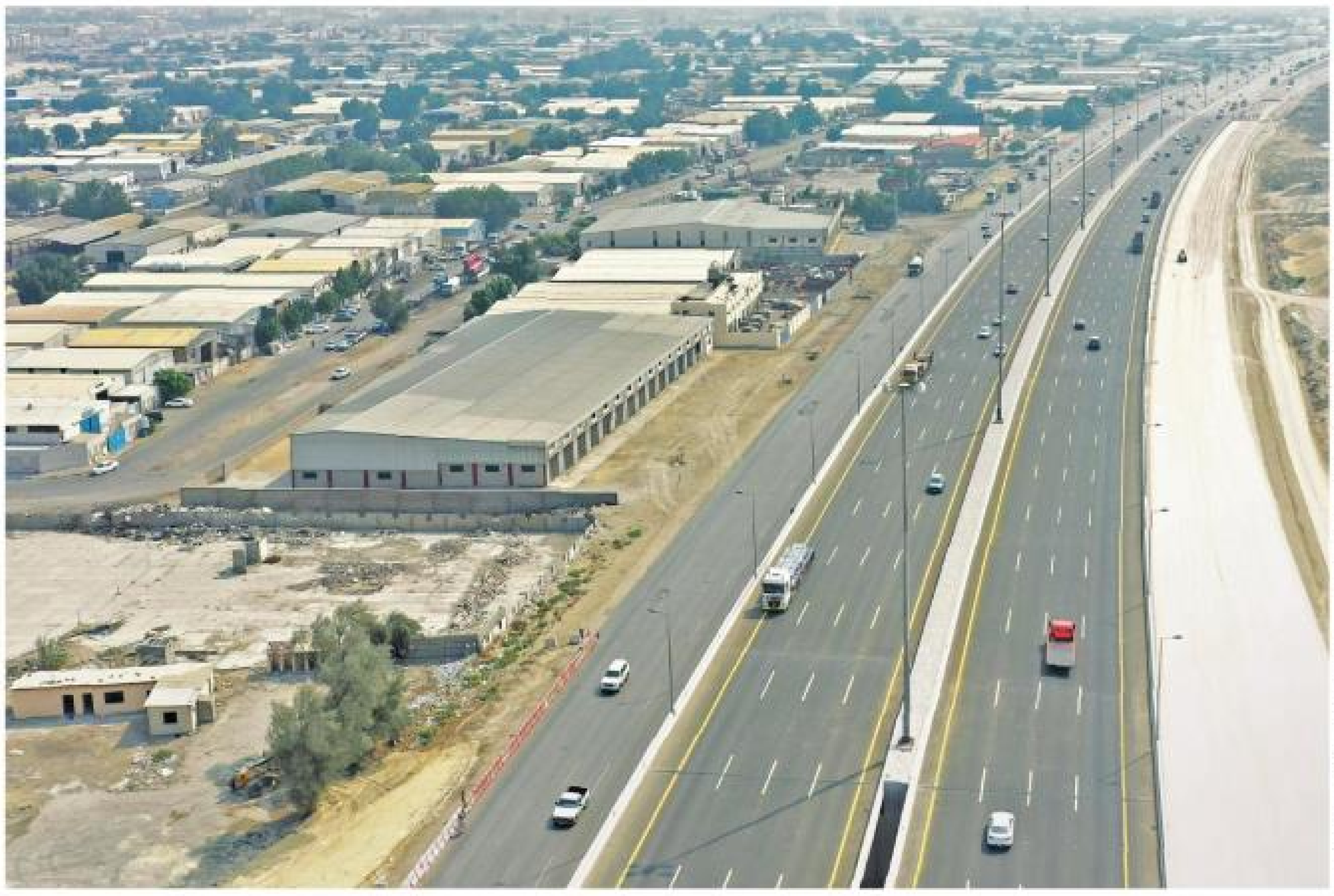
TRANSFORMATION

KSA's logistics sector pioneering pathways for global connectivity

Industry analysts are confident that the Kingdom is going to attract more global players into the sector

Nadin Hassan Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's logistics sector has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years, fueled by visionary initiatives like Vision 2030 and the National Industrial Strategy. As the sector continues to evolve, what groundbreaking strategies will drive it forward?



Significant infrastructure upgrades and favorable regulations are driving a transition towards a more integrated, efficient, and sustainable logistics sector. SPA

FAST FACT

By investing in training and education, logistics providers not only improve their operational capabilities but also contribute to preparing a new generation of skilled professionals specifically tailored for the logistics industry in Saudi Arabia.

The Kingdom presents substantial opportunities for global logistics players. With a population of approximately 36 million and a gross domestic product of $1.81 trillion in purchasing power parity as of the end of 2023, Saudi Arabia is a central hub for expansive trade routes supported by world-class infrastructure.

