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MONDAY, September 7, 2026
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EVIL DESIGNS

Arab, Muslim nations condemn Israel's Gaza expulsion plans

Such measures 'directly challenge President Trump's comprehensive plan to end conflict'

Arab News Riyadh

Eight Islamic and Arab countries on Sunday condemned Israeli plans for the removal of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, saying the designs, voiced by ministers, jeopardize a US-backed peace in the territory.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said on Wednesday the government had plans to remove Palestinians from Gaza but was waiting for US approval on where to displace the territory's population.

A day later, Israel's National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir said the plan aimed to remove 250,000 Palestinians from Gaza in the first year, followed by the rest of the roughly 2 million residents over the following six years.

The foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, the UAE, Qatar, Pakistan, Indonesia and Turkey said they condemned in "the strongest terms" the "plans and mechanisms they proposed aimed at forcibly expelling Palestinians from their land," AFP reported.

"Such measures directly challenge international efforts to achieve peace, particularly President Donald Trump's comprehensive plan to end the conflict in Gaza, which includes a firm rejection of forced displacement," they added, referring to a US-backed, October 2025 peace plan for Gaza.

On Saturday, the US



Mourners gather for a mass burial of around 100 Palestinians, including 62 children, whose remains were recovered from rubble in Gaza, on Sunday. **AFP**

ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, a staunch supporter of Israel and Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank, denied there was an Israeli plan to force Palestinians out of Gaza.

Meanwhile, Israeli settlers on Sunday began clearing a road through Palestinian-owned land near the town of Ni'lin, west of Ramallah in the occupied West

FASTFACT

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said on Wednesday the government had plans to remove Palestinians from Gaza but was waiting for US approval on where to displace the territory's population.

Bank, according to local sources.

Along with two bulldozers, settlers entered Wadi Ni'lin, north of the town, and began work on a road that is expected to extend about 5 km, the sources said. The road would link the area to Jabal Al-Alem, where settlers seized land in 2021 and later established a pastoral outpost.

Separately, the Quds News

Network reported that settlers were leveling Palestinian land near the village of Burqa, east of Ramallah, as part of expansion work for settlement outposts.

Israeli settlements and outposts in the West Bank are widely considered illegal under international law.

Related reports **Pages 6 & 7**

LEBANON'S AGONY

Aoun calls for US help as 7 killed by Israel

AFP ArabSalim

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun urged Washington and the international community to help stop Israeli attacks, which killed at least seven people on Sunday despite a truce and a framework deal aimed at halting the violence.

Israel said it had targeted Hezbollah operatives and sites in response to a drone attack a day earlier by the Iran-backed group on its troops in the vicinity of a strategic south Lebanon ridge.

It reported no casualties but accused Hezbollah of a "blatant violation."

Israel this week said it had captured the Nabatieh-area Ali Al-Taher ridge, which it considers part of its self-declared "security zone" in south Lebanon.

Aoun said Sunday's strikes, which damaged government premises and destroyed an out-of-service hospital, were "a dangerous escalation ... reaching Lebanese state institutions" and health facilities.

He called on the international community — particularly the US, which has sponsored direct Israel-Lebanon talks and a framework agreement between the sides in June — "to urgently act to stop these violations."

The Health Ministry said one of the strikes in Nabatieh Al-Fawqa "totally destroyed" the out-of-service Ghandour Hospital, decrying "another grave violation of international humanitarian law."

Opinion: Eyad Abu Shakra **Page 9**

MAJOR CRISIS

Sudan blackouts push residents toward solar power, but high costs shut many out

AP Omdurman

For almost a year, Randa Al-Mansour, a 31-year-old Sudanese housewife, has relied on solar energy panels installed on the rooftop of her building to survive the recurrent blackouts triggered by the war-torn country's deteriorating electricity grid.

"We are suffering big time," said Al-Mansour, who lives with her three children in Omdurman, just outside the capital of Khartoum.

"When kids arrive at school in the morning, they find no

electricity there, so they are forced to head back home, where there is none either. It is very hard for them to study under such a high temperature."

The Sudanese military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces have been fighting since April 2023, killing at least 59,000 people, though aid groups say the number could be higher, and displacing some 13 million.

The conflict also has strained an already weak power infrastructure, forcing many Sudanese to seek alternative energy sources, especially during scorching summer



The number of billboards advertising solar panels, batteries, and inverters has expanded in Khartoum as more Sudanese consider transitioning to solar energy. **AP**

heat. The UN Development Programme has estimated the damage inflicted on the electricity grid at \$3 billion.

"We resorted to solar energy

as a way of adapting to this situation. However, not everyone in Sudan can afford this solution," said Al-Mansour, who supports her family with remittances from

her husband working in Saudi Arabia.

In recent months, the number of billboards advertising solar panels, batteries, and inverters has expanded in the capital as more Sudanese consider transitioning to solar energy.

"For a low-income family, installing a solar panel system is a huge sacrifice but an inevitable choice," said Mohey Eddin Abu-Bark, owner of a solar systems business in Khartoum, adding that a typical household 10-kilowatt solar system costs nearly \$5,000.

Manahel Madany, a 43-year-old

diabetic civil servant, cannot afford the transition, despite needing steady electricity for her fridge for her insulin.

"Every three to four days, I am forced to throw away all my insulin stock after it goes bad due to heat and power outages," said Madany.

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On World Charity Day, we celebrate the role of the nonprofit sector as a key driver of sustainable development. We appreciate the efforts and volunteer initiatives that contribute to building a better future for our nation.

Ahmed Al-Rajhi
Saudi human resources and social development minister



Radar

KSA today



Dhahran Survival challenge

Survival Journey is an interactive experience in which participants explore how nature's challenges can transform into useful sources of life. It runs until Nov. 24 at Ithra Center.



Abha On the farm

Discover a rural escape filled with heritage rooms, traditional meals, and timeless atmosphere at Liwan Farm in Abha. It runs until Sept. 23. Check abha.platinumlist.net for more details.



Madinah Learn chess

Learn the basics of chess, as well as fun practice methods, with an instructor who shows how to make chess both a pastime and a brain workout.



Riyadh Cooking workshop

Learn to prepare chicken noodles at Elite Chef, which offers a hands-on session guided by an expert chef until Sept. 29, with all ingredients and essentials provided. Book via webook.com.

TheRegister

THE PICTURES THAT MARK THE DAY



Saudi Ambassador to Romania Khalid Al-Shammari presented his credentials to Romanian President Nicusor Dan in Bucharest. The ambassador conveyed the

greetings of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to the president, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Sunday. Dan returned the greetings and

expressed "his appreciation for Saudi Arabia, its government and people, and his country's aspiration to strengthen cooperation with the Kingdom across various fields."

What's Trending

Today's hot topics explained by Afshan Aziz



EMMY WINNER Sabrina Carpenter

X Sabrina Carpenter's work as an executive producer and performer on "The Muppet Show" has won her the Best Variety Special (Pre-Recorded) award at the 2026 Creative Arts Emmys. The Disney+ special brought back Jim Henson's famous puppets for a new variety program featuring comedy sketches, musical performances and celebrity appearances. Directed by Alex Timbers, the production earned six Emmy nominations and ultimately picked up four awards during the Creative Arts ceremony. Alongside the top prize, "The Muppet Show" won for Best Writing for a Variety Special, Best Picture Editing for Variety Programming and Best Production Design for a Variety Special. Matt Vogel, who voices Kermit the Frog, also received a nomination for Best Character Voice-Over Performance.

RED CARPET MOMENT Robert Pattinson

G Robert Pattinson had a special supporter by his side as his latest film received a 7-minute standing ovation at the Venice Film Festival. The actor, 40, attended the Sept. 5 premiere of "Primetime" with his wife, the singer and actress Suki Waterhouse, 34. Pattinson appeared in an off-white suit with a cranberry-colored tie, while Waterhouse wore a mint-green ensemble as the couple posed together on the red carpet. Waterhouse enthusiastically applauded Pattinson to celebrate the premiere of "Primetime." Pattinson plays a fictionalized version of Chris Hansen, the television host associated with Dateline NBC's "To Catch a Predator." The movie dramatizes the making of the controversial hidden-camera

program and draws partly from Luke Dittrich's 2007 Esquire article, "Tonight on Dateline This Man Will Die." Hansen was not involved with the production and has also said he has not seen the finished film. At a press conference, Pattinson expressed hope that Hansen might ultimately appreciate the movie. "Obviously, I hope he likes the movie," Pattinson said. "There's something electrifying about him. I would hope the amount of inspiration his character has given a lot of people for years is some kind of compliment." The Venice appearance comes during a particularly busy period for Pattinson, who currently stars in "The Drama" and "The Odyssey." He is set to appear in "Dune: Part III" and is also filming "The Batman: Part II" in London. "Primetime" is scheduled to premiere in theaters on Sept. 25.



Today's Number

10.8k

Saudi Arabia's Qassim region is home to more than 10.8 million palm trees across more than 13,000 farms, reflecting the scale and diversity of its date-growing sector, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

Review

Aromi

AFSHAN AZIZ

Aromi at Waldorf Astoria in Jeddah brings a new Italian selection that goes beyond the usual pasta and pizza choices. The dining room itself is part of the experience, especially during the day when sunlight comes through the long windows facing the sea. Before the food arrives, the restaurant serves corn fritters with tomato sauce as a small starter. Our meal started with the fig salad, featuring feta, pistachio, ruccola and pomegranate, which brought together sweet and savory flavors without making the dish feel heavy. The fried squid and shrimp with lemon aioli had a crisp bite and worked well with the



sauce. The smoked salmon with potato, sour cream and pickled onion was another option that kept the start of the meal lighter. The pasta was where the Italian character of the menu came through most clearly. The ravioli filled with red shrimp and mascarpone and served with parmesan sauce were among the stand-out dishes, unique and definitely worth trying. The rigatoni lamb ragu was another good choice, particularly for those who prefer a meat-based pasta. If you're in the mood for soup, the lobster soup and asparagus soup with black truffle are worth trying and both bring their own flavors to the table.

TheRegion

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Jeddah

• The Quantum Dome Project at Louvre Abu Dhabi is a collective virtual reality experience that takes visitors through different historical eras, from Imperial Rome to Medieval Baghdad. Suitable for visitors aged 8 and above, the experience is available in

Arabic, English and French. It runs until the end of the year and advance booking is via louvreaabudhabi.ae.

• Zyra Lounge in Bahrain will host "Techno Night" every Saturday, with audiences promised an evening of underground beats and electrifying energy. The

event runs weekly until Dec. 26.

• Experience John Legend live at the Qatar National Convention Centre, Doha, on Sept. 10. The 13-time Grammy winner celebrates more than two decades of music with intimate performances of beloved hits and fan favorites.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

Sept. 7	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghreb	Isha
Makkah	4:48	6:06	12:19	3:44	6:32	8:02
Madinah	4:48	6:05	12:20	3:48	6:34	8:04
Riyadh	4:17	5:36	11:52	3:20	6:06	7:36
Abha	4:41	5:57	12:08	3:30	6:19	7:49
Dammam	4:01	5:22	11:38	3:08	5:53	7:23

“**FRANKLY SPEAKING**
with Katie Jensen

The Interview



Arab News Riyadh

Since Andy Burnham became UK prime minister in July, Britain's approach to Israel and Palestine appears to be entering a new phase, with potentially tougher measures.

But for Chris Doyle, director of the Council for Arab-British Understanding, a London-based nonprofit and cross-party organization, the test is whether words produce consequences.

Appearing on the Arab News current affairs program “Frankly Speaking,” he said that settlement expansion, settler violence and Gaza's devastation were undermining Palestinian statehood.

“It's really hard to see where this goes,” Doyle told host Katie Jensen. “It's on life support at best because we have an Israeli government that is essentially committed to ending it.”

He cited the El settlement plan east of Jerusalem and strategic settler attacks on Palestinian communities across the West Bank.

“The other part of that potential Palestinian state, Gaza, it's suffering from what most of us consider to be a genocide,” he said. “It's been to all intents and purposes flattened.”

Doyle condemned Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz's advocacy of the “voluntary migration” of Palestinians from Gaza.

“This is ethnic cleansing. It must be called out as such,” he said.

Katz's remarks that Israel is prepared to remove Gaza's entire population if US President Donald Trump approves have heightened the challenge for European governments supporting Palestinian statehood.

“They really need to act fast. They need to act decisively,” he said.

Doyle questioned whether the Board of Peace could deliver the necessary political settlement.

“It is simply not designed to bring about, in my view, the reconstruction of Gaza, the opening up of Gaza, to make Gaza part of a Palestinian state,” he said.

For Doyle, the central question remains whether Britain's tougher language will translate into meaningful and enforceable action.

Foreign Secretary Ed Milliband has promised “comprehensive” restatement of UK policy on Israel could signal a significant shift.

“A comprehensive set of measures,” he said. “I think that's some of the most robust language we've heard from a British foreign secretary.”

Doyle said measures could extend beyond a proposed settlement trade ban to other sanctions, suspension of the UK-Israel trade agreement and a pause in military and security cooperation.

“I think that it is untenable to sanction two ministers in the current government to say that Israel is in flagrant breach of international law, committing all these violations, but then still continue to treat it as if it's business as usual,” he said.

For Doyle, this marks a change from the previous government's language.

“A lot of the statements that have been made since the end of July have been far more



CHRIS DOYLE

DIRECTOR OF THE COUNCIL FOR ARAB-BRITISH UNDERSTANDING

Britain breaks with the past — but is it enough?

Middle East commentator says the Burnham government's tougher stance on Israel must now move beyond rhetoric and deliver meaningful and enforceable action



(Main & above) Doyle doubts Board of Peace can deliver a deal. AN photos

assertive,” he said. “There hasn't been this sort of artificial balance and hesitant language: ‘on the one hand, on the other.’ It's been far more clear-cut.”

Britain has sanctioned some extremist settlers, but Doyle argued that those measures had achieved little. A settlement trade ban would need sufficient

scope and enforcement to make a difference. “It should have been doing this and much more years ago,” he said, when asked whether Britain was doing enough.

