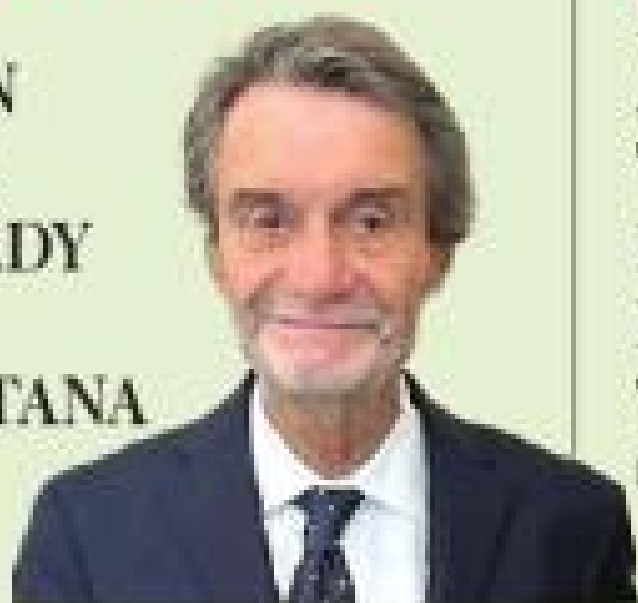


**SAUDI ARABIA**  
KSA, ITALY  
SHARE VISION  
FOR FUTURE,  
SAYS LOMBARDY  
PRESIDENT  
ATTILIO FONTANA  
Page 5



**SPORT**  
MMA STAR  
AL-SELAWI  
TAKES ON OMAR  
EL-DAFRAWY  
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TOMORROW  
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**OPINION**  
BRICS GREAT  
POWERS GATHER  
IN RIYADH  
By Dr. Abdel Aziz Aliuwalshag  
Page 10



**& FINALLY**  
FROM LONDON  
TO MILAN,  
NORA ATTAL  
DOMINATES  
FASHION  
WEEK  
Page 16



THURSDAY, September 19, 2024  
Rabi Al-Awwal 16, 1446  
www.arabnews.com

# ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

SINCE 1975

SHOURA COUNCIL ADDRESS

## Crown prince: No recognition of Israel without Palestinian state

Saudi Arabia strongly condemns 'crimes of Israeli occupation' against Palestinian people

Arab News Riyadh

**Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Wednesday said the Kingdom would not recognize Israel without a Palestinian state during an address to the Shoura Council.**

He also strongly condemned the "crimes of the Israeli occupation" against the Palestinian people.

"The Kingdom will not stop its tireless work toward the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, and we affirm that the Kingdom will not establish diplomatic relations with Israel without that," the crown prince said.

He thanked "countries that recognized the Palestinian state in embodiment of international legitimacy," and urged other countries who had not done so to "take similar steps."

The Kingdom seeks to enhance regional and international security and peace by making efforts to reach political solutions to the crises in Yemen, Sudan, Libya, and Ukraine, the crown prince said.

Turning to the Kingdom's domestic situation, the crown prince said that any achievement made through Saudi Vision 2030's comprehensive umbrella of various paths is an elevation for the nation, a benefit for the citizen, and immunity from fluctuations and changes for future generations.



Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman thanked countries that recognized the Palestinian state and urged other countries who had not done so to 'take similar steps.' SPA

"We are proceeding with optimism and confidence in continuing the journey to achieve our targets, according to a comprehensive and integrated approach based on careful

review and prioritization," the crown prince said.

He added that while the Kingdom moves forward "on the paths of modernization and diversity," the country is keen

to protect its identity and values "which are an extension of the journey of our grandfathers and fathers."

Related reports Pages 6 & 7

WALKIE-TALKIES

## 14 killed, 450 hurt in 2nd wave of blasts in Lebanon

Najla Houssari Beirut

At least 14 people were killed and 450 wounded by exploding electronic devices in multiple regions of Lebanon.

The explosions came a day after an apparent Israeli attack targeting pagers used by Hezbollah members killed at least 12 and wounded nearly 3,000.

Reports said walkie-talkies and even solar equipment were targeted a day after hundreds of pagers blew up.

Lebanon's official news agency reported that solar energy systems exploded in homes in several areas of Beirut and southern Lebanon, wounding at least one girl.

Wednesday's blasts caused fires, injuries and a state of hysteria because some of the devices were being carried by security personnel during the funeral ceremonies for the victims of the pager explosions on Tuesday.

Ambulances rushed everywhere, and Hezbollah supporters went out on motorcycles searching for victims after abandoning all their communication devices.

The Lebanese Army Command asked citizens "not to gather in places witnessing security incidents to make way for the arrival of medical teams."

The Axios website reported that "Israel blew up thousands of wireless communication devices used by Hezbollah elements in a second wave."

Spotlight Page 3

## The Brief

### HANDICRAFTS YEAR

The Culture Ministry has declared 2025 as the 'Year of Handicrafts,' recognizing the cultural and artistic significance of this tradition in Saudi society. **P4**

### FILIPINO EXPATS

The Philippines has resumed sending workers to Kuwait, with new protections in place to secure their rights and welfare. **P8**

### CHARGING POINTS

Saudi Arabia's EV ecosystem requires charging stations every 100 km along highways to support its growth. **P11**

### HOUTHİ MONOPOLY ENDS

## Musk's Starlink launches satellite internet in Yemen

People welcome move saying high-speed service will result in social, economic transformation

Saeed Al-Batati Al-Mukalla

Elon Musk said that his Starlink satellite internet provider will begin offering services in Yemen, eliciting enthusiastic reactions in the war-torn country, where the internet penetration rate is very low.