Another major catalyst for growth is Saudi Arabia securing the bids for Expo 2030 and the 2034 FIFA World Cup — both of which will attract substantial global business opportunities, opening new channels for trade and commerce.

Industry analysts are confident that the Kingdom is only going to attract more global players into the sector, with Hakan Lanfredi, member of the executive board at Dussmann Group telling Arab News: "For international logistics firms, these developments present lucrative opportunities to establish or expand operations, leveraging major global events and the rising need for advanced supply chain solutions."

Dominik Baumeister, PwC Middle East head and global partner of transport and logistics echoed that sentiment, and told Arab News the existence of untapped opportunities within Saudi Arabia's logistics industry that could be attractive to global companies.

"There are several whitespaces in Saudi Arabia's logistics landscape that offer interesting opportunities for global players. In particular, the logistics services space is still in its early stages of development, and more specifically in Freight Forwarding, 3PL, and warehousing," Baumeister said.

He added: "Airport and port privatization is an ongoing effort, and roads, while perhaps on the periphery of logistics, are opening up as a public private partnership environment."

Lanfredi also flagged the surge in e-commerce and last-mile delivery services, fueled by increasing digital consumer engagement.

"This shift necessitates robust, agile logistics solutions to meet growing consumer expectations and delivery efficiencies," he said.

Emerging logistics hotspots

Saudi Arabia is swiftly creating several hubs for logistics, assisted by important government programs and an advantageous business environment.

"Besides NEOM and the Riyadh Logistics Park, the Eastern Province has emerged as a key logistics hub due to its proximity to major oil operations and the King Abdulaziz Port," Saud Al-Sulaiman, CEO of Saudi investment firm Alsulaiman Group, told Arab News.

He added: "These hotspots are attractive due to their advanced logistical infrastructures and strategic positions that facilitate both regional and international trade."

Dussmann Group's Lanfredi also noted a prime example of a logistic hotspot is the creation of the Integrated Logistics Bonded Zone in Riyadh, as it offers several attractive incentives to investors and businesses.

There are several whitespaces in Saudi Arabia's logistics landscape that offer interesting opportunities for global players.
Dominik Baumeister
PwC Middle East Head and Global Partner of Transport and Logistics



"It offers direct access to a vast market of 5 billion people across Europe, Asia, and Africa within an eight-hour flight range," he said.

Lanfredi added: "The ILBZ is designed to establish the Kingdom as the region's premier logistics hub, providing significant incentives like a 50-year tax holiday, 100 percent foreign ownership, and efficient goods processing where items can be market-ready within just four hours of arrival."

He also noted additional notable hotspots include the Dammam Free Zone and various free zones along the strategic Red Sea corridor.

"Jizan is emerging as a key node on the Silk Road, highlighting its growing importance in global trade routes. These zones benefit from advanced infrastructure and strategic positioning, which are bolstered by governmental support and regulatory enhancements," he continued.

Technological innovation

According to PwC, the Kingdom is seeing a focus on improving efficiency and competitiveness through technological innovation.

"In Saudi Arabia's logistics sector, significant strides are being made in technological innovation to boost efficiency and competitiveness," Baumeister said.

He added: "Saudi customs is enhancing its capabilities through single window initiatives and integration into various data flows, with support from port operators, shipping lines, and airlines."

He also noted that PwC is witnessing the emergence of innovative technologies, some homegrown, particularly in the e-commerce and parcel space.

Baumeister referred to examples of this including geospatial solutions coupled with AI, and new ways of collecting and analyzing multiple data sources

"These technological advances will support the Kingdom's Vision 2030 journey, provide more optimized operations, and predictive analytics for future projects," he said.

Navigating uncertainties

There are challenges facing the logistics sector in Saudi Arabia, and stakeholders are actively addressing them to facilitate growth and ensure operational efficiency.

According to Dussmann Group's Lanfredi, the challenges are threefold, with the first being the complex navigation of customs and regulatory framework, specifically for new entrants and international companies.

"The need for compliance across various levels — local, regional, and international — adds layers of complexity to logistics operations," he said, adding that this can be addressed by providing "streamlined customs clearance services" through gateways for sea, air, and ground transport.

Managing extreme temperatures in the Middle East is the second area that needs consideration, as this can complicate the storage and transportation of goods that are sensitive to fluctuations in climate.

"Specialized capabilities in cold-chain logistics, utilizing advanced technology for live temperature control and monitoring at each step of the supply chain are necessary requirements for professional service providers," he explained.

The third challenge is a shortage of skilled labor in the logistics sector, particularly in emerging fields such as automation and robotics.

This shift necessitates robust, agile logistics solutions to meet growing consumer expectations and delivery efficiencies.
Hakan Lanfredi
Executive board member at Dussmann Group



This can result in operational inefficiencies and increased costs for companies. To address this issue, initiatives supporting workforce development, such as partnerships with institutions like the Saudi Logistics Academy, are essential.