“Basically, Israel has enjoyed a climate of impunity for decades.”

“The question here is not whether that's going to happen, but how tough this will be,”

he said. “Will it be a UK ban on just trading with the settlements in terms of products, or will it include investments, financial services?”

“It needs to have teeth,” he added. Doyle also contrasted Britain's support for Ukraine with its caution toward Israel.

“The British government has not once said that Israel has violated international law in Gaza, which is extraordinary,” he said.

“We need to speak out and say you are violating international law. What you're doing in Gaza is unconscionable. There are consequences.”

Britain's recognition of Palestine in September 2025 should bring practical consequences, Doyle argued. Recognition affirmed Palestinian rights but could not independently end occupation or settlement expansion.

“Why then are you not doing more to stop what effectively are colonies in that state, where a second state has implanted its own population into that state?” he said.

He also cited the International Court of Justice's 2024 advisory opinion deeming Israel's presence in the occupied Palestinian territory unlawful.

“That occupation being unlawful means that you must



We need to say you are violating international law. What you're doing in Gaza is unconscionable. There are consequences.

not have anything to do with it. You must not aid and abet it in any way, shape, or form.”

Across Europe, public attitudes toward Israel have deteriorated while governments remain divided. Doyle said a July poll commissioned by his organization, Caabu, found 50 percent of Britons believed Israel was committing genocide in Gaza, compared with 16 percent who did not.

“So Israel has a massive problem in terms of public support,” he said.

European Union sanctions require unanimity, however, and some governments oppose stronger measures. Doyle believes Israel could eventually face wider diplomatic isolation.

“And there are many Israelis who don't want that,” he said. “They want to be welcomed into the global community. They don't want to be outcasts.”

Britain also retains influence beyond Gaza, including in Lebanon, where UNIFIL's mission is due to end after nearly five decades.

“Britain can do plenty in Lebanon in concert with other partners,” he said.

Working alongside France and Germany, Britain should defend Lebanese sovereignty and press Israel for a withdrawal timetable, Doyle argued. He linked that withdrawal to progress on Hezbollah's disarmament.

“The other part of it is the disarmament of Hezbollah, which can only really be achieved if there is a clear statement that Israel would be leaving Lebanon once and for all,” he said.

In post-Assad Syria, Doyle welcomed the Assad family's absence and greater freedom of expression, although the economic crisis remains severe.

The war between the US, Israel and Iran, meanwhile, has exposed the limits of military power. Doyle said it had failed to produce a decisive military outcome and risked prolonged escalation. “What we've discovered, for those who didn't realize it in the first place, is there's no military solution to all of this,” he said. “The US, with all its military firepower, with the addition of Israel as well, could not militarily defeat Iran.”

Mediation and a political agreement would ultimately be necessary, he argued.

“We need to dial this down and find a realistic path out of this that gives everybody peace of mind and security.”

WATCH FRANKLY SPEAKING

Find the full interview at arabnews.com/FranklySpeaking

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The authority said uncontrolled grazing strips vegetation, causing soil erosion, reduced water retention and rangeland degradation. SPA

BIODIVERSITY

Royal reserve authority calls for curbs on overgrazing to protect Saudi rangelands

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's Imam Turki bin Abdullah Royal Nature Reserve Development Authority has warned that overgrazing is degrading rangelands within its boundaries and called for stricter adherence to sustainable grazing practices.

In a report carried by the Saudi Press Agency, the nature reserve said uncontrolled grazing strips vegetation before plants can mature and produce seed, triggering soil erosion, reduced water retention and rangeland degradation, it said.

Left unchecked, these effects

speed up desertification and sand encroachment, reduce food and shelter available to wildlife, and threaten historic sites located within the reserve, the authority said.

Describing rangeland conservation as a shared responsibility, it urged herders and other stakeholders to give vegetation sufficient time to recover to preserve the ecosystem's long-term balance. The appeal builds on a broader regulatory push by the authority.

In March, it introduced an updated, fifth edition of its grazing regulations, first rolled out in January 2022, as part of a

HIGHLIGHT

Describing rangeland conservation as a shared responsibility, the authority urged herders and other stakeholders to give vegetation sufficient time to recover to preserve the ecosystem's long-term balance.

wider strategy to protect vegetation cover and biodiversity across the reserve. Under the rules, grazing is permitted only with official authorization.

It is restricted to designated zones, time periods and

livestock quotas calibrated to each pasture's carrying capacity, the authority has said.

The regulations also expand grazing areas around villages and settlements inside the reserve and establish buffer grazing belts on its periphery, in response to requests from local communities. They bar tree-cutting, logging and off-road vehicle use. The authority has said it enforces the rules through patrols and monitoring systems, with legal action taken against violators.

The authority has pointed to improving environmental indicators as evidence its conservation program is taking effect.

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Religious tour

King's Umrah guests explore Madinah history

A group of 250 Umrah pilgrims visited the Uhud Martyrs' Cemetery, Mount Uhud and Quba Mosque as part of a cultural program in Madinah.

The group, hosted under the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques' Guests Program, said the visit reflected Saudi Arabia's care for Islam and for Muslims. They expressed their happiness and appreciation for the sites and their historical significance and thanked King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for the services provided.

This was the third group of pilgrims to visit as part of a program launched as a result of the king's decision 1,000 male and female Umrah performers at his own expense. They are being hosted in four groups, with the latest guests coming from 23 African countries.

Welcomed by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, they arrived in Madinah on Sept. 1 and have also visited the Prophet's Mosque and Al-Rawdah Al-Sharifah. SPA Madinah

Innovation

Agricultural fund steps up digital transformation

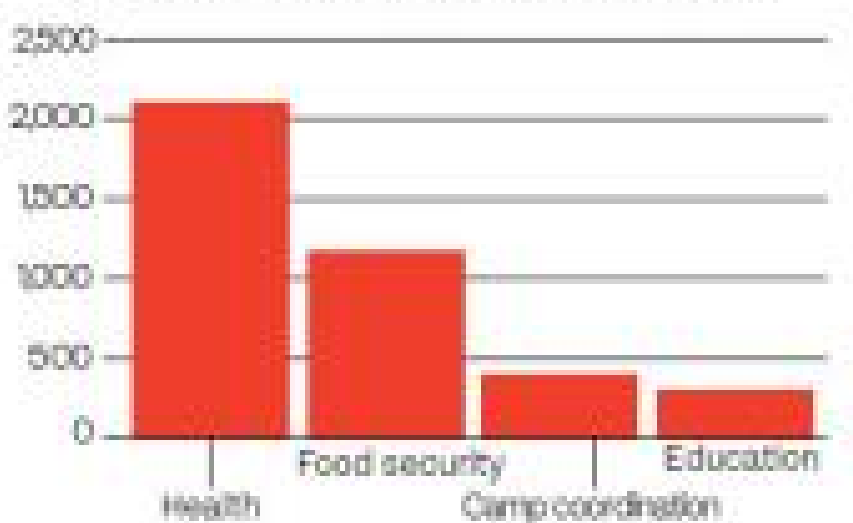
Saudi Arabia's Agricultural Development Fund has launched a new digital transformation strategy to improve beneficiary services, boost operational efficiency and support innovation.

The strategy was unveiled during the LEAP conference in Riyadh. The fund said the strategy would provide a more integrated beneficiary experience across its electronic services and agricultural financing products.

The fund said the strategy would "enable innovation, strengthen digital excellence, and improve the beneficiary experience and the services provided." The strategy includes developing innovative digital solutions and using data and analytics to support decision-making. It also aims to strengthen governance and digital excellence, improve institutional efficiency and data quality, and support innovation, in line with the Kingdom's wider digital transformation goals. AN Jeddah

The Day's FIGURES

KSRELIEF LARGEST COMPLETED AND ONGOING PROJECTS IN ITS COUNTRIES



Source: ksrelief.org

BUSINESS TIES

Jeddah exhibition opens up opportunities for Syrian industry

The four-day event will focus on trade, investment, distribution and long-term commercial partnerships

Nada Hameed Jeddah

Jeddah will host the first Syrian Industries Exhibition from Sept. 8-11, bringing Syrian manufacturers and companies together with Saudi businesses to explore opportunities for trade, investment and long-term commercial partnerships.

The four-day event at the Jeddah Center for Exhibitions and Events, held under the patronage of the Jeddah Chamber, will focus on business-to-business opportunities spanning supply, distribution, investment and partnerships.

The Syrian Arab News Agency said on its official X account that the exhibition would feature broad participation from Syrian companies and manufacturers.

Organizers said the event aimed to highlight Syrian industries and products while creating new channels for commercial and investment cooperation with Saudi businesses.

Rather than focusing on direct consumer sales, the exhibition will emphasize business-to-business meetings, commercial partnerships and opportunities in supply, distribution and investment. Participants will also have the opportunity to engage directly with Saudi businesses and explore long-term commercial relationships

BACKGROUND

Saudi Arabia recently took part in the 63rd Damascus International Fair, with more than 50 Saudi companies under the 'Made in Saudi' pavilion. Syria also took part as a guest of honor at the third 'Made in Saudi' exhibition in December 2025, with 25 Syrian companies presenting products and services.

beyond the four-day event.

The exhibition will cover a range of Syrian industries and highlight the country's production capabilities across several sectors. Entities linked to industry, agriculture, tourism,

culture, social affairs and labor are expected to participate alongside manufacturers and private-sector companies.

Panel discussions featuring participating government entities are planned to outline investment incentives, facilities and relevant procedures.

An accompanying cultural program is expected to include a seminar titled "The Land of Al-Sham ... Cradle of Civilizations," highlighting Syria's cultural and historical heritage.

Organizers said the cultural component would add a broader dimension to the event by combining commercial networking with insights into the economic and cultural landscape surrounding Syrian industry.

Green initiatives

KSA, Kuwait join efforts to combat desertification

Saudi Arabia's National Center for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification has launched a series of virtual training and technical workshops in collaboration with Kuwait's Environment Public Authority.

The sessions will run through September and October under a memorandum of understanding between the two countries on environmental protection, rehabilitation and conservation. The initiative aims to strengthen knowledge-sharing and technical cooperation while supporting regional efforts to address environmental challenges.

The center said the workshops aimed to strengthen cooperation and exchange knowledge and expertise in environmental protection, rehabilitation and conservation, while supporting regional efforts to address challenges. AN Jeddah

Moderation

100 attend Saudi Islamic course in Kenya

The Ministry of Islamic Affairs, represented by the religious attache at the Saudi Embassy in Kenya, launched on Sunday the third course for preachers, imams, orators and students of Islamic knowledge.

The course features an academic program focused on establishing a sound foundation in Islamic law and strengthening participants' understanding of creed and Sunnah through an explanation of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal's book "Usul Al-Sunnah" ("Principles of the Sunnah").

The lectures, delivered by Northern Border University faculty member Khalid Al-Anzi, aim to develop participants' Dawah knowledge and equip them to serve their communities on sound scholarly foundations.

The five-day course is attended by 100 beneficiaries. It reflects Saudi Arabia's role in promoting moderation, balance and tolerance. SPA Nairobi

News Saudi Arabia

INTERVIEW

Nearly a century of Saudi-Dutch ties points to new areas of cooperation

Marcel Kurpershoek traces a relationship shaped by trust, practical cooperation and shared interests

Nada Alturki Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's historical relationship with the Netherlands offers lessons for how the two countries could deepen cooperation in green energy, culture and other fields, former Dutch diplomat and scholar Marcel Kurpershoek told Arab News at the Security and History Dialogue Conference.

Kurpershoek took part in a panel titled "King Abdulaziz Al-Saud in the Eyes of the World." The three-day conference, organized by the Ministry of Interior from Sept. 6-8, brings together more than 160 experts and specialists from Saudi Arabia and abroad.

In an interview with Arab News, Kurpershoek discussed Saudi-Dutch relations, clean-energy cooperation, cultural diplomacy and the value of historical research in shaping future engagement.

"I think we are very eager in the Netherlands to even further strengthen our relations with Saudi Arabia in this field," he told Arab News. "We cannot contribute much to oil and gas production, but we can contribute a lot to our common ambitions in the field of green energy."

Given Saudi Arabia's pivotal position in global energy markets and its economic transformation under Vision 2030, Kurpershoek believes that the Netherlands can be a valuable partner in offering technical expertise in green and clean energy.

"There are so many tools. I think the financial system is one," he said. "Green energy needs a lot of capital to develop. The Kingdom has capital, and has an interest in developing it."



Marcel Kurpershoek discussed Saudi-Dutch relations at the Security and History Dialogue Conference in Riyadh. AN photos by Huda Bashatah

In the last few years, Kurpershoek's career has transitioned from diplomacy to culture, giving him an interesting angle to view political ties from a historical context.

He served in the Dutch diplomatic service, including a posting in Saudi Arabia, and later became the Netherlands' ambassador to Pakistan, Afghanistan, Türkiye



I think we are very eager in the Netherlands to even further strengthen our relations with Saudi Arabia ... We cannot contribute much to oil and gas production, but we can contribute a lot to our common ambitions in the field of green energy.

Marcel Kurpershoek
Diplomat and scholar

and Poland. He also conducted extensive research into Arabian oral poetry and Bedouin culture.

Kurpershoek highlighted the history of Dutch-Saudi relations as an example of how practical cooperation can build lasting ties. The first Dutch diplomat to the Kingdom, Daniel van der Meulen, had an inaugural meeting with King Abdulaziz in Jeddah, he said.

"The first subject on the mind of King Abdulaziz was the safety and the comfort also of the pilgrims," Kurpershoek added. "This was the beginning of 1926, and the Netherlands was still the colonial power in Indonesia ... we had millions of pilgrims coming to Jeddah and then to Makkah, and he felt responsible for their well-being."

Van der Meulen's work focused heavily on facilitating the Hajj pilgrimage for Muslims from

the Dutch East Indies, then under Dutch colonial rule.