In a post on his social media platform, Musk said on Wednesday that the Starlink internet is now accessible in Yemen, sharing a post from the company that depicted Yemen in

blue on its availability map as the sole Middle Eastern country in which the company will provide its services.

Yemen's internationally recognized government announced earlier this month that the Starlink satellite internet would be officially launched in the country after the government signed a deal with the company, putting an end to the Houthi militia's longstanding monopoly on Yemen's telecommunications sector.

The Houthis, who militarily



### SPEEDREAD

The US Embassy in Yemen congratulated Yemenis on the start of the Starlink service.

took power in Yemen a decade ago, have taken control of state-run landline and mobile providers, which generate billions of Yemeni riyals in revenue each year.

Yemenis, who have long complained about poor internet access, reacted positively to Starlink's announcement.

Akram Saleh, a Yemeni journalist, said that Starlink's services will reach isolated and remote areas in Yemen, forcing Yemeni internet companies

to improve their services and lower their prices. He said that high-speed internet access in Yemen would result in social and economic transformation.

2 Riyals • Vol. XLIX  
No. 288 • 16 pages



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The land and sea destinations of the Saudi Winter program this year will include diverse and unique tourist activities to explore Saudi Arabia.

Ahmed Al-Khateeb  
Saudi tourism minister

Radar

KSA  
today



Dhahran

National Day

On Saudi National Day, bring your kids to the Ithra Library, where they can watch a captivating play and learn about the big and little things that make up the Kingdom. Visit the Ithra app for more details.



Jeddah

Art workshop

Artist Rania will host a color-pouring workshop for children on Sept. 20. Register through @upgrade.sa on Instagram.



Taif

Rural getaway

Nestled high in the Shafa mountains, Mishaal Farm offers a variety of attractions, including a stable with horses and shops selling honey and roses. Spend a day in the cottages, go horseback riding, and feed the animals. Check the Hala Yalla app for more information.



Riyadh

Concert

Singer Faya Younan will be performing at the Vocally Theatre from Sept. 19-21. Visit [riyadh.platinumlist.net](http://riyadh.platinumlist.net) for tickets and other details.

TheRegister

THE PICTURES THAT MARK THE DAY



Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan headed the ministerial committee delegation of the Joint Arab Islamic Extraordinary Summit which on Wednesday discussed developments in the Gaza Strip.

Held in Amman, Jordan, the meeting reviewed efforts to support the recognition of the Palestinian state and the urgent need to implement the two-state solution in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative.

It was attended by Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Safadi, and Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Palestine Mohammed Mustafa, along with other officials.

What's Trending

Today's hot topics explained by Afshan Aziz

BACK TO SCHOOL

Kim-Ye Kids

**G** The Kardashian-West clan is officially back in the schoolyard. Kim Kardashian shared adorable photos of their four children — North, Saint, Chicago and Psalm — as they went to school on Sept. 17.

North, 11, and Chicago, 6, sported classic school uniforms with navy polos and plaid kilts, while Saint, 8, rocked a gray zip-up hoodie over his shirt and shorts. Psalm, 5, was ready for a day of learning in a bright red polo and khaki shorts.

All the kids chose to complete their outfits with white crew socks and sneakers.

Kim summed up the back-to-school vibe with the caption: "School daze are upon us." But it was the children's growth that truly stole the show.

BACK ON TOUR

Zayn Malik

**X** Zayn Malik made a surprise appearance on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon for the second time in just six months, once again stealing the spotlight with a special announcement.

After a period of relative silence from the former One Direction star, Malik returned to hijack Fallon's monologue, this time to reveal his upcoming solo tour.

This is aptly named the "Stairway to the Sky Tour," which will take him across the US and UK this autumn.

Malik made a slick entrance, surprising the audience by emerging from behind the curtains, as Fallon enthusiastically declared: "This is gonna be one of our best shows."

He casually handed Fallon a coffee along

with a note that read: "I am going on my first ever solo tour this Autumn." It marks Malik's first since departing from One Direction.

Fallon, relieved by the positive reception, humorously noted that Malik had affectionately referred to him as "mate."

The dynamic between Malik and Fallon has become increasingly notable, with the singer using the talk show as his platform for major announcements.

During his previous appearance, Malik had similarly taken over the show to announce his comeback single.

Fans expressed their enthusiasm on X. @DivyaC06 posted: "He has been away for sometime, good to see him again." @SunTime2702 posted: "Finally but what do you mean only US and UK what about the rest of the world."

TheRegion

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Jeddah

- Prateek Kuhad, an Indian singer and songwriter, is coming to Dubai. The show will take place on Friday, Sept. 20, at Zabeel Hall 3 in Dubai World Trade Centre. Tickets are available on [dubai.platinumlist.net](http://dubai.platinumlist.net).
- The Petra Music Festival in

Jordan is a rave experience one can attend with friends and family. It will be held at the Culture Village, Little Petra, Albaida, Petra City, on Friday, Sept. 20. For more details visit [calendar.jo](http://calendar.jo).

- Enjoy Italian food and live music by Lebanese singer Johnny Aouad, who will perform twice a week at Gia La Cucina d'Amore,

Monot, Beirut, Lebanon. Held every Thursday and Saturday, from 9 p.m. to midnight until Dec. 21. More details on [lebtivity.com](http://lebtivity.com).