By investing in training and education, logistics providers not only improve their operational capabilities but also contribute to preparing a new generation of skilled professionals specifically tailored for the logistics industry in Saudi Arabia.

PwC highlighted the potential for Saudi Arabia to become a leading player in the global logistics industry through strategic collaboration between the public and private sectors.

"Saudi Arabia's megaprojects and mega events will create additional logistics capability and capacity that can provide significant competitive advantages for the country," Baumeister said.

He continued: "As competition increases across the region, Saudi Arabia sets itself apart with its significant import activity and a robust diversification agenda."

With critical ports in strategic locations, competitive advantages in aviation, and opportunities for land transport connectivity, Saudi Arabia is positioned to play a pivotal role in linking freight corridors from India to Europe.

Business News



The Kingdom's importance in the halal sector was underscored during the inaugural edition of the Makkah Halal Forum held in January. SPA

VISION 2030

Saudi Arabia eyes global halal market lead

Kingdom's regulatory framework ensures compliance with halal standards

Mohammed Al-Kinani Jeddah

Saudi Arabia stands at the forefront of the global halal product industry, capitalizing on its unique status as the birthplace of Islam, thus earning the trust of around 2 billion Muslims worldwide.

This unparalleled position imbues Saudi halal regulations and certifications with a high degree of religious authenticity and credibility, making them highly respected and sought after worldwide. The Kingdom's regulatory framework, spearheaded by key bodies such as the Saudi Food and Drug Authority, ensures stringent compliance with halal standards, reinforcing its leadership in the market.

The Kingdom's importance in the sector was underscored during the inaugural edition of the Makkah Halal Forum, held in January and attended by Saudi Minister of Commerce Majid bin Abdullah Al-Qasabi. The minister pointed out that the industry is one of the most rapidly expanding sectors globally.

"Presently, the food market is valued at approximately $2.5 trillion, and is expected to reach $5.8 trillion in 2033," the minister said at that time.

As part of its Vision 2030 initiative, Saudi Arabia is actively fostering innovation and investment in the halal sector, aiming to diversify its economy and expand its influence in the global halal market.

Through strategic collaborations, international forums like the Makkah Halal Forum, and advanced certification processes, Saudi Arabia is not only meeting the growing global demand for halal products but also shaping the future of the industry.

In a recent interview with Arab News, Yousuf Khalawi, secretary-general of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Development, highlighted the significant regulations overseeing the production and certification of halal products in Saudi Arabia.

He emphasized that key regulatory bodies governing the halal industry in the Kingdom include the Saudi Food and Drug Authority, the Saudi Standards, Metrology and Quality Organization, and the Saudi Accreditation Center.

"The government of Saudi Arabia regulates the halal market using the GSO 2055-1:2015 (Gulf Standardization Organization), which sets the general requirements for halal food throughout the production chain," Khalawi said. He added that companies that deal in halal products need to be certified for compliance to Saudi standards by Saudi accredited conformity assessment bodies.

Khalawi pointed out that while many countries have other halal standards and regulations, the Islamic Chamber's halal conferences, held around the world, are striving to pave the way for businesses to navigate such different standards and regulatory requirements.

"In the meanwhile, and through the Islamic Chamber halal services, we strive to simplify companies' compliance with multiple standards through our unique auditing process that combines standards using artificial intelligence algorithms and ends with granting a halal certificate which can be verified using simple quick-response code readers," he said. Commenting on Saudi Arabia's position as the birthplace of Islam, influencing consumer perceptions and demand for halal products globally, the secretary general said that this position adds a layer of trust and potential influence in the global halal market, but it is not the only factor.

"Saudi Arabia's status as the Islamic holy land imbues their halal regulations with a perception of greater authenticity and religious legitimacy. Some Muslim consumers might view products originating from or certified by Saudi Arabia as more trustworthy in adhering to Islamic principles," he said.

He added: "Manafea emphasized those facts and organized the Makkah Halal Forum to be the platform where halal leaders from all over the world meet to shape the halal future."

In 2022, the Makkah and Madinah chamber, along with the Islamic Chamber, signed the Manafea agreement, which aims to transform the two holy cities into hubs for financial and business activities in the Islamic world.

From another perspective, he said, Saudi Arabia is a major consumer and investor in the halal industry. This gives the country significant influence in shaping the global halal market and that is why the Halal Product Development Company was the strategic partner sponsoring Makkah Halal Forum.

Khalawi shed light on the strategies Saudi Arabia has employed to take its halal products to international markets, saying that the Saudi Halal Center and its collaboration with the Saudi Exports Development Authority streamline the certification process for exporters.