They also discussed the economy in that first meeting. Saudi Arabia had yet to establish a banking system, but the king saw that this was an essential step in modern development. The Netherlands Trading Society opened a branch in Jeddah in 1926, which later became Alawwal Bank.

"A bank is also a question of trust," Kurpershoek said, adding that the same principle could underpin future cooperation in areas such as clean energy.

The former diplomat argued that Saudi capital and Dutch technical expertise could support joint clean energy development.

"The keyword here is clean energy," he said, both in terms of strategy and transparency.

Kurpershoek referenced the 2015 Dieselgate scandal, when Volkswagen installed secret software in millions of diesel cars that would cheat emission tests, taking a huge toll on air pollution.

"Now, to have clean energy is not a luxury anymore," he said. "It's for economic and financial survival and success."

The Netherlands aims for 100 percent of all new passenger car sales to be zero-emission by 2030, just as the Kingdom aims for 30 percent of all vehicles in Riyadh to run on electricity under Vision 2030.

AVIATION

Security and stability could drive Saudi advanced-mobility investment, CEO says

Banan Obaid Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's security, stability and investment in advanced infrastructure make the Kingdom a major market for the next generation of automated air mobility, Yvonne Winter, CEO of FlyNow Arabia and president of Sky Alliance for Automated Air Mobility, said during the Security and History Dialogue Conference

in Riyadh on Sunday.

Winter spoke to Arab News on the opening day of the conference, held at the Cultural Palace in Riyadh's Diplomatic Quarter.

The three-day event is being held under the theme "Our History and Our Future: Security and Prosperity," bringing together senior officials, scholars and international leaders to examine how national security supports economic growth and social development.

"Security and sovereignty are a basis for prosperity," Winter said. "When we look into history and then toward the future, security enables prosperity. Therefore, I think this is a very important conference."

"For companies like ours, which are introducing a completely new form of mobility, investors and partners need to know that the environment is secure, stable and capable of supporting

Yvonne Winter spoke to Arab News on the opening day of the conference, held at the Cultural Palace in Riyadh's Diplomatic Quarter.



long-term development."

She added: "Investors will only deploy significant money if they know that all the prerequisites are there and that there is a safe, stable and trustworthy environment."

"They need confidence that the regulations will develop, that the infrastructure can be built and that the country has the vision and capacity to support an industry over many years. This is why security is so important for investment and innovation."

FlyNow Arabia is developing modular electric aircraft, known as e-copters, for medical evacuation, firefighting, cargo delivery and passenger transportation.

The company recently acquired a majority stake of its former Austrian entity and subsequently moved its global headquarters to Riyadh. It also plans to establish its

Saudi Arabia is the perfect market because it fulfills all the prerequisites. It has very strong visionary leadership. It has a young, well-educated population. It has the market size and the needs.

Yvonne Winter
FlyNow Arabia CEO

production operations in the Kingdom.

"We will produce here in the Kingdom. This is our launch market, and we are going from Saudi Arabia to the world," Winter told Arab News.

"My co-founder and I believe that the Kingdom offers the right environment to develop this technology, build the necessary ecosystem and eventually export the solution to international markets."

Winter described Saudi Arabia as an ideal market for developing advanced air mobility.

"Saudi Arabia is the perfect market because it fulfills all the prerequisites," she said. "It has very strong visionary leadership. It has a young, well-educated population. It has the market size and the needs."

"It also has the financial means to develop the entire ecosystem necessary to introduce a new means of transport."

Winter said introducing automated air mobility involves considerably more than

manufacturing aircraft.

"When we talk about advanced air mobility, we have to consider that we want to deploy low-altitude airspace as much as we can," she said. "We will have thousands of drones every year — taxis, emergency-response aircraft and cargo vehicles in the air."

In a special address on the opening day, Winter spoke about pursuing international partnerships while maintaining national sovereignty.

"Sovereignty does not mean isolation. The Kingdom can work with European, American and Asian companies, including the world's technology leaders," she told the conference. "However, the architecture, governance, operational authority and critical data must remain under Saudi control."

"That is how innovation can enter without creating dependency, because if a nation does not control the data and digital infrastructure that run its critical mobility systems, it does not control the system at all."

EDUCATION UNDER THREAT

Teacher, children in Israeli-besieged town miss first day of school

Arab News London

Israeli forces and settlers on Sunday continued their siege of three Palestinian homes in the town of Qusra, south of Nablus, for the 29th consecutive day.

Samer Al-Jamal, an official at the Ministry of Education, said teacher Suhair Abu Rida could not attend her work at Asma Bint Abi Bakr School in Qusra, disrupting lessons for numerous female students. Two children were also unable to attend kindergarten due to the siege.

About 846,000 students attended their first day at schools across West Bank towns on Sunday.

A ceremony to launch the new academic year was held in Qusra, attended by Nablus Gov. Ghassan Daghlas and officials from the Directorate of Education, emphasizing the community's

commitment to education.

Abu Rida's home was targeted in an Israeli siege last month, along with two other homes belonging to the Hassan families. The Israeli army placed a military cordon around the homes, claiming the force was "protecting" them from settlers.

Susan Sarandon

Meanwhile, US actress Susan Sarandon said on Sunday she was still having roles "taken away" from her in Hollywood because of her outspoken criticism of Israel's war in Gaza.

The "Thelma & Louise" star was dropped by her agency UTA in November 2023 over remarks at a pro-Palestinian rally which she later said she regretted, according to AFP.

Speaking at the Venice Film Festival, where she has a role in Italian film "The Echo



A Palestinian girl walks under an Israeli army barrier as she makes her way to school in the occupied West Bank village of Qusra. AP

Chamber," she claimed the "narrative" around the Gaza war and the US support for Israel had "completely changed."

Referring to the extent of US financial and military aid for

Israel, the Oscar winner said: "I think there has been a change in terms of the understanding of the situation and the general public, but there are still very strongly held positions within

my industry that are held by Zionists and who have not relaxed their feelings toward me. "But I found my family, I found my people, and I'm okay," she added to a round of applause.

Sarandon was dropped by United Talent Agency for telling a rally that Jewish Americans were "getting a taste of what it is like to be Muslim in this country" because of rising anti-Semitic violence.

NORMALCY RESTORED

Interpol voids Assad-era alert listing over 24,500 passports as stolen

Alert disrupted travel for affected Syrians and impacted their freedom of movement

Arab News London

The International Criminal Police Organization has canceled a 2024 alert that listed more than 24,500 Syrian passports as stolen, after Syria worked with the organization to establish that the notice was based on inaccurate information, a Syrian security official said on Saturday.

Abdul Rahim Jabara, director of the International Cooperation Department at the Syrian Arab Republic's Interior Ministry, said the alert was issued at the request of the now-ousted government of President Bashar Assad and was later found to be invalid.

The former Assad government requested the international alert

in November 2024 after the capture of Aleppo, saying 24,511 passports had been stolen from an immigration and passports center in the city.

But official records showed the passports had been properly issued and legally delivered to their holders, Jabara said in a statement on the Interior Ministry's Telegram channel.

Syrian officials worked with Interpol to establish that the alert lacked a valid basis, leading to its removal, he said.

The notice had significantly disrupted travel for Syrians whose passports were listed, Jabara said. Some passport holders were detained in several countries, while others had their documents confiscated.

The decision comes as Syria's new authorities seek to expand engagement with Interpol and other international law enforcement bodies.



Syrian officials said records showed the passports were legally issued and delivered to their holders. AFP

The Interior Ministry participated in Interpol's first Global Conference on Police Communication in May in Lyon, France.

The Justice Ministry had announced on Aug. 12 that it had established an Extradition Committee to communicate with Interpol on behalf of Syrian authorities seeking individuals abroad.

Deputy Justice Minister Mustafa Al-Qasim said at the

time that the ministry was also opening offices to receive transitional justice complaints and working to recover Syrian assets allegedly embezzled and transferred overseas.

However, the scope of Interpol's role in such cases is narrower than it is often portrayed, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights.

Interpol facilitates cooperation

among national police agencies but does not issue binding international arrest warrants, conduct extradition proceedings, determine criminal liability or require member countries to surrender individuals.

Syria's National Central Bureau in Damascus acts as a liaison between Syrian law enforcement agencies, Interpol's secure communications system and police authorities in other member states. It has no authority outside Syrian territory.

Syria has been an Interpol member since 1953, according to the organization's records.

Interpol's principal mechanism for locating wanted individuals is a Red Notice, a request to police agencies worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender or another legal action. However, a Red Notice is not an international arrest warrant.

CRACKDOWN

Iranian opposition supporters seen in video held

AFP, AP Tehran

Iranian authorities have arrested a number of people accused of appearing in a rare video waving the flag of an outlawed opposition group, state television said on Sunday.

Videos circulating online in recent days showed individuals riding motorbikes on empty streets in Iran while waving the white-and-red banner of the banned People's Mujahedin Organization of Iran.

On Sunday, state television said authorities had identified and arrested "all the individuals who appeared in this clip" and that they were "associated" with MEK, without specifying how many.

It said the motorcade had been traveling near the city of Karaj, west of Tehran, but it was not clear when the footage was recorded.

Founded in the 1960s in opposition to Iran's then Western-backed shah, the MEK was outlawed after the 1979 Islamic revolution and later fought alongside Saddam Hussein's forces during the Iran-Iraq war.

The group has for decades advocated regime change in Iran from abroad, while Tehran has accused its members of cooperating with its arch-enemy, Israel.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military has denied Iran's claim to have struck an unmanned American military vessel in the Strait of Hormuz, calling it a "total lie."

AGONY

Algerian boy trapped in well for days found dead

AFP Algiers

Rescuers in Algeria on Saturday recovered the body of a 10-year-old boy who was trapped inside a well for four days, civil protection authorities said.

Efforts to rescue the boy, whom authorities identified only by his first name, Ayoub,

had drawn widespread attention across the country, and social media was awash with calls to save him.

On Saturday evening, however, the civil protection announced that "the child was found and recovered dead."

Teams had been working to reach Ayoub after he fell into

FASTFACT

While the operations were still ongoing, rescuers said they had been struggling to reach him because he was 'trapped beneath a thick layer of soil.'

an 80-meter-deep well near his home in the desert municipality of Brezina in El Bayadh province, some 550 km south of Algiers.

Civil protection said the well was dry and dug using traditional methods, and was only 40 cm in diameter, which made efforts to rescue the boy difficult.

While the operations were still ongoing, rescuers said they had been struggling to reach him because he was "trapped beneath a thick layer of soil."

Images released by authorities and local media showed heavy machinery digging a large pit alongside the well in an attempt to reach the boy.

NATIONAL UNITY

Palestinian football returns after nearly 3-year pause

Israel has killed 1,014 local athletes since Gaza war, according to the football association's tally

AFP Al-Ram

Palestinian sports commentator Khalil Jadallah has spent the past three years mourning the athletes killed in the Gaza war. As Palestinian football officially resumed this week, his return to the stadium proved bittersweet.

Palestinian professional sports were brought to a halt after the Gaza war, in which 1,014 Palestinian athletes were killed, according to the Palestinian Football Association's tally.

On Friday, Jadallah was back at Faisal Al-Husseini Stadium in Al-Ram in the West Bank to call the opening match of the first tournament organized by the association in three years.

Though long awaited, the event was marked by contradicting emotions for Jadallah: "a feeling of joy at returning after such an absence, but also a feeling of loss."

"We lost players ... fans, administrators and referees," Jadallah said.

The football association named the comeback tournament — which includes over 200 teams from the occupied West Bank, Gaza, and refugee camps in Lebanon — the "1,000 Martyrs Cup."

Throughout the war, Palestinian football authorities have accused Israel of killing football players and damaging Gaza's sporting infrastructure.

Israel has said 12 Palestinian



Throughout the war, Palestinian football authorities have accused Israel of killing football players and damaging Gaza's sporting infrastructure. AFP

football figures that it killed in Gaza, including a FIFA-registered referee, were members of militant groups, an allegation the football association has rejected.

Large numbers of Palestinian security forces were deployed for the event, an unusual sight in the town more accustomed to Israeli military raids.

Before the game, pitting Jabal Al-Mukaber Club against Shabab Al-Khaleel SC, children carried a Palestinian flag wrapped to



Sport in general is the culture of the people. Palestinians have the right to practice sport normally and in all its forms.

resemble a dead body, before unfurling it across the center circle as a band played the Palestinian national anthem.

The sport authority also unveiled a memorial bearing

the names of the killed Palestinian athletes outside the stadium, which stands in Al-Ram, not far from the West Bank separation barrier.

Samir Issa, a prominent former player and veteran manager who had coached both teams, watched from the stands as the game kicked off.

"Football has become more important than politics today," he said. "The proof of that is the following the World Cup has had."

"Sport in general is the culture of the people," he added, saying that Palestinians had "the right to practice sport normally and in all its forms, not just football."

At the 10-minute, 14-second mark, the referee ordered the game to stop for a minute of silence for the dead before the crowd grew loud again.

"Football returns to Palestine," read electronic screens around the stadium.

Thousands of mainly young

people attended the game, with families, women and children seated in a separate section.

Maysan Suleiman, a 35-year-old from Al-Ram, said she came to commemorate "the martyrs."

"I don't support either team," she said. "I came to support the idea (of the tournament) itself. After all, they're all sons of Palestine."

The tournament opened simultaneously in Gaza, where Israeli strikes have left much of the territory in ruins and some football fields have been turned into makeshift camps for those displaced by the war.

The opening match there was held in Deir Al-Balah between Khadamat Rafah and Shabab Rafah as fans sat on plastic chairs around the small field lined with palm trees.

"Football represented life for us before the war, and after the war the lives of players stopped altogether," said Khalil Matar, a Khadamat Rafah player.

Matar said holding the cup simultaneously in the West Bank, Gaza and refugee camps in Lebanon reflected "national unity" for Palestinians.

But the West Bank teams are set to face major logistical hurdles as they travel between cities and Israeli military checkpoints in the occupied territory.