- Egyptian music star Angham will perform at Exhibition World Bahrain on Sept. 20, singing hit songs and taking the audience on a journey of emotions. For tickets and other details, visit [calendar.bh](http://calendar.bh).

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

	Sept. 19	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghreb	Isha
Makkah		4:52	6:08	12:16	3:41	6:23	7:53
Madinah		4:51	6:08	12:17	3:44	6:24	7:54
Riyadh		4:22	5:39	11:48	3:16	5:56	7:26
Abha		4:44	5:58	12:05	3:28	6:12	7:42
Dammam		4:07	5:25	11:35	3:03	5:43	7:13

Today's  
Number

6.5m

Madinah, with 6.5 million palm trees and an annual production of 263,000 tonnes, is central to Saudi Arabia's food security goals and Vision 2030. The Madinah Dates Season, organized by the Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture, features auctions of harvests from more than 29,000 farms, showcasing a range of date varieties.

Who's Who

Dr. Adel Ezzat

**D**r. Adel Ezzat is the CEO of Elaf Group. Since taking up the role, he has guided the organization's operations and strategic initiatives.

His extensive experience has been instrumental in contributing to Saudi Vision 2030's goals for economic diversification, expanding the hospitality sector, and growth in travel and tourism.

Under his leadership, Elaf Group, which operates nine hotels and manages 3,377 rooms, has recorded booking more than 1 million room nights annually.

Before his tenure with Elaf Group, Ezzat held various senior positions across different industries.

He served as the president and chairman of the Saudi Arabian Football Federation, a role in which he demonstrated his leadership and commitment to enhancing the sports sector.

His professional journey includes high-level roles such as CEO of Saudi Paper Group; managing director of Hyundai and Genesis at Mohamed Youssef Naghi Motors Hyundai; and managing director of Toyota at Abdul Latif Jameel Group.

These positions allowed him to showcase his expertise in operations, marketing management and organizational growth.



There is no doubt that Tuesday's attack is a watershed moment in this conflict that has been raging.

**Firas Maksad**  
Senior fellow at the Middle East Institute



# Spotlight

**RESEARCH & STUDIES**  
THE MIDDLE EAST, BETTER EXPLAINED

**ARAB NEWS**

MIDDLE EAST

# Casualties of remote warfare

Pager and walkie-talkie blasts targeting Hezbollah across Lebanon raise questions, stoke regional tensions

Jonathan Gornall London

**At 3:30 p.m. local time on Tuesday, an estimated 3,000 pagers carried by Hezbollah members exploded simultaneously, killing at least 12 people and injuring thousands more across Lebanon and parts of Syria.**

On Wednesday afternoon, further blasts were reported across Lebanon, this time reportedly involving hand-held radios, causing at least three further fatalities.

Israel has not claimed responsibility for the attack, which is thought to be the handiwork of its foreign intelligence agency Mossad.

The opportunity to use pagers as an offensive weapon arose in February when Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah warned members to stop using cell phones, which are easily bugged and traced.

According to a senior Lebanese security source quoted by The Times of Israel, Hezbollah then ordered 5,000 pagers, which were imported into Lebanon earlier this year.

Initial speculation was that Israel had somehow infected the pagers with code designed to cause lithium batteries inside them to overheat and explode. However, it has since emerged that the pagers used AAA batteries.

Besides, the synchronized detonations, apparently triggered by incoming messages, suggest the pagers had all been fitted with a small amount of explosive and a miniature detonator.

On Tuesday, a Lebanese security source told Reuters: "Mossad injected a board inside of the device that has explosive material that receives a code. It's very hard to detect it through any means, even with any device or scanner."

On Wednesday, Gold Apollo, the Taiwanese firm whose brand name was found on the pagers, denied involvement, saying the AR-924 models had been made under license by a Budapest-based company, BAC Consulting KFT.

BAC's website went offline on Wednesday and the profile of its owner was deleted from LinkedIn. It is, however, unlikely that any genuine company would knowingly take part in such an operation. This has provoked some speculation that BAC might have been a front for Israeli intelligence.

A more likely scenario is that the batch of pagers ordered by Hezbollah was intercepted en route to Lebanon by Israeli agents.

"The use of pagers bears the hallmark of Israel weaponizing



Twelve died and thousands were injured, mainly when the pagers exploded, right and inset, raising the prospect of all-out war, bottom. Reuters/AFP/social media



digital technology to achieve political ends," Ibrahim Al-Marashi, associate professor in the Department of History at California State University San Marcos, told Arab News.

Israel has "form" in such warfare. In 2010, "a code known as Stuxnet, snuck into a USB drive, caused Iranian centrifuges to accelerate to the point that they destroyed themselves."

In 1996, Hamas bombmaker Yahya Ayyash was killed when explosives hidden inside his cell phone were triggered remotely by Israeli agents.

"The advantage of the most recent attack in Lebanon is that it allows Israel to strike from a distance while claiming

plausible deniability, avoiding a US rebuke at a time when Washington has pressured Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu not to strike Hezbollah," said Al-Marashi.

But the pager attack, he warned, could lead to a dangerous escalation.

"Hezbollah does have the ability to weaponize the digital in retaliation, raising the possibility that violent non-state actors might even pursue artificial intelligence to retaliate against their adversaries."

The timing of the attack sends the most worrying signal.

The day after Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, its ally Hezbollah began firing missiles



## HOW DID THOUSANDS OF HEZBOLLAH PAGERS EXPLODE?

• Taiwan's Gold Apollo claims AR-924 pagers were made in Hungary by BAC Consulting KFT.