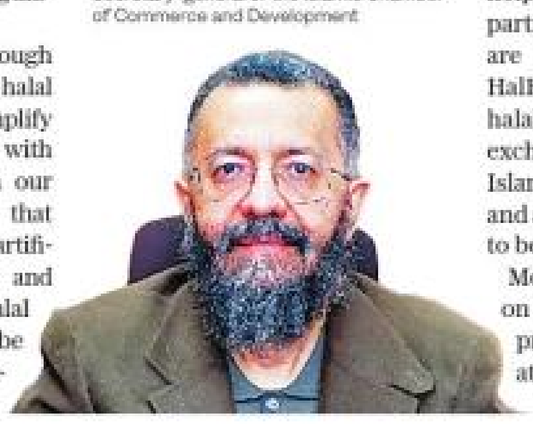
"This aims to make Saudi certification more attractive and user-friendly for international companies. Saudi Arabia promotes its halal standards – based on GSO 2055-1 – as a globally recognized benchmark for halal production. This leverages their position as the birthplace of Islam to enhance the credibility of their certifications," he said.

The official added that to help Saudi business reach trade partners around the globe, they are availing halal exchange, HalEx, an online platform for halal products and services exchange, operated by the Islamic Chamber's halal services and allowing only halal products to be listed.

Moreover, Vision 2030's focus on economic diversification presents an opportunity to attract investment in the Saudi halal industry.

Saudi Arabia's status as the Islamic holy land imbues their halal regulations with a perception of greater authenticity and religious legitimacy.

Yousuf Khalawi
Secretary-general of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Development



BizBriefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Climate goals

Green Germany, Morocco agree energy alliance

Germany has agreed to form a climate and energy alliance with Morocco to support renewable energy expansion and hydrogen production in the north African country.

Germany is seeking to expand its reliance on hydrogen as a future energy source. It will have to import up to 70 percent of its hydrogen demand in the future as it aims to become climate-neutral by 2045, but it lacks the space and conditions for large wind and solar power production. **Reuters**

Projections

Ford expects profitable EV in two years

Ford Motor Co. expects to launch a $30,000 EV that could be profitable in about two and a half years but did not provide any further details on the vehicle, CNBC reported on Friday. In April, Ford CEO Jim Farley had alluded to the automaker's expectations of being profitable in the $25,000 to $30,000 range for EVs.

The company has been shifting focus to produce larger electric trucks and SUVs, along with affordable and smaller EVs that are being developed by a "skunkworks" team in California. **Reuters**

Chart of THE DAY

Tesla's revenue grew to nearly $97 billion in 2023 fiscal year.

Source: Statista



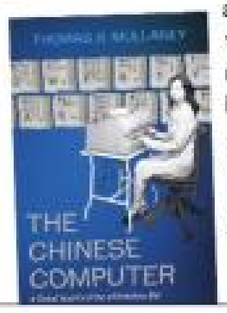
What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

The Chinese Computer

THOMAS S. MULLANEY

Thomas S. Mullaney's "The Chinese Computer" takes the reader back through the history and evolution of Chinese language computing technology, showing the development of electronic Chinese input methods and the profound impact they have had on the way Chinese is written. An eminently engaging and artfully told history, the book is a must-read for anyone interested in how culture informs computing and how computing, in turn, shapes culture.



Rising inflation

Vietnam Q2 GDP growth accelerates

Vietnam's economic growth accelerated in the second quarter on robust exports, government data showed on Saturday. Gross domestic product is estimated to have expanded to 6.93 percent in the second quarter from a year earlier, faster than a growth of 5.87 percent in the first quarter, the government's General Statistics Office said.

Vietnam, an important exporter of smartphones, electronics and garments, is seeking to shore up business activity after missing last year's growth target because of weak global demand and power shortages. **Reuters**

Backup option

Shein keeps option to list in Hong Kong

Online fast-fashion group Shein is keeping alive a fallback option to list in Hong Kong despite filing for a London listing, the Financial Times reported on Friday.

The company confidentially filed papers with Britain's markets regulator in June, kicking off the process for a potential London listing later this year.

The news has triggered strong opposition from human rights groups in the UK over concerns about Shein's labor practices. Amnesty International UK said the potential London initial public offering would be a "badge of shame" for the LSE. **Reuters**

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> The strategic acquisition of AutoWorld provides a robust platform for future growth opportunities, bolstered by the strong Saudi economy.
>
> **Fawaz Danish**
> President and Group CEO, Budget Saudi



Corporate

PRESS RELEASES | FROM THE WORLD OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE



Najm participated in this year's Hajj mission with a field operations team consisting of approximately 120 members, including liability determination specialists and supervisors.

TRAFFIC OPERATIONS

Hajj 2024: Najm ensures pilgrim safety on the road

CEO of Najm for Insurance Services Mohammed Yahya Al-Shehri expressed his gratitude and congratulations to King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, on the occasion of the conclusion of a successful Hajj season this year.

He also announced the success of Najm's operational plan for Hajj, which involved deploying dedicated human and technical logistical capabilities as well as vehicles and other transportation means to enhance traffic safety, promptly address traffic accidents in the holy sites, and ensure the safety and security of pilgrims according to the highest standards.