"Still, we're determined to continue sporting activities and developing our young people," said Abdullah Abu Ghassan of the Shabab Jaba team competing in the tournament.

STUCK IN A CONFLICT ZONE

Gaza woman dies of cancer after UK visa request rejected

Arab News London

A Palestinian woman who died of cancer in Gaza last month had been seeking to travel to the UK with her husband and children after a Home Office visa application was rejected, according to her family.

Anwar, a Gaza refugee living in Glasgow, said his sister-in-law Maryam could still be alive if British authorities had allowed her and her family to travel to the UK when they first applied, The Guardian reported.

Anwar fled Gaza in 2020 and was granted refugee status in Britain the following year. After the outbreak of the war in Gaza in October 2023, he applied in October 2025 to bring his brother Hassan, Maryam and their two young children to the UK.

The application was complicated by the requirement for applicants to provide biometric information at a visa application center. There is no such center in Gaza, while Palestinians face severe difficulties

leaving the territory to access facilities elsewhere.

In April, the family asked the Home Office to waive the biometric requirement and allow their applications to undergo "predetermination" and "biometric excusal." The request was rejected, prompting the family to launch a legal challenge.

The Home Office agreed to reconsider the decision but rejected the request again in July. By then, Maryam's condition had deteriorated significantly.

Shortly after giving birth to her son Ismail, now seven months old, she was diagnosed with renal cell carcinoma that had spread to her lungs. Doctors in Gaza told the family that the territory lacked the facilities needed to treat her.

The family submitted medical evidence, including cancer test results and referral reports, as well as information about their living conditions, including sleeping in tents and shortages of food, medicine and clean water.

The Home Office accepted the



The healthcare system in Gaza has collapsed. Reuters/File

FASTFACT

Shortly after giving birth to her son, Maryam was diagnosed with renal cell carcinoma that had spread to her lungs.

evidence that Maryam had cancer and acknowledged the difficulties facing the family.

In a letter dated July 31, officials said: "Given the current situation in Gaza, reliable health care may

not be accessible."

They also accepted that Maryam faced a significant risk of harm because she was in a conflict zone and unable to travel to a visa application center.

However, officials concluded that, despite the circumstances being "somewhat compelling," it was in the children's best interests to remain with their parents in Gaza and delay travel to the UK.

They said the family's circumstances did not meet the threshold

for "compelling circumstances" required to waive the biometric requirement. They also said pre-entry checks remained necessary because the family came from "a territory where terrorists operate."

The family's lawyers argued that it was "difficult to understand what circumstances would ever qualify as compelling if the present circumstances do not."

Maryam died from cancer on Aug. 28.

Gordon McKee, the Labour MP for Glasgow South, had raised the case with ministers in June, warning about Maryam's deteriorating health and the collapse of reliable health care in Gaza.

In a letter to Mike Tapp, then a Home Office minister, McKee described the case as involving "exceptional humanitarian circumstances" and asked him to personally review it.

Anwar said Maryam's case raised wider questions about how Britain handles family reunification applications from Palestinians

trapped in Gaza.

"I believe that if the Home Office had agreed to bring Maryam and her family from Gaza to the UK when we first applied last October, Maryam would still be alive today," he said.

"Maryam is now gone, but her family remains in Gaza. We are now urgently asking the UK government to intervene to protect Maryam's surviving family members and to find a way to bring them to safety and reunite them with their family in the UK."

Speaking from Gaza, Maryam's husband Hassan described the loss of his wife while remaining in the territory with their children.

"I am struggling to come to terms with losing my wife while I remain trapped in Gaza with our children, including our seven-month-old baby," he said.

He said the family had spent Maryam's illness trying to overcome the biometric requirement and progress their applications.

FESTIVE MONTHS

Filipinos begin world's longest Christmas season

Vow to celebrate, uphold tradition, despite high inflation, energy crisis

Elle Aben Manila

As the Philippines started the world's longest Christmas season in September, shops and public spaces compete to put on the most festive look. But this year, Santa figures and baubles face a more pressing rival: rising prices that are squeezing household budgets after months of the US-Israeli war on Iran.

Over the past few days, colorful decorations have begun to pop up outside Filipino homes, in streets and on public buildings, as people in one of the largest Catholic-majority countries embark on their four-month-long preparations.

The tradition covers the four months ending in "-ber" until Christmas Day. Filipinos start the Christmas celebration during the "ber" months because the 100-day Christmas countdown normally begins during this time.

Normally, in the first days of September, residents of Metro Manila would be flocking to Dapitan Market in Quezon City — a main destination for holiday ornaments. But this time it is different.

"We're not sure if we'll still have a lot of customers coming in this season," said Joy Oros, one



Filipinos start the Christmas celebration during the 'ber' months because the 100-day Christmas countdown normally begins during this time. Supplied

of the sellers at the market, as he expected sales to be slower.

"In the past, by Sept. 1, we would already have some buyers. Now it's still just one or two customers."

The slowdown comes as the Philippines grapples with surging fuel, electricity and commodity prices. Highly dependent on imported fuel, the Southeast Asian nation has been immediately affected by disruptions to supplies from Gulf countries and shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. In March, days after the start of US-Israeli attacks on Iran and Tehran's retaliatory strikes on American bases in the region,

the Philippine government declared a national energy emergency.

As fuel prices directly affect the costs of transportation, agriculture, manufacturing and distribution, the impact has rippled through the economy, making everyday consumer goods more expensive.

Most of the sellers at Dapitan Market have increased their prices.

"We raised them a little because the suppliers also increased their prices, by at least 10 percent," Jen Valenzuela, another seller, told Arab News, expecting that her sales would be lower.

"People are much more conscious about prices ... People's priority now is their basic needs, rather than decorations. People are already struggling to afford basic necessities."

But celebrating and rejoicing Christmas is something that every Filipino household looks forward to and will never forgo the tradition.

"We are known for having the longest Christmas in the world. We really celebrate Christmas," said Marjorie Jalosjos, one of the visitors to the market.

"Whatever is happening, you have to keep it in your heart that you have to spend Christmas and celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ the Filipino way. And we have to teach our children also to celebrate Christmas."

As the rising cost of living has already affected her family, she is looking for ways to cut back on other expenses to make sure Christmas is still a merry one, as it should be.

"You have to make adjustments. For example, when it comes to extracurricular activities — or if you eat out or go on outings — you have to cut back a little so you can set aside some budget for Christmas decorations," she said.

"The decorations add cheer and happiness to our eyes, and our neighbors and family. We want them to be happy."

CHAOS

Indonesia's main airport suspends operations after volcanic eruption

AFP Jakarta

Indonesia halted operations at its main international airport outside Jakarta on Sunday after ash spewed from the Anak Krakatau volcano more than 150 kilometers away, impacting thousands of passengers.

Mount Anak Krakatau erupted on Saturday, producing a fountain of lava and booming sounds that could be heard up to a few hundred kilometers away, the geology agency said in a statement.

Two new eruptions were recorded on Sunday, the volcano agency warned.

Ash from the volcano was detected in the airspace surrounding Soekarno-Hatta International Airport, prompting authorities to initially suspend operations from 1:30 a.m. Sunday (Saturday 18:30 GMT) to 5:30 a.m.

The suspension was extended three times, with the latest



Stranded passengers wait at check-in area as Soekarno-Hatta International Airport closed its operations due to the eruption of the Mount Anak Krakatau volcano, in Tangerang, near Jakarta, Indonesia, on Sunday. AFP

ending at 5:30 p.m. Sunday "due to increased eruptive activity," the airport said in a social media post.

Operations have been suspended at six airports, including the Hussein Sastranegara Airport in Bandung and Radin Inten II Airport near Bandar Lampung on Sumatra, the country's Transportation Minister Dudy Purwagandhi said.

Several airports in cities, including Semarang and Surabaya, have been prepared as "alternatives for landing" Dudy added.

The disruption left some passengers scrambling to find alternative flights.

Henny Yensan, 44, who had hoped to go back to her hometown with her mother, said "everybody was disappointed."

"No one flew into a rage, because after all, this is due to natural disaster," the businesswoman, who had to reschedule her flight to Tuesday, said.

Samuel Guiberteau, a Danone executive on a business trip to Lombok since Friday, said "nothing is certain for the moment," as he searched for alternative flights back to the capital.

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Air pollution

Haze emergency grips Malaysian Borneo town

Acrid smoke hung heavily over the Malaysian town of Serian, seeping into homes and cloaking roadside stalls, as residents navigated an air quality emergency fueled by transboundary haze from Indonesia's raging fires. Malaysia declared a state of emergency in Sarawak state's Serian district on Borneo island on Friday, after air pollution readings reached critical levels. Toxic haze has shrouded parts of Indonesia and Malaysia for weeks as Jakarta struggles to contain fires that have scorched large tracts of Borneo and Sumatra, with the plumes drifting into neighboring Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei. **AFP**

Finding survivors

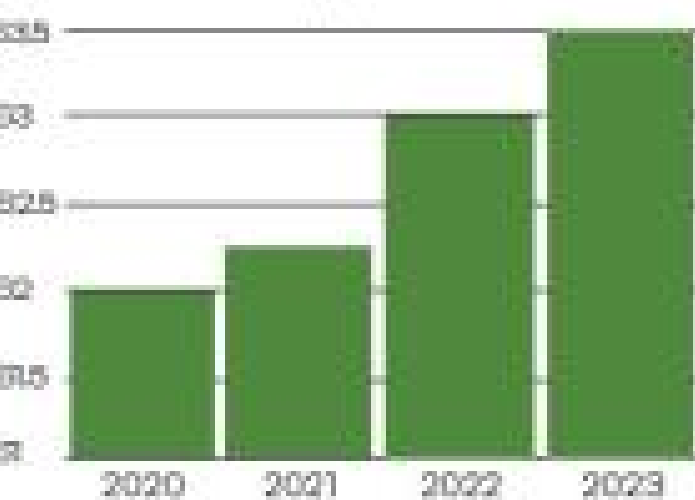
Nepali rescuers buoyed by miracle finds

Nepali rescuers faced challenging conditions on Sunday as search operations after catastrophic floods entered their 12th day, buoyed by the extraordinary rescues of four survivors. The glacial and mountain collapse on the China-Nepal border has killed at least 1,372 people and left more than 5,500 missing across the two countries. Rescuers found two more people alive on Saturday, joining two saved the day before in what have been described as miraculous tales of survival. Three of those have been found in hydropower tunnels where the government initially said it believed more than 100 workers could be alive. **AFP**

The Day's FIGURES

Source: Statista

PARAGUAY: URBANIZATION (%)



What We're Reading

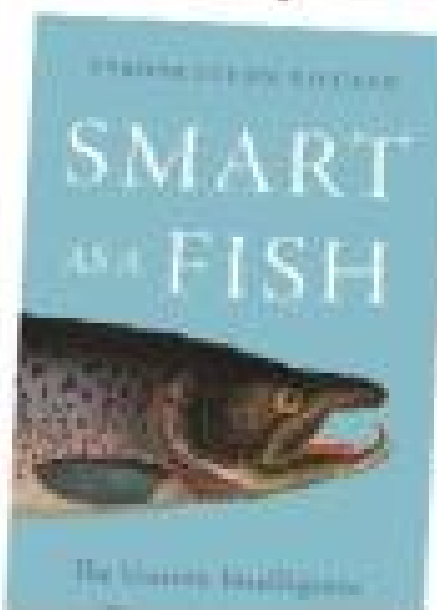
FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

'Smart as a Fish'

TYRONE LUCON-XICCATO

It is easy to think of fish as simple, instinct-driven animals. With their tiny brains and seemingly mindless way of drifting through the water, there appears to be nothing going on inside their heads. "Smart as a Fish" upends

this common misperception, revealing how these creatures possess a rich set of cognitive skills finely tuned to the demands of aquatic life, and how the origins of human intelligence may reach further into the evolutionary past than we realize.



Heavy rain

Mudslide death toll in China rises to 3

The death toll from a mudslide in eastern China rose to three on Sunday after days of torrential rain brought by Typhoon Saudel. Nine others were still missing. The mudslide hit part of a village in Suichuan county in Jiangxi province early Saturday, damaging a dozen houses. Rescuers found two people dead Sunday, state broadcaster CCTV reported. Over 5,300 people in the country were relocated to safer places. Separately, CCTV reported that two people were killed in Hunan province in south-central China following downpours brought by the typhoon. The report did not specify the cause of the deaths. **AP**

Taxpayers' money

Prince Harry's return renews security row

Prince Harry's return to Britain has reignited debate about whether taxpayers should foot the bill to protect him and his family, with experts warning genuine threats likely exist. The Duke of Sussex, who arrived in Britain last week with his wife Meghan and their two young children, had previously ruled out returning to his home country, citing security concerns. The couple left Britain and quit royal duties in 2020 amid a royal family feud and Harry subsequently waged a years-long, ultimately unsuccessful, legal battle to retain UK taxpayer-funded security while living in California. **AFP**

الصُّنْقُ الْفَضْلُ شَيْءٌ أَنْتَ فَاجِلُهُ
لَا شَيْءَ كَالصُّنْقِ لَا فَخْرٌ وَلَا خُسْبٌ
(مسكين الدارمي)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB
Truthfulness is the best venture. There is nothing like it; neither pride nor status.
Miskin Al-Darimi
(Medieval Arab poet from the Tamim tribe)

Opinion

The Nile is not Ethiopia's to control or to price

DR. ABDELLATIF EL-MENAWY

Disputes over rivers are rarely about water alone. They are also about power, geography and the rules that prevent one country's natural advantage from becoming another's permanent vulnerability. Recent Ethiopian statements suggest that the dispute over the Blue Nile is entering this more dangerous phase.

Ethiopian Minister of Water and Energy Habtamu Geleta has said that the "keys" to the Abay — Ethiopia's name for the Blue Nile — are now in Ethiopian hands and that the river moves according to Ethiopian decisions. The exact translation has been debated but the political meaning is unmistakable: Addis Ababa believes the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam has given it the physical ability to regulate the river and it intends to convert that ability into strategic leverage.