• Initial theory they were hacked to overheat.

• Pagers intercepted and tampered with during transit.

• Explosives hidden inside pagers alongside batteries.

• Remotely triggered by a coded message.



### ARE MOBILE PHONES VULNERABLE TOO?

• Only these specific Gold Apollo AR-924 pagers were targeted.

• No indication other communication devices pose a danger to users.

### WHO STILL USES PAGERS?

• Widely used in the healthcare industry.

• Function with poor cellular coverage and have long battery life.

into northern Israel — a near-daily bombardment that has increased steadily in intensity, forcing the evacuation of thousands of Israelis from the border region.

After a meeting of its Security Cabinet on Monday night, barely 12 hours before the pagers were detonated, Netanyahu's office announced that "the Security Cabinet has updated the objectives of the war to include the following: Returning the residents of the north securely to their homes. Israel will continue to act to implement this objective."

At the same time, reports suggested Netanyahu was on the brink of buckling to the extremist elements in his Cabinet

by sacking his Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, who has criticized him for having no postwar plan for Gaza, and replacing him with Gideon Saar, leader of the New Hope — The United Right party.

On Wednesday, the day after the pager attack, media reports citing anonymous US and Israeli officials suggested it had been planned originally as "an opening blow in an all-out war against Hezbollah."

According to The Times of Israel, a Hezbollah operative "had come to suspect the devices had been tampered with." He was killed before he could alert his superiors, but the decision was taken to detonate the pagers before the plot was uncovered.

The question now is whether

Israel is poised to follow up the pager attack, perhaps as was planned, with an all-out assault against Hezbollah in Lebanon.

"We have been teetering on the brink of a wider war for many months now," Sanam Vakil, director of the Middle East and North Africa program at the London-based Royal United Services Institute, told Arab News.

"Hezbollah and Iran have made it clear they don't want this broader conflict to erupt, but Israel cannot end the war in Gaza without addressing the security crisis on its northern borders with Iran, Lebanon and Syria.

"In order to address this security imbalance, which puts at risk the safety of the broader population but also that of those displaced since the war began, Israel is trying to target and degrade the 'Axis of Resistance' to stave off further threats," she said, referring to the loose network of Iranian proxies throughout the region.

"But this strategy could certainly push the groups and Iran to respond and eventually draw in regional states and above all the US."

Most Israelis, said Daniel Seidemann, an Israeli lawyer and founder of the nongovernmental organization Terrestrial Jerusalem, "will tell you that war with Hezbollah is inevitable, but a large percentage say: 'Not now.'"

"The priorities for many are a ceasefire in Gaza, release of the hostages and dialing down the tension in Lebanon. Hezbollah can wait," he told Arab News.

"Hezbollah, actively backed by Iran, is a much greater threat to Israel than Hamas and the general perception is that there will eventually be a war with Hezbollah, but Israelis know this will be much different than what we have witnessed in the past. It would mean years of war and vast devastation.

"But Netanyahu has a vested interest in the perpetuation of the war, which would be good for Netanyahu but intolerable for Israel."

What happens next, added Seidemann, "is not only an Israeli decision. Will the US provide the munitions and the rest of the world the legitimization to pursue a protracted war in Lebanon?"

"The bottom line is that right now, anything can happen."



## KSrelief delivers 25 ambulances to Ukrainian Health Ministry



Saudi aid agency, KSrelief, has supplied 25 ambulances to the Ukrainian Ministry of Health. The delivery is part of a larger commitment of 125 vehicles aimed at supporting the country's healthcare system. They will be handed over in Poland ready to travel over the border. The ambulances were delivered to the Ukrainian authorities by the director of KSrelief's health and environmental aid department, Dr. Abdullah Al-Muallem. The initiative forms part of Saudi Arabia's ongoing humanitarian and relief efforts. Medical and shelter supplies, along with electrical devices and generators, were also delivered by 21 aircraft.

SPA

### NATIONAL IDENTITY

# 2025 named 'Year of Handicrafts' to showcase Saudi artisan talents

Ministry of Culture aims to elevate traditional crafts and empower artisans through national celebration

Arab News Jeddah

The Ministry of Culture has announced 2025 as the "Year of Handicrafts," recognizing the cultural and artistic significance of this tradition in Saudi society.

The initiative, approved by the Cabinet, will celebrate Saudi artisans' creativity and showcase their talents globally.

Minister of Culture Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan expressed appreciation for the Cabinet's decision and emphasized the importance of

preserving and promoting Saudi cultural heritage.

Prince Badr said: "At the Ministry of Culture, we work to instill pride in the national identity and all the tangible and intangible cultural elements associated with it.

"This is one of the goals of the National Cultural Strategy under the umbrella of Saudi Vision 2030, which places national identity and Saudi culture among its ambitious objectives."

The "Year of Handicrafts" will serve as a platform to honor this essential component of national identity, celebrating its cultural and artistic value.

### HIGHLIGHT

The 'Year of Handicrafts' in 2025 promises to celebrate the artistry and heritage that form the core of Saudi identity, ensuring that this invaluable legacy is preserved and shared globally.

Prince Badr added: "Saudi handicrafts reflect the creativity of Saudi society through weaving, handmade artifacts and artistic innovations passed down through generations.

"Among these are pottery, traditional clothing, ceramic

utensils, leatherwork, copperwork, tailoring, dyeing, blacksmithing, gold and jewelry crafting, and other handmade creations by Saudi artisans."