"At Najm, we are honored to have been part of the Hajj's success by efficiently implementing our operational plan. Najm succeeded in providing support for traffic plans on the roads leading to the holy sites and within the central region, ensuring the safety of pilgrims and enhancing the efforts of all relevant parties, including the General Traffic Department and the Special Forces for Road Security," said Al-Shehri.

Najm's operational plan for this year's Hajj season, complements the Kingdom's efforts in caring for the pilgrims, providing the best services, and creating conditions that allow them to perform the Hajj rituals with ease and tranquility. Najm's plan relied on interactive maps, advanced digital tools to respond to traffic accident reports, and the enhanced capabilities of its operations room equipped with a network of technical systems that contributed to faster response times and handling of accident reports. Smart applications and systems were also deployed to serve pilgrims and to reach traffic accident sites in the shortest possible time.

Najm participated in this year's Hajj mission with a field operations team consisting of approximately 120 members, including liability determination specialists and supervisors overseeing the mission. It also allocated a fleet of more than 80 motor vehicles and motorcycles. Technical and support teams from the Command and Control Center and the IT sector also contributed, with Najm's teams assisting in easing traffic congestion and surveying traffic accidents in the holy sites of Makkah, Madinah, Mina, Arafat, and Muzdalifah. Najm's teams also provided insurance services to pilgrims coming through all border crossings.

HIGHLIGHT

Najm's plan relied on interactive maps, advanced digital tools to respond to traffic accident reports, and the enhanced capabilities of its operations room equipped with a network of technical systems.

Najm is a closed and unlisted Saudi joint stock company established in 2007, to promote the vehicle insurance sector in the Kingdom. It provides an integrated system of insurance solutions and services to citizens, residents, and visitors in 44 Saudi cities through a skilled Saudi workforce.

MOBILITY SOLUTIONS

Strategic expansion: Budget Saudi acquires AutoWorld

United International Transportation Company, or Budget Saudi, a comprehensive mobility solutions provider in the Kingdom, has announced the acquisition of Al-Jazira Equipment Company, known as AutoWorld, a SEDCO Holding owned vehicle leasing company.

Budget Saudi's shareholders voted in favor of the acquisition at the Extraordinary General Assembly held on June 24. This landmark decision marks a significant milestone in Budget Saudi's history and paves the way for strategic expansion in a dynamic market poised for healthy growth.

Following the approval of the shareholders at the EGM, 7 million ordinary shares paid in full will be issued by Budget Saudi to SEDCO Holding and are expected to start trading on the Saudi Exchange upon completion of the necessary procedures with the exchange and Securities Depository Center Company. The new shares represent 8.96 percent of Budget Saudi's share capital after the capital increase. Once the new shares are issued in favor of SEDCO Holding, a Saudi Shariah institutional investor with deep experience and a strong track record of investing in national champions, it will directly and indirectly own 8.96 percent of Budget Saudi. AutoWorld's shares will be transferred from SEDCO Holding to Aljozoor Alrasekha, a Budget Saudi wholly owned subsidiary.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Emirates NBD inks deal with Jarir Bookstore

Emirates NBD Bank, a leading banking group in the Middle East, North Africa and Turkiye region, has signed a cooperation agreement with Jarir Bookstore, to enhance the customer experience by offering exclusive services and benefits to their clients.

This significant step embodies the vision of both companies to foster innovation and expand the range of services offered to customers, in alignment with market needs and customer aspirations.

Marwan Hadi, group head of retail banking and wealth management at Emirates NBD, said: "We are delighted with our partnership with Jarir Bookstore, the leading retail company in the region. This partnership reflects our joint commitment to providing the best services to our customers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and to enhancing the status of both Jarir and Emirates NBD Bank as leaders in their fields."



The signing of the cooperation memorandum took place in the presence of key executives from both organizations.

Meanwhile, Abdulkarim Al-Aqeel, CEO of Jarir Bookstore, emphasized the importance of the partnership, saying: "We are pleased to collaborate with Emirates NBD Bank, one of the largest financial institutions in the region, to provide greater value to our customers. This strategic partnership allows us to offer distinctive benefits and enhances the shopping experience in our branches, aligning with our commitment to providing the best services to our customers."

Corporate Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Tech Innovation

Dubai forum reviews use of AI in sports

Dubai Sports Council organized the "Dubai International Artificial Intelligence Forum in Sport" on June 25, in collaboration with the Global Sports Innovation Center.

The forum, titled "Toward Sports Future Industry," reviewed the latest AI experiences and applications in global sports corporations specialized in this field.

The event showcased successful experiences in the use of AI in sports, and connected local sports corporations with global companies in the sports innovation field to create investment opportunities.

The forum was addressed by Saeed Hareb, secretary-general of DSC, and Sebastian Lancestremere, director of sports management and strategic partnerships at Microsoft.