The remarks accompanied renewed plans for three more hydroelectric projects: Karadobi, Mandaya and Beko Abo. Their projected cost is about \$10.5

billion, with a combined generating capacity of some 5,700 megawatts — slightly more than the installed capacity of the Renaissance Dam itself.

This ambition has been accompanied by an increasingly assertive narrative. Shiferaw Jarso, a former Ethiopian water minister, has called on his government to seek compensation from Egypt for using Nile water, arguing that Ethiopia contributes about 86 percent of the river's flow. He later claimed that Egypt had historically sought to weaken Ethiopia, deny it access to the Red Sea and support forces that contributed to Eritrea's separation.

Jarso is no longer in government and his remarks should not be presented as a formal Ethiopian policy. Yet their repeated publication by Ethiopia's official news agency is significant. It suggests that the Nile dispute is being incorporated into a broader narrative of strategic encirclement involving the Red Sea, Eritrea and the regional balance of power.

Ethiopia is entitled to generate electricity and develop its economy. It is not entitled



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to decide alone how a shared river will be stored, regulated or released.

Ethiopian officials correctly note that hydroelectric dams do not consume water in the same way as large irrigation schemes. Water can pass through turbines and continue downstream. But reservoirs alter the timing and management of flows. Filling periods, storage decisions, evaporation and drought policies determine how much water reaches downstream states and when.

A coordinated chain of dams could bring shared benefits, including electricity, flood control and more predictable seasonal flows. An uncoordinated chain would create structural dependence. Egypt and Sudan would come to rely on decisions taken by an upstream government with which they have no binding operating agreement.

Egypt's latest response is therefore important because it begins to move beyond warnings. Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty and Water Resources and Irrigation Minister Hani Sewilam last week issued a joint statement combining legal

opposition to unilateral action with a wider development strategy in the Nile Basin.

Cairo should demand full disclosure of the Ethiopian projects and an independent assessment of their cumulative effects. Potential lenders, contractors and insurers must understand the legal and political risks of major infrastructure on an international river when downstream consequences have not been properly assessed.

The immediate contest remains political rather than engineering or financial. No final financiers or construction contracts for the three new dams have been publicly confirmed. But the argument emerging from Addis Ababa is already clear: Ethiopia holds the keys, its highlands are the best place to store the water and Egypt must adapt, perhaps even pay.

That proposition must be rejected. Ethiopia has a right to development but not to ownership of the Nile. The river's future cannot be determined by whoever pours the most concrete upstream. It must be governed by rules accepted by all those whose lives depend upon it.

Ethiopia is entitled to generate electricity. It is not entitled to decide alone how a shared river will be stored, regulated or released



COURTESY: AMAL RASHID/ASHARQ AL-AWSAT



Hezbollah faces a serious challenge from Shiite groups that oppose its conduct and slogans

A little honesty would be useful in Lebanon

EYAD ABU SHAKRA

The issue of the Ali Al-Taher ridge in southern Lebanon has ended up as a distraction and a different phase has begun — one that changes nothing in the substance of the matter.

The Israeli propaganda machine, organized and disseminated by experts in psychological warfare, gave many people, including numerous Lebanese, the impression that we were witnessing something akin to the Normandy landings or the fall of Saigon at the end of the Vietnam War.

Yet these heights, which I suspect the vast majority of Lebanese outside the south had never even heard of, are no different in terrain to many other areas across Lebanon. In the calculations of modern warfare and Israel's strategic objectives alike, they were already militarily indefensible.

The problem for Hezbollah is that it does not handle politics as skillfully as it handles armed resistance. Also, even if it had avoided becoming involved, it would

still have suffered losses after losing its Syrian corridor and a significant portion of its financial resources, while also forfeiting much of the sympathy it once enjoyed among Sunni communities in Lebanon, Syria and other Arab countries.

In my view, Hezbollah's silence regarding the deliberate Israeli exaggeration of what was achieved at the Ali Al-Taher ridge stems from its desire to preserve the morale of its supporters by not having to admit that it lost a battle but not the war.

Nevertheless, the party undoubtedly faces a serious challenge from Shiite groups that oppose its conduct and slogans and that have every right to object after years of marginalization and accusations of disloyalty. What is striking today is that some of these groups have lost all restraint in their political and media retaliation.

Even some Shiite liberals and leftists no longer hesitate to express schadenfreude and, at times, to participate in incitement, despite fully understanding the complexities of the Lebanese arena and the potential consequences, now more than ever, of



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absolute Israeli dominance in Lebanon and across the region.

These people have yet to grasp that the choice is no longer between Iranian clerical extremism fueled by sectarian rhetoric and a democratic, moderate Western alternative offering reasonable models of coexistence. Even if the current conflict were to bring down the regime in Tehran, there is no indication on the horizon that Israeli or Western racism, whether in Europe or the US, would begin to recede.

If this is the situation within parts of Lebanon's Shiite community, then how can we imagine the feelings of others, their sense of triumph and their eagerness to provoke?

Can we truly be optimistic that Lebanon's official institutions will act rationally, free from spite and gloating, and independently of the ongoing and escalating Likud-inspired rhetoric that Washington appears largely unconcerned about despite its future risks?

And will the Lebanese public believe that the displacement of hundreds of thousands

of people and the destruction of dozens of towns and villages in southern and southeastern Lebanon are merely temporary measures whose consequences will simply disappear once Netanyahu feels his settlers are safe?

I realize that these are not comfortable times, neither in the Arab world nor beyond it. I fully understand that the game of nations is now being played without rules or restraints and indeed without a referee.

I believe that the visionaries among international leaders must recognize, before it is too late, that the cost of repairing the damage inflicted over the past two years could be extraordinarily high.

I also hope that the courageous among them — those capable of helping to reduce tensions — will acknowledge that the structures of power and governance, even in long-established Western democracies, have become vulnerable to potentially devastating collapse at the hands of the racist and populist forces that are poised to assume power in several pivotal countries.

Opinion

The world's silent majority for international cooperation

GORDON BROWN

As the pillars of the post-1945 global order — support for human rights, multilateral cooperation, the rule of law, humanitarian aid and environmental stewardship — crumble and as country after country reduces or even terminates funding for international organizations, the next UN secretary-general faces a staggering task. Global peace and prosperity may depend on his or her success.

The US has led this most recent “hollowing out” of the world’s multilateral institutions, announcing in January that it would cease to participate in and fund 31 UN entities, including the UN Human Rights Council,

and 35 non-UN bodies. Under President Donald Trump, the US has withdrawn from the World Health Organization and UNESCO. And America is not acting alone: Argentina has officially left the WHO and Nicaragua’s withdrawal from UNESCO will take effect this December.

As a result, the international rule of law, gradually built up since the 1868 Declaration of St. Petersburg first sought to regulate the conduct of war, is rapidly losing credibility. In today’s 65 state-based conflicts, including eight international wars, the distinction between combatants

and noncombatants has become increasingly blurred.

Some believe that the end of US hegemony and the existing institutional impasse mean that multilateralism is necessarily moribund. But while China’s rise is confirming a shift toward multipolarity, with multiple centers of decision-making, multilateralism remains a viable option. In fact, given the need to deliver global public goods like climate action and public health on which we all depend,

everyone will suffer if countries cannot find better ways of cooperating, whether through regional or other arrangements, to achieve agreed and specific goals.

But a bigger question has been raised by

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney in his landmark Davos speech in January and by Finnish President Alexander Stubb in his recent book “The Triangle of Power.” Can other powers find a basis within the UN Charter to meet agreed-upon global objectives even as America, Russia and China resort to unilateral action? Here, the first step is for countries to demonstrate that they can cooperate on concrete policies absent superpower consent and override an increasingly hostile international environment.

Fortunately, they are already making



Gordon Brown, a former prime minister of the UK, is World Health Organization Ambassador for Global Health Financing and the author, most recently, of “The Future Starts With Us” (Simon & Schuster UK, September 2025). ©Project Syndicate

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progress. Even as America stood aside, 124 countries at the World Health Assembly voted to adopt the WHO Pandemic Agreement (with only 11 countries abstaining), a major achievement for public health. More than 100 small- and medium-sized countries are backing the proposed UN treaty to prevent and punish crimes against humanity. Vanuatu, a small island state, recently led a coalition that grew to 132 countries in securing an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice declaring that inaction on climate change is a breach of international law.

But there have been other successes. An alternative arbitration system for resolving trade disputes has 34 parties so far. The EU and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership are considering the possibility of a more structured relationship, which, if India were to join them, could create the biggest trade bloc ever seen.

Much more can be achieved. Those countries that are neither superpowers nor their satellites control roughly three-quarters of the votes at the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, represent huge majorities at the World Trade Organization and the WHO, and occupy two of the five permanent seats on the UNSC.

Offering even more cause for optimism is a major shift in global public opinion. The proliferation of wars and conflicts has not pushed citizens into mindless jingoism; rather, an increasing majority recognize the value of cross-border collaboration. In a 2025 global survey commissioned by the Rockefeller Foundation, 55 percent of respondents in 34 countries supported international cooperation on global challenges, “even if it means compromising on some national interests.” That includes a

clear majority of people surveyed in the US, demonstrating that their president’s “America First” agenda is now a minority position.

Despite the current US administration’s coercive approach to diplomacy, Americans

can be convinced that acting unilaterally in a multipolar world is short-sighted and that persuasion and cooperation better serve US interests. But for the time being, progress will depend upon a coordinated push by the leadership of like-minded powers. A hitherto silent majority of the world’s population yearns to return to the days of multilateral engagement and international cooperation. And the evidence suggests that they will not remain silent forever. Our leaders must follow them and recognize that this is the only viable path forward.

Everyone will suffer if countries cannot find better ways of cooperating to achieve agreed and specific goals

For the time being, progress will depend upon a coordinated push by the leadership of like-minded powers

Has the EU lost its allure?

KHALED ABOU ZAHR

Does the EU still make people and nations dream of joining? Following Iceland’s vote to reject a return to accession negotiations last week, many are stating this openly. The EU has become a bureaucratic dictatorship that is destroying national identities and sovereignty. Now, for insular countries such as Iceland and the UK, which exited the EU in 2020, that might be true. Part of it is undoubtedly true: to keep the bloc together, Brussels has become more top-down than bottom-up in terms of representation. Members of the European Parliament attest to this. Yet, when it comes to joining the EU, there is also what I call “Why buy the cow when you can get the milk for free?” And this probably applies to many of the countries that are part of the European Economic Area and Schengen but outside the EU.

Countries such as Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, as members of the European Economic Area, obtain most of the practical advantages of the European market without being full EU members, meaning they do not need to accept common integration policies in key areas such as customs and monetary union and do not need to fully participate in

the political institutions. As a consequence, they are not bound on important and influential domestic topics, such as agriculture and fishing rights. Fishing is and will continue to be a key issue for Iceland.

Switzerland has a similar model through bilateral agreements with the EU, rather than joining the European Economic Area. And as all these countries are part of Schengen, they do not feel the need to apply for membership.

Perhaps, with these small, wealthy countries, it is the EU that is keen on offering this very attractive middle ground and Iceland’s referendum result illustrates this logic clearly. What might change this mindset is not the dream that guided most of the countries to join the EU

in the late 1990s and early 2000s — it is the nightmare of the major crises that could happen, with the bloc seen as a potential safeguard in such a situation. Hence, it was in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2009 and the collapse of its banking system that Iceland announced that it intended to join the EU. While most of the negotiation points were cleared, a more euroskeptic sentiment has recently become dominant within the population.

We are being forced to recognize that,



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beyond trade and economics, the dream of Europe has disappeared. The view that the EU would become a single space recognizing every nation and giving opportunities to their citizens has gone from sweet to bitter.

It is undeniable that we tend to take everything for granted and quickly forget that the EU and its predecessor brought peace to nations that had been fighting for centuries. But the effervescence and celebrations of nations every time they cross a milestone that brings them closer to membership have dissipated and we have moved to a transactional vision.

This is very clear with Türkiye, which is one of the main candidates for EU membership. The dynamics in this relationship have shifted over the past 20 years. While President Recep Tayyip Erdogan set EU accession as a major objective in the 2000s, he recently stated that membership of the bloc is “not a priority.” Türkiye remains an EU candidate country but negotiations have stalled, with the commercial relationship between the two governed by the 1995 customs union, which covers most industrial goods and cooperation on migration/refugees, trade, security and mobility. There is no doubt that, when it comes to migration and

defense — especially the war in Ukraine — Türkiye has greater leverage with the EU and this is very clear in their current respective geopolitical standings.

Even in countries in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, where membership is a key pathway linked to prosperity, security and political stability, the excitement is not the same and countries are increasingly questioning whether the long and uncertain path to membership is still worth it.

While surveys do show trust in the EU, we

notice that Europeans mostly trust their local institutions — the ones in which they have a direct say. The EU, while having strong legislative power over its members and being all-powerful, lacks real leadership.

This is especially the case regarding the relationship between France and Germany, the two key driving forces behind European integration, over Ukraine and the tensions in global supply routes. They are now facing off over their respective economic interests in the rearmament of Europe, while geopolitical files seem left unanswered. This bickering, along with a void in leadership and vision, may be what makes others question whether they still want to be a part of the EU.

We are being forced to recognize that, beyond trade and economics, the dream of Europe has disappeared

The EU, while having strong legislative power over its members and being all-powerful, lacks real leadership

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Italy's economy could grow by around 1 percent this year, above the latest estimate.

Giuseppe Giorgetti
Italian economy minister



PERFORMANCE

GCC corporate profits hit record \$74.8bn in Q2

Saudi-listed firms lead the region with earnings up 36.7 percent to \$45.3 billion

Nirmal Narayanan Riyadh

Companies listed across the Gulf Cooperation Council posted a record \$74.8 billion in net profits in the second quarter of 2026, up 31.3 percent year on year, driven by gains in the energy and banking sectors, according to an analysis.