The Ministry of Culture wants to elevate Saudi handicrafts locally and internationally, empowering artisans and boosting their contribution to the economy.

This will be achieved through events organized with partners to highlight the cultural, historical and economic importance of handicrafts.

Since 2020, the ministry has celebrated an annual "cultural year" to honor key elements of Saudi culture.

### ENVIRONMENTAL GROWTH

## Environment Fund partners with ROSHN to drive sustainable building innovation

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's Environment Fund on Wednesday signed an agreement with the Public Investment Fund-owned developer ROSHN to stimulate investment and boost research into sustainable building practices.

The MoU focuses on exploring

sustainability in building designs, improving standards, and introducing incentives to encourage environmental development practices. It also builds upon the relationship between both parties, working toward the common goal of achieving sustainability.

ROSHN signed another MoU

with the National Center for Vegetation Cover, pledging to work together to increase vegetation cover and combat desertification.

The agreements were signed on the sidelines of the opening of the ROSHN Green Initiative Center in Riyadh. The center will have a tree nursery that will produce

greenery for ROSHN communities and surrounding areas.

The center will also have an educational hub that will be open to the public, offering interactive learning sessions for members of the public and organizations interested in supporting the Kingdom's sustainability programs.

## Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

### Expertise exchange

#### Saudi, US officials discuss nonprofit sector regulation

A delegation from Saudi Arabia's National Center for the Nonprofit Sector recently visited the US Internal Revenue Service in Washington, DC.

The visit featured workshops and discussions on governance, legislation and nonprofit sector regulation, facilitating an exchange of expertise.

The Saudi delegation, led by Yahya Almosteh, vice president of legal affairs at the center, met with IRS Global Operations executive director Mary Hammond and her team.

Key topics included IRS best practices in nonprofit regulation, tax exemption and compliance. **AN Riyadh**

### Weather warning

#### Authorities warn of thunderstorms until Sunday

The General Directorate of Civil Defense has warned of thunderstorms across the Kingdom until Sunday as the country experiences cooler autumn weather.

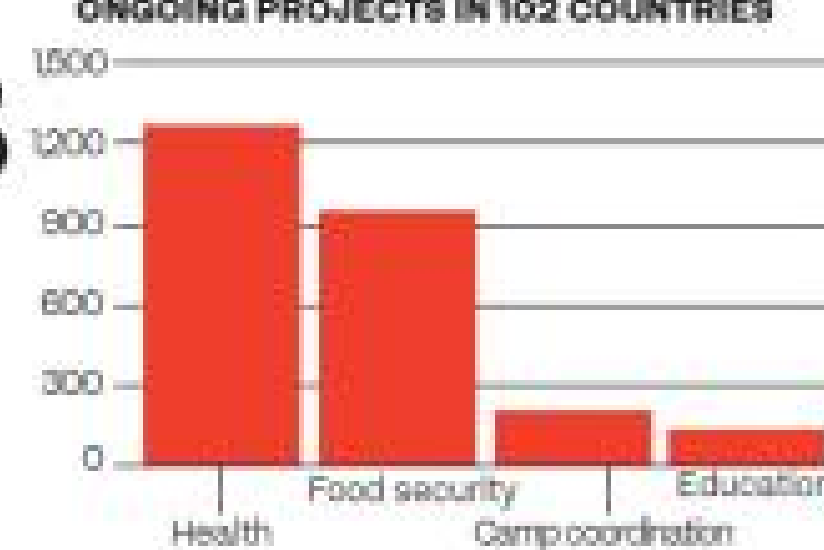
The authorities urged people to avoid areas susceptible to flooding, not swim in open water, and follow instructions issued through social media.

Moderate to heavy rain is expected in the Makkah region, potentially causing downpours, hail, and strong winds.

Authorities also forecast similar conditions for Isaha, Asir, and Jazan, while Najran and Madinah may experience light to moderate rain. **SPA Riyadh**

## The Day's FIGURES

KSRELIEF LARGEST COMPLETED AND ONGOING PROJECTS IN 102 COUNTRIES



Source: ksrelief.org

## DiplomaticQuarter

EMBASSY ACTIVITIES



Mexican envoy Anibal Gomez Toledo said that September is a month of celebration for both nations. **AN photo/Loai El-Kellawi**

Riyadh

### Mexican Embassy celebrates Independence Day in Riyadh

Mexican Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Anibal Gomez Toledo hosted a vibrant celebration at the Diplomatic Quarter in Riyadh to commemorate Mexico's Independence Day.

The ambassador noted that September is a month of celebration for both nations.

He mentioned that National Day on Sept. 16 is meaningful for both Mexico and Saudi Arabia, as the two countries established bilateral relations on Sept. 12, 1952, and Saudi Arabia celebrates its National Day on Sept. 23.

Guests joined the ambassador in waving flags and chanting "Viva Mexico," celebrating the nation's freedom and prosperity.

"Saudis are very generous, welcoming, and warm. We feel this warmth from the Saudi people toward us Mexicans and Mexico.

"I have been here for

almost five years, and I feel an emotional connection when I am with a Saudi. We are not only friends but brothers ... I don't know if we share the same DNA or something like that," he said jokingly.

The ambassador highlighted the growing relationship between the two countries, noting their strengthened political and bilateral dialogues.

Trade and tourism were key areas of focus, with bilateral trade surpassing \$1 billion, up from less than \$300 million five to six years ago. Toledo hopes to double or triple this figure.