Empowering Users

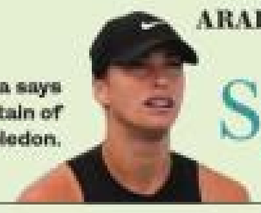
Honor unveils industry-first AI features

Global technology brand Honor revealed two industry-leading on-device AI innovations created to empower individuals and introduce a new level of user safety. During its keynote at MWC Shanghai 2024, titled "The Human-AI Synergy: Intelligent Devices Will Empower People Better," Honor showcased its latest advancements in human-centric AI, AI Defocus Eye Protection and AI Deepfake Detection. During the keynote session, the brand also reiterated its focus on human-centric on-device AI and its belief in the potential for AI-enabled hardware to empower users by delivering tailored services while protecting user privacy.

Strong Performance

Kaspersky reports 19% growth in META

Kaspersky demonstrated strong performance in 2023, marked by an 11 percent growth in the company's net sales bookings. This increase was primarily driven by robust sales of the company's B2B product portfolio, which rose by 24 percent year on year. In 2023, Kaspersky's global non-audited combined revenue amounted to $721 million. In the Middle East, Turkiye and Africa region, Kaspersky saw 19 percent business growth. The B2B sales in the Middle East grew by 28 percent.



Australia's Aryna Sabalenka says she is not 100 percent certain of playing her first round Wimbledon.

TENNIS

Egypt's Mayar Sherif in confident mood ahead of Wimbledon opener

Arab News London

Egyptian tennis player Mayar Sherif, who last year reached a career-high No. 31 in the world, is gearing up for her second appearance at Wimbledon next week and looking to improve on her first round exit last year.

Egypt's top-ranked female player will get her championship up and running in the first round against Hungarian qualifier Dalma Galfi.

After a shaky start to the year, Sherif spoke to Arab News about her upturn in form going into the grass-court grand slam event, confidence-boosting wins, and being an Arab female sporting role model.

Q How did you manage to improve your form in 2024 after a challenging start to the year?

The year started off tough due to an injury I sustained early on, which took a mental toll. Even after two months recovery, regaining my strength and capabilities was taking some time. However, I used this challenge as a positive experience where I focused on securing one win at the Madrid Open to help boost my confidence and get myself back into match rhythm. Not only did this win happen once, but twice, which I am incredibly proud of.



Q How did it feel to reach your career-high ranking of No. 31 last year, and what are your targets for returning to or surpassing that ranking?

Reaching a career-high ranking of No. 31 in the world was a proud milestone for me. My coaches and I focused on consistent progress and hard training, which led to significant improvements in my game. This year, we aim to achieve more and rank higher. My team has been incredibly supportive, pushing me beyond my limits, and working tirelessly to help me become a better player.

Q What does it mean to you to be Egypt's most successful tennis player ever?

Being recognized as Egypt's most successful tennis player ever carries a great responsibility. I see myself as a role model for younger players, and I've always believed that my career is just the beginning. My goal is to inspire more tennis players from Egypt and other African countries to break into the world's top 100 tennis players.

Q How do you feel about inspiring a generation of Arab tennis players, both female and male, alongside Ons Jabeur?

I feel honored to inspire the next generation of Arab tennis players. However, inspiration is limitless, and I want to be able to inspire all kinds of athletes, especially those who do not have proper access to sport. Which is why, I'm also proud to support adidas' efforts to encourage young athletes to pursue their goals in sports and overcome pressure. In addition, being a positive role model motivates me to continuously improve my game. It's rewarding to see younger athletes look up to us, and I'm committed to showing them what's possible through dedication.

EURO 2024

England seek spark against Slovakia to take advantage of soft draw

There has been little in the Three Lion's performances in Germany so far

AFP Gelsenkirchen

England manager Gareth Southgate has pinpointed expectation for the festering unease among his side's traveling support but demand on the Three Lions to deliver at Euro 2024 has only risen after landing in the soft side of the draw.

Southgate's men begin what they hope will be a road to Berlin for the final on July 14 against Slovakia in Gelsenkirchen on Sunday.

A rematch of the Euro 2020 final with Italy or Switzerland would then await in the quarters, while Austria, Turkiye, the Netherlands or Romania are potential semifinal opponents.

There has been little in England's performances in Germany so far to justify their hype as pre-tournament favorites.

But with Germany, France, Spain and Portugal all on the other side of the draw, the pressure has intensified on a richly talented squad to finally start performing as a team.

"If people are being negative, it's only because they expect a lot from you, which is a positive thing," said Newcastle winger Anthony Gordon, who could be one of the changes Southgate turns to.

"If we want that to stop, we just need to perform and give people what they want to see."

Despite topping Group C, England have managed only two goals in their opening three games.

The quartet of Phil Foden, Jude Bellingham, Bukayo Saka and Harry Kane combined for 114 goals in club football in the 2023/24 campaign.