Compared with the previous three months, net profit of listed companies in the GCC region increased 10 percent.

The strong figures underscore the resilience of GCC corporates even as geopolitical tensions and regional disruptions continue to weigh on investor sentiment.

In its report, Kamco stated: "At the country level, the increase in profits mainly reflected double-digit y-o-y growth in profits for Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi and Oman and 4.9 percent growth in profits for companies listed on Dubai Exchange."

It added: "On the other hand, Qatari and Bahraini companies reported decline in quarterly profits by 20 percent and 0.4 percent, respectively."

Industry observer Tony Hallside, CEO of STP Partners, said the record \$74.8 billion profit figure reflected strength beyond the headline number. "Higher oil prices clearly provided a major tailwind, with energy-sector profits rising more than 40 percent, but earnings growth across several other sectors shows that corporate activity remains resilient."

He added: "For investors, that breadth is arguably more important than the record number itself."

Aggregate revenues for GCC-listed companies rose 17 percent year on year to \$381.6 billion in the second quarter and



The figures underscore the resilience of GCC firms even as geopolitical tensions continue to weigh on investor sentiment. Reuters/File

8.1 percent quarter on quarter.

Excluding Saudi Aramco, revenue growth for the rest of the region remained in double digits at 11.4 percent.

KSA leads

Saudi-listed companies accounted for the bulk of the gain in the region, with aggregate net profits rising 36.7 percent to \$45.3 billion from \$33.2 billion a year earlier.

Energy, banking and materials together made up 92 percent of Saudi earnings in the quarter.

Saudi Aramco's net profit increased 42 percent year on year to \$32.4 billion, supported by a 19 percent rise in total revenue as realized crude prices climbed from \$66.7 a barrel in the second quarter of 2025 to \$108.1 a barrel in the second quarter of this year.

Saudi Arabia's banking sector net profits increased 8.3 percent to \$6.6 billion from \$6.1 billion, supported by strong lending growth and resilient operating income. "Saudi Arabia remains the earnings engine of the GCC market," said Hallside.

He noted that it points to "broader corporate momentum and gives investors more evidence that the opportunity

FASTFACTS

- Energy, banking and materials accounted for 92 percent of Saudi corporate earnings.
- Aramco's profit surged 42 percent to \$32.4 billion as higher crude prices boosted revenue.
- Kuwaiti listed companies recorded the strongest percentage increase in Q2.

set in Saudi equities is widening beyond the traditional energy story."

Kuwaiti companies recorded the largest percentage increase, with net profits almost doubling to \$3.1 billion, partly reflecting the absence of large losses from discontinued operations that weighed on Agility in the year-earlier quarter.

Abu Dhabi profits rose 41.8 percent year on year to \$14.7 billion. Dubai-listed firms grew 4.9 percent to \$6.9 billion.

Qatari companies saw profits fall 20 percent to \$2.9 billion, while Bahraini firms declined 0.4 percent to \$572 million. Omani companies rose 24.2 percent to \$1.4 billion.

POLICY

OPEC+ keeps October oil output unchanged

Arab News Riyadh

The seven OPEC+ countries that had previously announced additional voluntary production adjustments in April and November 2023 have agreed to maintain their September 2026 production levels in October.

Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Algeria and Oman made the decision during a virtual meeting on Sept. 6 to review developments in the oil market and its future outlook.

The seven countries reaffirmed their commitment to the Declaration of Cooperation and agreed to continue holding monthly meetings to monitor market developments. The next meeting is scheduled for Oct. 4, 2026.

HIGHLIGHT

Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Algeria and Oman made the decision during a virtual meeting on Sept. 6 to review developments in the oil market.

In August, OPEC+ agreed its production boost for September, completing a phased rollback of a 1.65 million-barrel-per-day supply cut first agreed in 2023.

Despite the agreed production increases, the group made up of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, including Russia, still produces far below its targets because of the war. International oil prices have risen in recent days as traders monitor an escalation of the Iran war, more than six months after it was begun at the end of February. Benchmark Brent crude futures hit a six-week high on Thursday after US strikes and renewed Israeli threats against Tehran revived concerns about disruptions to supplies from the region.

DEBT MARKET

Saudi Arabia opens September 'Sah' sukuk at 4.8% return

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia has opened subscriptions for its September "Sah" savings sukuk, offering a fixed annual return of 4.80 percent, up from 4.70 percent in August's issuance.

The window opened at 10 a.m. Saudi time on Sept. 6 and closes at 3 p.m. on Sept. 8, according to the National Debt Management Center. Sukuk are Shariah-compliant investment instruments that give investors partial ownership of underlying assets, serving as a popular

alternative to conventional bonds.

Unlike conventional bonds, sukuk are structured to comply with Shariah principles and do not rely on conventional interest payments.

The sukuk is denominated in Saudi riyals, carries a one-year maturity and pays a fixed return at maturity. The issuance is part of the NDMC's 2026 calendar and reflects the Kingdom's efforts to boost household savings and advance financial inclusion.

In a post on X, the NDMC said the minimum subscription is SR1,000 (\$266), while the

HIGHLIGHTS

- Subscriptions run from Sept. 6 to Sept. 8, with a minimum investment of SR1,000.
- Individual subscriptions are capped at SR200,000 across the program period.
- The one-year Shariah-compliant sukuk is available to Saudi citizens aged 18 and above.

maximum is capped at SR200,000 per individual across the program period.

The sukuk is available only to Saudi citizens aged 18 or older through approved platforms, including SNB Capital, Aljazira Capital, Alinma Investment, SAB Invest and Al Rajhi Capital.

Issued monthly, "Sah" sukuk returns are set according to prevailing market conditions. The program is issued by the Ministry of Finance and arranged by the NDMC and is designed to encourage personal savings and expand financial inclusion.

Launched under Vision 2030's Financial Sector Development Program, "Sah" aims to raise the Kingdom's national savings rate to 10 percent by 2030, up from about 6 percent currently.

International sukuk

On Sept. 2, the Kingdom raised \$3.25 billion through a two-tranche international sukuk issuance that drew about \$16.5 billion in orders, the NDMC said.

The order book was about five times the size of the offering, as the Kingdom tapped international Islamic debt markets through its

Global Trust Certificate Issuance Program. In May, the NDMC said it had secured approximately 90 percent of the Kingdom's funding needs before geopolitical events in the region.

Separately, Saudi Arabia's non-oil private sector grew at its fastest pace in six months in August, with the Riyadh Bank Purchasing Managers' Index rising to 53.8, driven by stronger business activity and domestic demand. The reading came as the non-oil economy continued to show resilience amid a sharp downturn in oil activity.

TECH

Nokia bets on Saudi talent to build globally exported technology

Company sees locally developed software gaining traction beyond Kingdom

Basmah Al-Basrawi Riyadh

Nokia is turning to the Kingdom as not only a hub but a base for technology with global export potential, as the company expands its presence in Saudi Arabia with the launch of its first research and development center in Riyadh.

The new center will focus on AI-powered network automation and orchestration software, bringing together Nokia's global expertise with Saudi talent as the company looks to develop technology locally for use both within the Kingdom and on an international scale.

Speaking to Arab News, Mikko Lavanti, president of Nokia Middle East and Africa, said the company sees the knowledge and expertise being developed locally as having great potential that can be extended past the Saudi market and into global avenues.

"We believe that the know-how, and knowledge and the experience that's done here will have a global market, so that will fit into the 'Made in Saudi,'" Lavanti said.

Nokia's ambitions in the Kingdom, however, extend beyond serving its domestic customer base, with its focus being on the ambitions of the Kingdom as a great partner in future plans.

"From the very beginning we saw that it is not only about the Kingdom and it's not only about MENA," he said.

"With the knowledge, with all the young engineers, we're working a lot with the universities; we have here an intelligence hub that can benefit Nokia globally," he added.



Nokia's new research and development center in Riyadh will focus on AI-powered network automation and orchestration software. Reuters/File



We want to actually be the preferred partner for the Kingdom in technology.

Mikko Lavanti
President, Nokia
(Middle East and Africa)



The company's focus on developing Saudi talent is crucial to the center's agenda, with Nokia set to build engineering and research roles alongside training programs, bootcamps, and certifications focused on AI and automation for the selected Saudi talent.

Lavanti underscored software as a specific sector for Nokia's focus

in the Kingdom as he pointed to the company's previous work with stc around the 2025 Hajj season as an example.

That experience, he said, showcased to Nokia that software created in the Kingdom could have reach internationally, opening doors of opportunity for Saudi technology to reach export markets.

Lavanti went on to list areas that have potential for continuous work, such as traffic

management, automated operations, revenue-generating applications and quantum-safe networks, as Nokia continues to explore how locally made software can be Saudi blueprints to further innovation.

"If we get it working here, I think that the market globally will be there," Lavanti said.

Nokia's Riyadh R&D center follows an agreement announced earlier this year between Nokia President and

CEO Justin Hotard and the Saudi Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.

The company is also looking forward to the Kingdom's upcoming mega-events, including Expo 2030 Riyadh and the 2034 FIFA World Cup.

"Five years from here, we want to actually be the preferred partner for the Kingdom in technology, in what we call the connecting intelligence," Lavanti said.

Mergers and acquisitions drive Saudi growth

TALAT ZAKI HAFIZ

Amid uncertainty over global growth, interest rates and energy prices, businesses face mounting pressure from trade disruptions, geopolitical conflicts and supply chain vulnerabilities.

These conditions underscore the need for resilient businesses that are financially strong, supported by robust supply chain and capable of navigating challenging markets.

Against this backdrop, mergers and acquisitions have emerged as powerful drivers of growth, competitiveness and economic transformation.

But their success depends on more than agreeing on valuation and commercial terms. Regulatory complexity, cultural integration, governance, due diligence, and the alignment of people and strategy can determine whether a transaction creates lasting value.

Global M&A activity strengthened

significantly in 2025, with announced deal value reaching approximately SR17.3 trillion (\$4.6 trillion), up 49 percent from 2024 and the strongest annual performance since 2021.

Saudi Arabia also recorded substantial activity.

The General Authority for Competition received 427 economic concentration applications valued at approximately SR2 trillion in 2025 and issued a record 269 no-objection decisions, up 33 percent from 2024.

In the industrial sector, Saudi Aramco completed its \$69.1 billion acquisition of a 70 percent stake in SABIC from the Public Investment Fund.

Together, these transactions show how M&A can consolidate industries, achieve economies of scale, integrate supply chains and develop strategic capabilities while supporting economic diversification.

Against this backdrop, the Riyadh Chamber organized the "Legal Aspects



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

of Corporate Mergers and Acquisitions and Investment Opportunities Forum" on Aug. 31, bringing together public- and private-sector representatives.

I had the privilege of moderating the forum's third session, "The Regulatory and Supervisory Framework for Mergers and Acquisitions in the Kingdom."

The session examined the role of regulators in reviewing transactions and promoting competition, the framework governing deals involving listed companies, and the support provided by relevant authorities for investment transactions.

It also explored M&A as a tool for the growth and long-term sustainability of SMEs. An M&A transaction should not be pursued simply to expand or increase market share. Companies should first establish a clear strategic rationale and determine whether the deal can create sustainable value, improve efficiency, foster innovation, strengthen competitiveness

and build resilient supply chains.

Expected synergies should be realistic, measurable and backed by a credible post-transaction integration plan.

Due diligence should extend beyond financial performance and valuation to legal obligations, regulatory approvals, tax exposure, operational risks, contractual commitments, governance, workforce implications, corporate culture, cybersecurity, data protection and intellectual property.

Companies must also assess whether they have the financial and managerial capacity to complete and integrate the transaction without disrupting existing operations.

Clear governance, transparent decision-making, regulatory compliance and continuous monitoring of post-transaction outcomes are essential to ensuring that M&A achieves its strategic objectives while supporting fair competition and long-term market development.

Business News



The agency expects a sharp economic rebound as LNG flows normalize and production begins from the North Field expansion. AP/File

ASSESSMENT

Qatar's 'AA' rating holds despite regional turmoil

UAE's diversified economy, fiscal buffers provide resilience

Arab News Riyadh

Qatar and the UAE retained their high sovereign credit ratings in separate assessments by Fitch Ratings and S&P Global Ratings, highlighting the financial strength of the Gulf economies even as the regional conflict continues to disrupt energy exports and trade.

Fitch affirmed Qatar's long-term issuer default ratings at "AA" and removed the country from Rating Watch Negative, although it maintained a negative outlook because of continuing risks to liquefied natural gas exports and infrastructure.

The rating action reflects reduced risks of further severe damage to Qatar's LNG facilities since March, Fitch said.

In its latest report, Fitch said the "AA" rating reflects Qatar's high gross domestic product per capita,

which is among the highest in the world, and its large sovereign assets. The ratings agency added that higher gas production is expected to further strengthen the country's public finances and support a relatively flexible fiscal position.

The affirmation follows a period of heightened regional tensions that disrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, with Fitch warning that further damage to LNG infrastructure or prolonged disruption to hydrocarbon production and transport could negatively affect the country's rating in the future.

"The rating actions capture the risk from a further prolongation of the period in which Qatar cannot export LNG to the sovereign balance sheet, which has held up well so far," Fitch said.

Fitch expects Qatar's economy to contract 18.8 percent in 2026 because of lower LNG production due to the disruption in the Strait of Hormuz. Non-oil growth

FASTFACTS

● Fitch removes Qatar from Rating Watch Negative but keeps a negative outlook.

● Qatar's economy forecast to contract 18.8 percent in 2026 amid lower LNG production.

● S&P maintains a stable outlook for the UAE amid regional and global risks.

is also expected to weaken, reflecting lower activity in downstream industries and fewer tourist arrivals.

The agency expects a sharp economic rebound as LNG flows normalize and production begins from the North Field expansion.

"A further ramping up of output from the North Field will underpin growth that will stay in double digits in 2028," said Fitch.

Potential rating upgrades could follow a reduction in hydrocarbon dependence, improvements

in governance and a sustained decline in geopolitical risks, provided Qatar maintains strong fiscal and external balance sheets.