He also mentioned the embassy's recent MoU between King Fahd University and Mexico's Instituto Politécnico Nacional, offering scholarships for Mexicans to pursue graduate studies in Saudi Arabia.



## News Saudi Arabia

LOOKING AHEAD

## Kingdom and Italy share vision for future

The two countries can work together, says Lombardy President Attilio Fontana

Lama Alhamawi Riyadh

**Italy and Saudi Arabia share similar visions for the future, according to the president of the Lombardy region.**

Attilio Fontana and his delegation expressed confidence in the potential for stronger cooperation during their visit to Saudi Arabia on Tuesday.

They aimed to explore new opportunities with Saudi officials and engage with Italian companies at the Interior Design and Furniture Exhibition in Riyadh on Tuesday.

"I believe that between Italy and Saudi Arabia, it's possible to work very heavily together. And I think that we can engage," Fontana told Arab News.

"The important thing ... in Italy and in Saudi Arabia, is a view of the future, a vision of the future that is very similar. So, on this object, we can work together."

Highlighting the significance of Italian participation at the exhibition in Riyadh, Fontana said: "You know, I believe that it's very important for our entrepreneurs to know this merchant (Saudi Arabia) and to have the possibility to come here and to export because your country is very similar to our region."

Ambassador of Italy to Saudi Arabia Carlo Baldocci also attended the exhibition.

"Italy is the second (largest) number of exposures in the firm, which means that there is a huge potentiality for stronger collaboration," he said. "It looks very interesting and very promising; a lot of new companies are coming from Italy."

"A big group of companies was also present last year in the past editions and the fact that Italians are increasing their numbers



**I believe that between Italy and Saudi Arabia, it's possible to work very heavily together.**

**Attilio Fontana**  
Lombardy President

means it is very significant to us," the ambassador said.

Baldocci underlined the importance of Fontana's visit to Riyadh for Saudi-Italian cooperation: "It is very important; Lombardy is a model, a significant model also for Italy and Europe."

"We can establish strong collaboration in many fields, bilateral on both sides, so there would be advantages for the Italian side and Saudi side; it's a win-win situation."

Asked about sectors for



Lombardy President Attilio Fontana met with Bandar Alkhorayef, Saudi minister for industry and mineral resources, on Wednesday. X/ItalyinKSA

## HIGHLIGHTS

● **Attilio Fontana and his delegation visited the Interior Design and Furniture Exhibition in Riyadh on Tuesday.**

● **The three-day INDEX exhibition focusing on interior design features more than 78 Italian companies.**

● **Fontana will hold multiple sideline meetings with Saudi officials in culture, fashion, technology and innovation during the visit to the Kingdom.**

growing partnerships between Saudi Arabia and Italy, he said: "I see many areas of technology, from high technology to fashion, design, automotive."

"On the cultural field, there is a highway of collaboration between Lombardy in Italy and Saudi Arabia, and in many other sectors too," he said.

The president of Lombardy and the ambassador of Italy toured the exhibition areas and met Italian company representatives during the exhibition.

Among the more than 78 Italian companies present at the exhibition were Chairs and More, AMG, ArcaHorn, MIDJ, Vigano, Zanetto, and many others.

Discussing the many Italian

companies showcased at the exhibition, Romano Baruzzi, director of the Riyadh office of the Italian Trade Agency, said: "All of the sectors are represented."

Baruzzi said that while many Italian companies were already active in the Saudi market and had established local partnerships, several were still seeking to explore new avenues for growth in their collaborations.

"It's a good opportunity if you consider that this is the fourth edition in terms of growth and the presence of companies; it's a very big number," he said.

Baruzzi said that some of the feedback he had received from Italian companies indicated that they were aware of the continuing expansion of Riyadh.

"I think we can offer very good opportunities for the Italian companies here," he said.

Fontana, along with his delegation, will hold multiple sideline meetings with Saudi officials in culture, fashion, technology and innovation during the visit to the Kingdom.

The three-day INDEX exhibition, focusing on interior design, takes place until Sept. 19 at the Riyadh Front Exhibition Center, welcoming local and international participants to showcase the latest innovations in design.

## GOING GREEN

## Students plant 1,600 trees in Saudi royal reserve

Arab News Jeddah

The King Abdulaziz Royal Reserve Development Authority has completed the second phase of a school-based initiative aimed at raising environmental awareness and encouraging community involvement, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Wednesday.

In the second phase of the initiative, it expanded its reach to 1,300 students across all grades — up from the 500 students involved in the first phase — and included five school complexes where students planted 1,600 native trees and seedlings.

The initiative aligns with the authority's broader goals of increasing vegetative cover, educating young people, and promoting sustainable practices, in line with the 2030 strategic targets for royal reserves and



the Saudi Green Initiative.

It includes interactive projects and volunteer opportunities for students and is designed to inspire young people to become environmental stewards.

The participants' volunteer hours are recorded on the National Volunteer Portal affiliated with the Ministry of

## FASTFACTS

● **The King Abdulaziz Royal Reserve Development Authority's initiative aligns with goals of increasing vegetative cover, educating young people, and promoting sustainable practices.**

● **It includes interactive projects and volunteer opportunities for students and is designed to inspire young people to become environmental stewards.**

Human Resources and Social Development.

By caring for these plants, students will develop a deeper connection with their environment, the SPA reported.