But together they have been a disjointed attacking unit that Southgate is under huge pressure to shake up in Gelsenkirchen.

Foden has rejoined the squad after flying back home to attend the birth of his third child.

However, his lack of time on the training field this week may mean the Premier League's player of the year is the fall guy to try and balance the attack.

England's lack of width on the left has been exposed by Southgate having no natural left-back available due to Luke Shaw's injury and Foden's tendency to drift inside.

Gordon looks set to be handed his chance despite having just a few minutes action in the tournament so far.

"My main strength is that I'm very direct. I'm obviously quick, so I'm a nightmare for anyone I play against," Gordon told reporters on Friday to push his case for a first competitive England start.

"I'm not a very safe player, I'm always going for it, I'm always trying to put people on the back foot.

"I think with the players we've got, the likes of H (Kane), who likes to drop deep, I think I add a different element to the team."

Kobbie Mainoo is expected to start in midfield after the 19-year-old made an impressive impact in his second half appearance against Slovenia. Southgate also faces a clamour to unleash Cole Palmer.

The Chelsea playmaker, who scored 26 goals at club level last season, caught the eye in his late cameo against Slovenia and had England's only shot on target of the second half.

So far Southgate has remained steadfast and stubborn in his team selection, making only one change to his starting lineup as Conor Gallagher replaced Trent Alexander-Arnold in midfield for the third match.



Southgate's men begin what they hope will be a road to Berlin for the final on July 14 against Slovakia in Gelsenkirchen on Sunday. AP

Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

'Rare' injury

Sabalenka not certain for Wimbledon

Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka said Saturday she is "not 100 percent" certain of playing her first round Wimbledon match due to a "really rare" shoulder injury.

Sabalenka, a two-time semi-finalist at the All England Club, had to quit her quarterfinal match against Anna Kalinskaya in Berlin last week due to the problem.

"I'm not 100 percent fit now," admitted the 26-year-old Belarusian who is due to face 106th-ranked Emina Bektas of the US in the first round on Monday. **AFP**



WSL

Goalkeeper Earps leaves Man United

Manchester United goalkeeper Mary Earps appeared to fire a parting shot at the direction of the club under minority owner Jim Ratcliffe on Saturday as she became the latest high-profile player to leave the Women's Super League side.

The England international said she could not achieve her career ambitions at a club undergoing "transition."

Since his takeover of football operations at Old Trafford, billionaire businessman Ratcliffe has made it clear that the focus has been on the men's team. **AFP**

Austrian GP

Max Verstappen resists Norris attack in Austria

Max Verstappen resisted a spirited attack from Lando Norris on Saturday to claim victory for Red Bull in a feisty sprint race at the Austrian Grand Prix.

The series leader and three-time world champion delivered a home win at the Red Bull Ring with a fighting response after being passed by McLaren's Norris in the opening laps.

His win was his third sprint triumph this year, his fifth in succession and his 10th in 15 contests. **AFP**

Follow Arab News Briefs all through the day @ArabNews



Lana Del Rey and Quavo will release their new country-trap single, 'Tough,' on July 3. The artists confirmed the date with an Instagram post featuring a black-and-white photo of Del Rey putting a diamond chain on Quavo.

&Finally

TheSix

Summer glow

Here are six radiant products from Arab brands that will give your body a luminous glow this summer.



Nadine Njeim

The Lebanese actress's newly launched beauty line features two products, the Glow Satin Illuminator Primer and the Glow Lighter Liquid Highlighter, guaranteeing a radiant summer glow.



Bex Beauty

Emirati Yemeni singer Balqees Fathi's beauty brand offers a set of three highlighters in tan, rose, and gold.



Asteri Beauty

For those who prefer powder highlighters, the Saudi brand offers a two-shade option — pink and yellow — called Desert Diamond Highlighter.



Noha Nabil

Highlighters from the Emirati Egyptian influencer come in four shades, featuring rich pigmentation, and are suitable for use on the face, lips and body.



Huda Beauty

Highlighters are not only for the face. Try Huda Beauty's Body Drip Shimmering Dry Oil to add a radiant glow to your body.



Mond

This highlighter from the Egyptian brand not only provides radiance, but also contains nourishing ingredients, such as sweet almond, macadamia, argan, and others.

CLOSE UP

Arab designers unveil latest couture collections

Arab News Dubai

From Saudi talent to Lebanese couturiers, the now-concluded Fall/Winter 2024-25 edition of Paris Haute Couture Week played host to top-tier Arab creativity.



Mohammed Ashi showed off a collection titled 'Sculpted clouds' while Elie Saab showcased a soft color palette after a range of moody eveningwear. Getty Images

Among the highlights was Saudi designer Mohammed Ashi, founder of Ashi Studio, whose collection, titled "Sculpted Clouds," captured his signature style of merging the theatrical with elements of nature.