UAE rating

Separately, S&P Global Ratings affirmed the UAE's long- and short-term foreign- and local-currency sovereign credit ratings at "AA-/A-1+" with a stable outlook, citing the country's substantial financial and external buffers.

In its latest report, the credit rating agency said that the UAE's substantial fiscal, economic, external and policy flexibility continues to provide an effective buffer against regional and global shocks.

This comes after Moody's affirmed the UAE's "Aa2" long-term sovereign ratings with a stable outlook in June, citing the country's strong financial buffers, low federal debt and diversified economy despite disruptions to trade through the Strait of Hormuz.

INDUSTRY

Egypt signs \$2bn deal to boost tire production

Arab News Jeddah

China's Linglong Group has signed a memorandum of understanding with Egypt's Ministry of Industry to develop an integrated tire manufacturing complex with planned

investments of about \$2 billion, creating more than 5,000 jobs and supplying domestic and international markets.

The project will produce tires for passenger cars, buses and equipment, as well as conveyor belts, according to the Egyptian Cabinet.

The complex will also include supporting industries and production inputs, including carbon black and steel cords.

The initiative comes as Egypt seeks to develop domestic passenger-car tire production and reduce its reliance on imports.

The country imports nearly 8 million tires annually at an

estimated cost of \$1.25 billion.

The undertaking is intended to deepen local manufacturing and establish an integrated value chain for the tire industry,

HIGHLIGHT

The project will produce tires for passenger cars, buses and equipment, as well as conveyor belts.

while supporting technology transfer and the development of local skills.

The Minister of Industry said the complex will include a number of supporting

industries and production inputs, including carbon black and steel cords, contributing to deeper local manufacturing and the development of an integrated value chain.

The MoU was signed by Egypt's Industry Minister Khaled Hashem and Wang Lin, vice chairman of Linglong Group, in the presence of Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly. Hashem said the signing was part of efforts to strengthen industrial and investment cooperation between Egypt and China.

He added that the initiative would support technology and knowledge transfer and build local skills and capabilities.

BizBriefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Growth

Brazil's trade surplus beats expectations

Brazil posted a trade surplus of \$7.4 billion in August, as exports grew faster than imports.

The result topped the \$7.1 billion surplus forecast by analysts in a Reuters poll.

Exports rose 12.2 percent year on year to \$33.2 billion, while imports increased 9.2 percent to \$25.8 billion.

The commodity-exporting powerhouse saw copper ore shipments surge 223.1 percent from a year earlier, helping drive the strong performance.

The result was also supported by double digit growth in exports of crude oil, soybeans, coffee and fuels. **Reuters**

Trade

South Korea's exports surpass full-year record

South Korea's exports have reached \$709.4 billion so far this year, surpassing last year's annual record, the customs office said.

The country's exports hit \$709.3 billion last year, a second consecutive annual record.

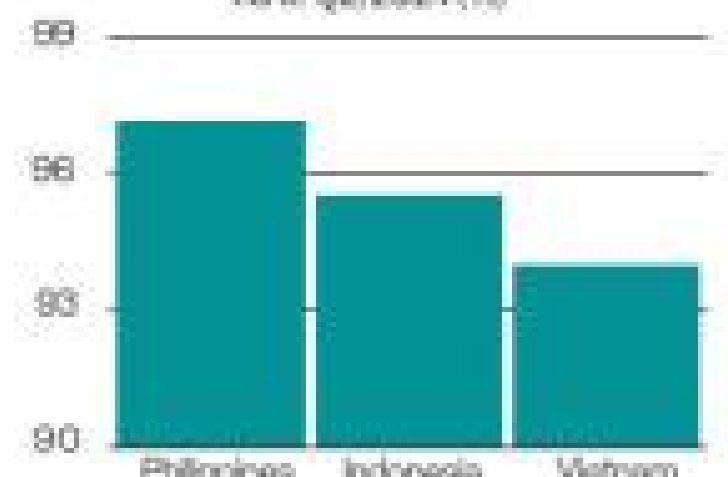
Asia's fourth-largest economy is on track to reach \$1 trillion in annual exports by early December, becoming the fourth country to hit the milestone after the US, China and Germany. From January to August this year, semiconductor exports increased by 169.6 percent to \$281 billion compared to the same period last year. **Reuters**

Chart of THE DAY

In Q2 of 2024, the Philippines had the highest video gaming usage reach, ranking first with a gaming penetration of 97.1 percent.

Source: Statista

GLOBAL GAMING PENETRATION As of Q2, 2024 (%)



What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

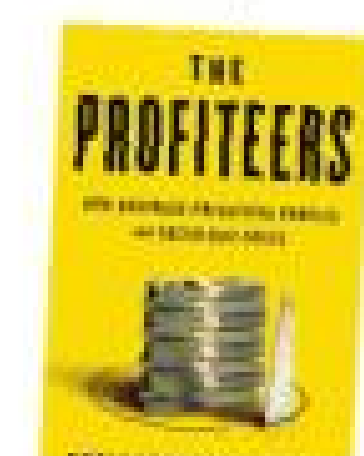
The Profiteers

CHRISTOPHER MARQUIS

In an age when business leaders profess dedication to principles of environmental and social justice, Christopher Marquis' probe into the real costs of doing business reveals the way the corporate

world gaslight to evade responsibilities, says a review published on goodreads.com.

By bringing to light ideas that today are on the fringe, Marquis outlines a new regenerative paradigm for business in society.



Rating

Fitch upgrades Portugal to 'A+' on fiscal gains

Fitch raised Portugal's sovereign rating to "A+" from "A," its second upgrade in a year, citing strengthened public finances and declining government debt.

"Policy prudence, repeated fiscal outperformance and persistent current account surpluses have enhanced economic resilience and shock absorption capacity," it said.

The Finance Ministry said that the upgrade demonstrates international investors' confidence in the Portuguese economy. The country had reported in July that its economy grew 0.8 percent in Q2. **Reuters**

Policy

Britain eases infrastructure approval rules

Britain's Treasury said that it would lower a key rate used to evaluate the long-term benefits of investment in public infrastructure projects as part of plans to boost investment across the country.

The discount rate used for appraising public spending will be cut to 3 percent from 3.5 percent, the Treasury said detailing reforms to its "Green Book."

Discounting is how the Treasury compares costs and benefits that arrive at different points in time — treating £100 today as worth more than the promise of £100 in future. **Reuters**

Almosafer's collaboration with AWS and SAP marks a strategic leap forward in our digital evolution.

Muzzammil Ahussain
CEO of Almosafer Travel and Tourism Co.



Corporate

PRESS RELEASES FROM THE WORLD OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE



Through RISE with SAP on AWS, Almosafer will migrate its mission-critical enterprise systems to a secure, scalable, and high-performance cloud environment.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Major tech move to power Almosafer growth

Saudi travel company Almosafer Travel and Tourism Co. has announced plans to migrate its enterprise resource planning to RISE with SAP on the AWS cloud. Marking a significant milestone in Almosafer's digital journey, this initiative will strengthen Almosafer's technology foundation, enhance operational agility, and position the company for its next phase of growth as Saudi Arabia continues to build one of the world's fastest-growing tourism destinations in line with Saudi Vision 2030.

Through RISE with SAP on AWS, Almosafer will migrate its mission-critical enterprise systems to a secure, scalable, and

high-performance cloud environment. The deployment will enable Almosafer to unify data across its diverse business portfolio and introduce next-generation digital capabilities powered by advanced analytics, automation, and AI. By leveraging RISE with SAP on AWS, Almosafer will benefit from AI-enabled intelligence, greater operational insight, predictive business forecasting, enhanced customer personalization, and smarter resource optimization, ensuring faster, data-driven decision-making across the organization.

The transformation strengthens governance, financial efficiency, procurement management,

business AI, and enterprise visibility, while providing real-time business intelligence that supports proactive planning and sustained growth. This AI-ready digital foundation enhances Almosafer's core operations and enables the company to continue shaping innovative travel solutions and experiences, supporting the Kingdom's rapidly evolving tourism landscape.

Transforming its on-premises ERP landscape to cloud-based Business Suite reflects Almosafer's long-standing collaboration with both AWS and SAP. These relationships have been built over years of shared commitment to advancing digital innovation

across Saudi Arabia's tourism and travel landscape.

"Almosafer's collaboration with AWS and SAP marks a strategic leap forward in our digital evolution as we continue to build a world-class technology foundation that supports our ambitious growth journey. This transformation empowers us with enhanced agility, resilience, and data intelligence, ensuring we are fully equipped to support Saudi Arabia's rapidly expanding travel and tourism ecosystem in line with Vision 2030. It provides a high-performance digital backbone necessary to manage the trajectory toward 150 million annual visitors, ensuring our operations can scale

seamlessly to meet the national ambition," said Muzzammil Ahussain, chief executive, Almosafer Travel and Tourism Co.

"RISE with SAP will provide Almosafer with a unified cloud platform that connects core business processes, data, and AI capabilities across the organization. By moving its ERP landscape to the cloud with AWS, Almosafer is establishing a scalable digital foundation that can support continued innovation and operational resilience as Saudi Arabia's travel and tourism sector expands under Vision 2030," said Ahmed Al-Falhi, senior vice president and managing director, SAP Middle East and Africa — North.

CRITICAL COMMUNICATIONS

From connectivity to continuity: resilience as a national necessity

There is a moment in the evolution of every nation when infrastructure ceases to be a supporting function and becomes a strategic necessity. Saudi Arabia is experiencing such a moment today.

For decades, connectivity was seen as a symbol of progress. Expanding networks, improving coverage, and increasing digital access helped transform how people, businesses, and institutions operate. Yet, as economies have become increasingly interconnected and dependent on technology, a new reality has emerged: Connectivity alone is no longer enough. The true challenge is continuity.

While connectivity enables communication, continuity ensures that communication, coordination, and critical operations remain uninterrupted when they matter most. It is the foundation of resilience in a world where even brief disruptions can have significant operational and economic consequences.

This shift has fundamentally transformed the role of critical communications in Saudi Arabia.

What was once viewed as a specialized operational capability has become a cornerstone of national resilience. From energy networks and transportation systems to health care institutions and government operations, critical communications now form part of the critical infrastructure that supports economic stability, operational continuity, and national development.

As Saudi Arabia continues its Vision 2030 transformation journey, the importance of resilient communications infrastructure has become increasingly clear. The Kingdom's investments in digitization, smart

infrastructure, and advanced technologies are creating new opportunities for growth and innovation. At the same time, greater connectivity brings greater complexity, making continuity and coordinated operations more important than ever.

In response, critical communications are evolving beyond standalone connectivity into integrated operational environments. Solutions such as Business Critical Network by stc and Hadath platform reflect this evolution, helping organizations maintain continuity, strengthen coordination, and operate with greater confidence when it matters most. Communications, data, and operational insights are being brought together to support more informed decision-making and a greater understanding of complex operating environments. The objective is no longer simply to transmit information, but to provide organizations with the clarity and confidence needed to operate effectively under any circumstances, and this is exactly what specialized by stc has been working to enable.



By Khaled bin Ibrahim Al-Dharrab

The writer is chief executive of specialized by stc.

ACADEMIC STUDY

KACST and Imperial College London join forces for quantum brain research

King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology has signed a research partnership with Imperial College London to advance quantum brain research, study quantum mechanical phenomena, and connect quantum science with engineering, neuroscience, and biochemistry. The agreement was signed in the presence of President of KACST Dr. Munir Eldesouki, on the sidelines of the Quantum Forum, organized by the Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution in Saudi Arabia, an affiliate of the World Economic Forum. The event was held in partnership with KACST and King Salman Science Oasis, under the theme "Shaping the Future Quantum Workforce."

The partnership focuses on developing an engineering framework to study quantum properties associated with neuronal cell membranes and the role of fatty acids in neural signaling. It also includes the development of measurement and testing technologies and tools that bring together quantum electronics, semiconductors, biomimetic platforms, and neuroimaging. In addition, the partnership includes a research track examining the relationship between maternal fatty acid

nutrition and fetal brain development and function, particularly in relation to cognitive abilities.

Director General of the Bioengineering Institute at KACST Dr. Mai Alzaydi said the partnership is focused on advancing quantum brain research as part of KACST's efforts to support multidisciplinary research that brings

FASTFACT

The partnership focuses on developing an engineering framework to study quantum properties associated with neuronal cell membranes and the role of fatty acids in neural signaling.

together fundamental science and promising technological applications, enabling Saudi researchers to participate in this scientific field.

Head of Research at the Quantum Brain Laboratory at Imperial College London Professor Mark Johnson said the collaboration represents a significant milestone in quantum brain research by integrating quantum physics, neuroscience, engineering, and biochemistry within a testable research framework.

Corporate Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Electronic Platform

Absher tops Digital Experience Maturity Index

The Digital Government Authority honored the Ministry of Interior's electronic Absher platform after it ranked first in the 2026 Digital Experience Maturity Index, achieving a score of 94.38 percent. The honor was given during LEAP 2026 in Riyadh.

The Ministry of Interior participated for the fifth time in the global technology event, through a pavilion featuring specialized technological systems in security and field safety, traffic safety, security cameras, digital services, institutional services, and rapid response.

The ministry's pavilion offered visitors an integrated experience highlighting its journey of leveraging technology to enhance security and safety and continuously improve services for citizens, residents, and visitors.

Humanitarian Aid

WAMY hosts eye surgery campaign in Cameroon

The World Assembly of Muslim Youth concluded its 12th eye surgery initiative in Maroua, Cameroon, as part of its humanitarian programs providing medical care and helping reduce the causes of visual impairment and blindness.

The medical team conducted 1,169 medical examinations and performed 354 surgeries.

The beneficiaries expressed their gratitude for the medical services. They thanked Saudi Arabia for its ongoing humanitarian and relief efforts in Africa to alleviate the suffering of those in need and improve their living and health conditions.