The National Center for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification is also restoring 120 meadows and gardens across Saudi Arabia using a combination of more than 5.8 million seedlings and 28

**In the second phase of the environmental initiative, 1,300 students across all grades planted 1,600 native trees and seedlings. SPA**



tonnes of seeds scattered as part of the center's meadows and gardens development project.

This project aims to plant 12 million trees and shrubs by 2030, covering an area of 8 million hectares. The goal is to enhance environmental sustainability, improve the quality of life, and contribute to the goals of Saudi Vision 2030 and the Saudi Green Initiative.

The project prioritizes meadows and gardens as they play a critical role in storing carbon, mitigating climate change, and reducing the impact of desertification and dust storms.

These meadows and gardens team with diverse perennial and annual plant life. They act as natural sponges, absorbing rainwater during rainy seasons and nourishing the vegetation. This rich habitat also provides sanctuary for various wildlife, making them valuable areas for conservation efforts.



DIPLOMACY

# UN asks Israel to end ‘unlawful’ presence in Palestinian territories within 12 months

Calls on states to ‘take steps toward ceasing the importation of any products originating in the Israeli settlements’

Reuters New York

**The UN General Assembly on Wednesday adopted a Palestinian-drafted resolution that demands Israel end “its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory” within 12 months.**

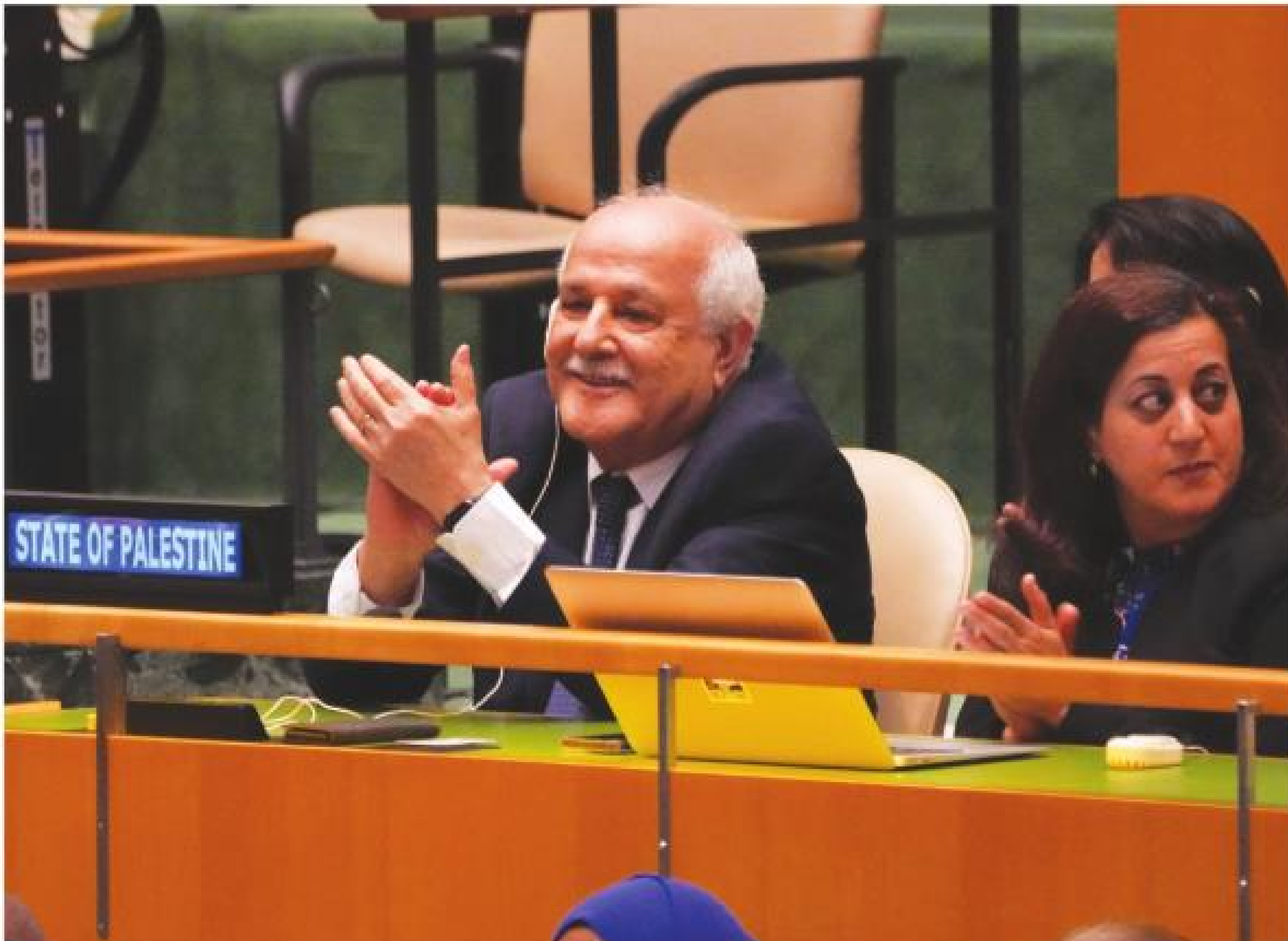
The resolution received 124 votes in favor, while 43 countries abstained and Israel, the US and 12 others voted no.

The action isolates Israel days before world leaders travel to New York for their annual UN gathering. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is due to address the 193-member General Assembly on Sept. 26, the same day as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The resolution welcomes a July advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice that said Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territories and settlements is illegal and should be withdrawn.