From dark to light to dark again, the billowing, yet structured, garments playfully juxtaposed different styles and textures, and produced a dazzling array of silhouettes, easily slipping between hard and soft, feminine and masculine.

The collection drew heavily from nature as well. The models wore slick-back buns and minimal makeup, and offered a clean canvas to go alongside the dramatic designs.

Lebanese designer Elie Saab presented touches of magic and splendor for his guests, including Avril Lavigne and Ellie Goulding, at the Musee des Arts Decoratifs.

With silks and velvet, the couturier conjured a fantastical, almost fairytale world of bridal queens, gleaming foliage and midnight shadows.

Saab's fall collection was presented dramatically at midnight to elicit a dark mood. Models in black leather opera gloves and graphic bands of black satin set the tone.

Men's couture capes, part of Saab's theme since Fall 2022, were embroidered with sequins and gleaming threads. His opulent men's couture line continues to add a new dimension to his brand, catering to a market segment that craves visibility.

In the predominantly women's display, organza whooshes swirled artistly upward from the waist. As the show progressed, the color palette softened. In addition, tried-and-tested floor-length silhouettes dazzled in gemstone hues.

Lebanese designer Zuhair Murad's collection, which was presented at Hotel Salomon de Rothschild, featured an array of rich fabrics, including velvet, silk and lace, with each piece having meticulous beadwork, sequins and embroidery.

The color palette was dramatic and sophisticated, dominated by blacks, deep reds, and metallic hues. The warmer tones of bronze and copper were also included. Silhouettes varied from dramatic, voluminous gowns to sleek, body-hugging dresses, featuring daring cutouts and necklines.

Notable design elements included exaggerated shoulders, intricate draping, and asymmetrical details.



BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE

Queen Rania shares new photos of royal couple

Arab News Dubai

Jordan's Queen Rania celebrated her son Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah's birthday on Instagram with a newly released portrait of him and his wife, Princess Rajwa.

In the photo, a pregnant Princess Rajwa, who is Saudi, is seen wearing a light, creamy yellow midi dress from the Spanish brand Rabanne. The dress features short sleeves, a round neckline and a gathered detail along one side, adorned with a row of buttons. The crown prince was wearing a navy blue shirt and matching trousers.



Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah and Princess Rajwa. Instagram

ON DISPLAY

Guggenheim acquires works by Emirati artist

Arab News Dubai

New York's Guggenheim Museum has acquired five works by Emirati artist Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim, according to a statement by his representing gallery, Lawrie Shabibi, in Dubai.

Ibrahim, a prominent figure in UAE contemporary art, is known for his abstract and organic sculptures, many inspired by a deep connection to the local environment, particularly that of his hometown of Khor Fakkan, on the Gulf of Oman.

In 2022, Ibrahim presented his work – notable for its electric colors and anamorphous form – at the National Pavilion UAE exhibition at the Venice Biennale. The exhibition celebrated his 40-year career, underscoring his status as a leading experimental artist from the UAE.

INTERVIEW

Restaurateur cites hunger for homegrown dining concepts amid Saudi push

Saffiya Ansari Dubai

The UAE's Fundamental Hospitality is setting its sights on Saudi Arabia with the launch of several of its popular food and beverage concepts in the Kingdom over the course of the next 18 months.

Alaya, Cipriani Dolci, Gaia and La Maison Ani will open in the Kingdom, with Venetian-inspired Cipriani Dolci scheduled to open its doors in Riyadh this year while the other concepts are expected to welcome diners in 2025.

"Saudi is fast becoming a luxury dining hot spot with all the key brands of the world opening here, so it's definitely somewhere we want to be," Evgeny Kuzin, CEO of Fundamental Hospitality, told Arab News. "We are witnessing a growing demand for 'Made in the GCC' dining experiences, and we are excited to contribute to this vibrant culinary landscape," he added.

Alaya celebrates Mediterranean cuisine and features Middle Eastern influences, while Gaia offers a Greek-meets-Mediterranean menu and La Maison Ani a French-meets-Mediterranean cuisine.



Evgeny Kuzin is the CEO of Fundamental Hospitality. Supplied

"We chose to launch Cipriani Dolci and La Maison Ani in Saudi Arabia because each of these brands brings something unique to the table that we believe will resonate well with the Saudi audience.

"Alaya offers a modern take on Mediterranean and Levantine cuisine, which is both familiar and innovative. Cipriani Dolci, with its rich heritage and luxurious Italian style, brings a sense of timeless elegance. The Cipriani brand is one of the most famous luxury brands in the world with a strong Saudi client base," Kuzin said.

When it comes to launching in Saudi Arabia, Kuzin is keen to adapt.

"We will introduce certain adaptations to align with local sensibilities. This might include offering more private dining options (and) incorporating local ingredients," he said.

Fundamental Hospitality has more than 20 concepts in the UAE, Europe and the United States, with La Maison Ani most recently opening in London at the end of May.