Digital Solutions

Al-Baha University inks deal with IBM

Al-Baha University signed a framework cooperation agreement with IBM Saudi Arabia on the sidelines of LEAP 2026 in Riyadh to strengthen cooperation in technology, digital solutions, and digital transformation.

Al-Baha University President Dr. Abdullah bin Yahya Al-Hussain, IBM Consulting Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Mohammad Ali, and several officials attended the signing.

The partnership establishes a framework for cooperation in technology and digital fields, developing joint opportunities and projects, and leveraging IBM's expertise and technology solutions to support digital transformation and innovation.

Katie Taylor beat Flora Pili to hang up her gloves as an undisputed world super-lightweight champion.



Sport News

SAUDI FOOTBALL

5 talking points from 5th round of Saudi Pro League season

● Al-Nassr show they don't know when they're beaten ● Al-Hilal keep their perfect run going to go top

John Duerden London

The Saudi Pro League season is getting into its stride after five games, with champions Al-Nassr's 100 percent record over following a 2-1 loss against Al-Ittihad, while Al-Hilal kept their perfect run going to go top.

Here are five things we learned from the latest round of action.

1 One comeback too far for Ange Postecoglou

Al-Nassr have shown this season that they do not know when they are beaten. That is the mark of champions, but it did not happen this time as they lost 2-1 at Al-Ittihad.

After starting the season with four straight wins, it was a strange feeling. Even when Al-Ittihad took a two-goal lead, there was never a sense that the game was over, especially as both were scored in the first quarter. When Angelo pulled one back before the break, the visiting supporters started to get excited.

There were chances in the second half as Al-Nassr played well. Cristiano Ronaldo came close and then, in the final moments, Sadio Mane had the best opportunity of all, running through on goal only for the Senegalese star to see his shot bounce back off Predrag Rajkovic.

So, the comeback never came and now it is time for coach Postecoglou to show that his team can bounce back from defeat and, with Al-Hilal looking so good, there may not be room for many more slips.

2 Al-Ahli win but all is not well

Al-Ahli thrashed Al-Riyadh 5-0 to get back to winning ways but all is not well by the Red Sea.

You do not often hear players and coach come out after such a big win to criticize the fans but the supporters are not happy. Successive defeats at the hands of Al-Kholood and Al-Hilal did not help but the dissatisfaction goes back further.



FAST FACTS

● Al-Ahli thrashed Al-Riyadh 5-0 to get back to winning ways but all is not well by the Red Sea.

● After five games, Al-Hilal have 15 points and have scored 17 goals.

Just days after defeating Al-Ahli, Al-Hilal dispatched Al-Shabab 2-0 to make it five wins out of five. Many eyes were on the recently recruited stars. X/@AlHilal_FC

Preparations for the new season were not helped by the sudden departure of successful head coach Matthias Jaissle to Newcastle. His successor, Marino Pusic, was not seen as being of the same quality or stature.

Something similar can be said for the players too. Former Barcelona midfielder Franck Kessie left to be replaced by the little-known Artem Bondarenko and the Ukrainian was booed by fans in the win, prompting pushback from teammates and coach.

With Al-Hilal spending big in the transfer market and Al-Ahli not doing so, the mood is not what you would expect at a club that successfully defended its Asian title just a few months ago.

3 Al-Hilal look ominous

Just days after defeating

Al-Ahli 3-0, Al-Hilal dispatched Al-Shabab 2-0 to make it five wins out of five. It was not a game that will live too long in the memory but the kind of routine win that all potential champions need to be able to deliver.

Many eyes were on the recently recruited stars from the English Premier League: Gabriel Martinelli, who was making his debut, and Ollie Watkins, playing in only his second game. Neither managed to get on the scoresheet or make a huge difference but when there is such strength in depth, it does not really matter.

After five games, Al-Hilal have 15 points and have scored 17 goals. What is perhaps most ominous for the rest of the league is that this really could have been a much bigger win as the Blues wasted chance after chance. If they do find their

shooting boots then Al-Hilal are going to take some stopping.

4 Al-Ittihad have a star in Ilenikhena

After Al-Ittihad defeated Al-Nassr 2-1, Ange Postecoglou, the coach of the losing team, said that the hosts only played for 15 minutes. That was a bit mean-spirited but, even if true, that is all you need when there is a striker like George Ilenikhena.

The Nigerian, signed from AS Monaco earlier this year, is just 20 and has all the attributes to become a star in the league. Fast, powerful and athletic, he certainly knows where the goal is, as he demonstrated with both the goals he scored early in the game. He is a handful for any defence.

This season, he has already scored five goals in the league and cup. Al-Ittihad do not look to have quite settled under new coach Jens Wissing yet but have already

defeated Al-Qadsiah and now Al-Nassr. This season is already looking better than the last.

5 Al-Qadsiah clinical as title race takes shape

Al-Qadsiah will be very happy to have won 2-0 at Diriyah, the newly promoted team that had adapted well to life in the top flight. It was a tight clash that could have gone either way. In the end, Qadsiah were just a little more clinical in front of goal with Julian Quinones and Mateo Retegui making the difference.

The title race is already taking on some shape. It would not be a surprise if the top five from last season ended up as the top five this time around. Other teams are looking solid, such as Neom, Ettifaq and Al-Kholood, but breaking into the top five is going to be tough.

Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Dream career

Taylor bows out as undisputed champion

Ireland's Katie Taylor ended her career in style, the most decorated female boxer beating France's Flora Pili by unanimous decision to hang up her gloves as an undisputed world super-lightweight champion before an 83,000 Croke Park crowd.

Taylor, now 40 but too much for her 29-year-old opponent, finished her 10-year professional career on a high with a 26-1 record and an array of belts. **Reuters**

FIFA

Infantino will seek reelection

FIFA President Gianni Infantino remains committed to standing for reelection amid renewed opposition to his candidacy after a botched plan to sell a stake in FIFA competitions to private investors, a spokesperson for the global soccer body said on Sunday.

Infantino, who had previously announced that he would seek a fourth term in March next year, has faced calls to resign from UEFA, the AFC and CONCACAF, after his plan to sell a 20 percent stake in the World Cup and other FIFA events was scrapped amid widespread backlash in July. **Reuters**



US Open

Swiatek prefers playing on Grandstand

Arthur Ashe Stadium's noise and spectacle are a big part of the US Open's appeal, but Iga Swiatek said she did not mind swapping the tournament's biggest and most boisterous venue for the more intimate surroundings of the Grandstand.

With a capacity of nearly 24,000, the main showcourt is the beating heart of the year's final Grand Slam and one of tennis's loudest stages, dwarfing the outside venue where Swiatek secured a 7-6(3) 7-6(3) third-round victory over Marie Bouzkova. **Reuters**

Follow Arab News Briefs all through the day @ArabNews

A DAZZLING DRIVE

Antonelli takes Italian GP win from back of grid

AFP Monza

Kimi Antonelli produced a dazzling drive from the back of the grid to see off Mercedes teammate George Russell and win the Italian Grand Prix at Monza on Sunday.

It marked a seventh victory of the season for the 20-year-old Italian, who won his home grand prix for the first time and stretched his lead at the top of

the championship standings to 66 points.

He is the first domestic winner of the Italian GP since Ludovico Scarfiotti in 1966.

Max Verstappen finished third in his Red Bull ahead of the McLarens of Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri. Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton gave the many Ferrari fans something to cheer as he rounded off the top six.

SPEEDREAD

The race started in dramatic fashion when Charles Leclerc slammed his Ferrari off the track and into barriers.

The race started in dramatic fashion when Hamilton's teammate Charles Leclerc slammed his Ferrari off the track and into barriers.

The Monegasque, who is a two-time winner at Monza, lost control on the exit of the parabolica at the end of lap two, going straight into the gravel and flying side on into the tire barriers.

Leclerc stepped out of the car, looking winded but otherwise unhurt.

The race was red-flagged with Russell in the lead, having overtaken pole-sitter

Pierre Gasly of Alpine.

Antonelli, who began at the back of the field in 19th after exceeding the permitted number of power unit changes, had already moved his way up to 12th and once the race restarted continued to pick his way through the field.

On lap 18, he hit the front for the first time but that was the start of a desperate dogfight with Russell.

Watermelon Pictures has acquired 'Everything Is Not OK,' a documentary by director Dev Benegal that follows the life of artist Judith Blum Reddy. Meanwhile, 'Palestine 36' director Annemarie Jacir (pictured) signed on as executive producer.



& Finally

The Six

Murex d'Or

The Murex d'Or returned to Lebanon for another celebration of the region's entertainment industry, bringing together some of the Arab world's most recognisable names.



Nancy Khoury

The Syrian actress received an award celebrating excellence in acting. She wore a Salid Kobaisy gown.



Bassem Feghali

Lebanese entertainer Bassem Feghali, known for his comic performances and impersonations, was honored with an exceptional talent award.



Akhras

Jordanian singer and songwriter Akhras was named the ceremony's New Arab Artist, marking his growing influence on the regional music scene.



Amr Saad

Egyptian actor Amr Saad took home the award for Best Egyptian Arab Actor in Drama for "Efrac."



Marilyne Naaman

Lebanese actress and singer Marilyne Naaman received the Artistic Excellence award, celebrating her contribution to the industry.



Randa Kaady

Lebanese actress Randa Kaady was honoured with the Best Supporting Role award for her work in the show "Bil Haram."

CLOSE UP

Elyanna releases new music

Arab News Dubai

Palestinian Chilean singer Elyanna has returned with "BOSA," a playful new single that blends Arabic and Latin influences while turning traditional ideas about romance and gender roles on their head.

Released over the weekend, the upbeat track is her first new music release in almost three years, following debut album "Woledto." Produced by Moroccan hitmaker RedOne, "BOSA" combines Arabic lyrics and melodies with Latin-inspired pop and a contemporary, stadium-ready sound. The track also draws on the rhythms of mid-2000s dance-pop, giving it a bright, energetic feel. At the heart of the song is a playful reversal of the traditional roles often seen in romantic songs. The accompanying music video continues the theme, presenting Elyanna and a group of women taking control of their surroundings and challenging expectations. "BOSA" arrives at a significant moment in Elyanna's rapidly expanding international

career. This summer, the singer featured alongside Canadian artist Jessie Reyez on "Illuminate," an official song from the FIFA World Cup 2026 soundtrack, before she performed at the opening ceremony in Toronto. The collaboration followed a string of global milestones for Elyanna, including becoming the first artist to perform a full Arabic-language set at Coachella in 2023 and performing in Arabic on "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert." She has also collaborated with Coldplay on the British band's world tour. In August, Elyanna announced that she will feature on the forthcoming album from masked Egyptian musician TulSte, pairing two of Arab pop's rising young acts. The collaboration was confirmed after a studio photograph surfaced showing Elyanna alongside TulSte and his longtime collaborator, Egyptian producer Moataz Maady. Elyanna is set to appear on the record, titled "Sadeeq El-Bernameg." The singer has also fronted fashion campaigns for US brand Coach and Swedish high street retailer H&M.



Elyanna released a new song, three years after her debut album. File/ Getty Images



Liam Gallagher, right, and Noel Gallagher. AFP

REUNION

Oasis documentary rocks Venice Film Festival

AP Venice

The Gallagher brothers brought some rock star energy to a sleepy, and sweaty, Venice Film Festival Saturday, where the documentary about their reunion tour made its world premiere. And like true rock stars, after giving a few waves for photographers on the Lido docks, they skipped the whole "news conference" bit. "Oasis: Don't Look Back in Anger," is part concert film and part exploration of the contentious relationship between Noel and Liam Gallagher, whose long-held feud led to Oasis disbanding in 2009 in spectacularly theatrical fashion after a backstage altercation moments before they were due on stage in Paris. The band was founded in working-class Manchester, England, in 1991, and became one of the most popular British acts of the 1990s. The film looks at the phenomenon of Oasis and the prickly personalities behind the hit songs, most of which were written by the elder Gallagher brother, Noel, from "Wonderwall" to "Live Forever." It includes never-before-seen rehearsals (where everyone tenses as Liam walks in) and what was, then at least, their first joint interview in 25 years. Filmmakers Dylan Southern and Will Lovelace spoke to the brothers separately before the rehearsals had started, and then together while the tour was in full swing, to reflect the true progression of the relationship. "We set out to make a film about the reconciliation of two brothers, infamous for their volatile relationship, but we also wanted to make a film about the power of music and the way Oasis' songs have continued to have a life of their own, as the band lay dormant for 15 years," the filmmakers said in their directors' statement.

REVIEW

A haunted house carries generations of Palestinian trauma

Sumalyya Naseem Jeddah

"Our Cut of Salt" is an extraordinary debut partly because it understands that the haunted-house story has always been most effective when it is, at heart, a story about people and the fears they carry with them. Under Palestinian American writer Deena Helm's pen, a haunted house in Haifa that once was home to a Palestinian family is not merely the site of

a ghost story; it is itself a record of displacement, violence and belonging, as well as an indictment of military occupation. Forthcoming from US publisher Tor's horror imprint Tor Nightfire on Sept. 22, the gothic horror novel follows three generations of Palestinian women and the history embedded in their ancestral home, Dar Sayadi. After Nuhad's death, her granddaughter Marina in Chicago becomes determined to visit the

house she has inherited that she only knows of through her grandmother's stories. Her mother, Haifa — named for the city her family lost and carrying inherited trauma herself — reluctantly agrees to let her go to Palestine. Nuhad had not returned to the house since the

Nakba of 1948, but she continued to carry it in her heart until death. Rania, her childhood friend, becomes a guide and a bridge connecting Marina to her ancestry. Helm's characters feel remarkably full and vibrant even when they appear only briefly. The debut author's measured prose moves deftly between the poetic

and the clear-eyed. At times, her language is lyrical and atmospheric, giving the house and its haunting an almost dream-like quality; at others, it becomes restrained and precise, allowing scenes to speak without being weighed down by narration. In "Our Cut of Salt," the supernatural elements expose the inadequacy of ordinary language to describe the psychological consequences of forced expulsion and Israeli military occupation.