The advisory opinion — by the highest United Nations court, also known as the World Court — said this should be done “as rapidly as possible,” although the General Assembly resolution imposes a 12-month deadline.

The General Assembly resolution also calls on states to “take steps toward ceasing the importation of any products originating in the Israeli settlements, as well as the provision or transfer of arms, munitions and related equipment to Israel ... where there are reasonable



Palestinian Ambassador Riyad Mansour applauds the result of the vote during the emergency session at the UN headquarters on Wednesday. AFP

grounds to suspect that they may be used in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.”

The resolution is the first to be formally put forward by the Palestinian Authority since it gained additional rights and privileges this month including a seat among UN members in the assembly hall and the right to

propose draft resolutions.

US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield urged countries to vote no on Wednesday. Washington — an arms supplier to and ally of Israel — has long opposed unilateral measures that undermine the prospect of a two-state solution.

The ICJ advisory opinion is

not binding but carries weight under international law and may weaken support for Israel. A General Assembly resolution also is not binding, but carries political weight. There is no veto power in the assembly.

“Each country has a vote, and the world is watching us,” Palestinian UN Ambassador

Riyad Mansour told the General Assembly on Tuesday. “Please stand on the right side of history. With international law. With freedom. With peace.”

Israel’s UN Ambassador Danny Danon criticized the General Assembly on Tuesday for failing to condemn the Oct. 7 attack on Israel by Palestinian Hamas

militants that sparked Israel’s assault on the Hamas-run Gaza Strip.

He rejected the Palestinian text, saying: “Let’s call this for what it is: this resolution is diplomatic terrorism, using the tools of diplomacy not to build bridges but to destroy them.”

Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem — areas of historic Palestine which the Palestinians want for a state — in the 1967 Middle East war and has since built settlements in the West Bank and steadily expanded them.

The war in the Gaza Strip began on Oct. 7, 2023, when Hamas gunmen stormed into Israeli communities, killing around 1,200 people and abducting about 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

Since then, Israel’s military has leveled swathes of the Palestinian enclave, driving nearly all of its 2.3 million people from their homes, giving rise to deadly hunger and disease and killing more than 41,000 people, according to Palestinian health authorities.

The General Assembly on Oct. 27 last year called for an immediate humanitarian truce in Gaza with 120 votes in favor. Then in December, 153 countries voted to demand — instead of calling for — an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in December.

The Palestinian Authority represents the Palestinian people at the UN, where it is a non-member observer state and the delegation is known as the State of Palestine.

STATEHOOD

## Palestinian president in Madrid to thank Spain for support

AFP Madrid

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is scheduled to meet on Thursday in Madrid with Spain’s Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, in his first visit to the country since it formally recognized a Palestinian state in May.

Abbas is stopping in Madrid at Spain’s invitation before heading to New York for the UN General Assembly, according to an official in his office.

Sanchez will meet with Abbas on Thursday, the Spanish premier’s office said, but the

details of the program for the rest of the Palestinian president’s visit is not yet known.

Abbas is also due to be received by Spain’s King Felipe VI according to the official in his office, but the royal palace, has not confirmed this meeting.

His visit comes after Spain, along with Ireland and Norway, on May 28 formally recognized a Palestinian state comprising the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Israel condemned their decision, saying it bolsters Hamas, the militant group that led the Oct. 7 attack on Israel that

**Abbas’s visit comes after Spain, along with Ireland and Norway, on May 28 formally recognized a Palestinian state comprising the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.**

triggered the war in the Hamas-governed Gaza Strip.

Spain’s leftist government then announced that a first bilateral summit between Spain

and Palestine would be held before the end of the year, and the first Palestinian ambassador to Spain presented his credentials on Monday to Spanish King Felipe VI.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has said the recognition of a Palestinian state is “not against anyone, least of all Israel,” but the move led to a further deterioration in ties between the two countries.

He has been one of the most outspoken critics in Europe of Israel’s

Gaza offensive since the start of the conflict.

Sanchez vowed this month to continue to “pressure” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the global stage over the war in Gaza, especially at the International Criminal Court, which in May requested an arrest warrant for Netanyahu and his defense minister.

Spain, along with other nations, has joined South Africa’s case at the International Court of Justice in which Pretoria has accused Israel of “genocide” in the Gaza Strip. “We are going to strengthen

our ties with the Palestinian state,” Sanchez said, adding that Madrid hoped “to sign several collaboration agreements” with the Palestinian state at the bilateral summit later this year.

Last week, Madrid hosted a gathering of representatives from European and Arab nations to discuss how to advance a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“The international community must take a decisive step toward a just and lasting peace in the Middle East,” Sanchez said at the time.



MIDDLE EAST WAR

### Sanders preparing resolutions to block \$20 billion in US arms sales to Israel

AP Washington

Sen. Bernie Sanders is preparing several resolutions that would stop more than \$20 billion in US arms sales to Israel, a longshot effort but the most substantive pushback yet from Congress over the devastation in Gaza ahead of the first year anniversary of the Israel-Hamas war.

In a letter to Senate colleagues on Wednesday, Sanders said the US cannot be “complicit in this humanitarian disaster.”

The action would force an eventual vote to block the arms sales to Israel, though majority passage is highly unlikely.

“Much of this carnage in Gaza has been carried out with US-provided military equipment,”

Sanders, I-Vermont, wrote.

As the war grinds toward a second year, and with the outcome of President Joe Biden’s efforts to broker a ceasefire deal and hostage release uncertain, the resolutions from Sanders would seek to reign in Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s assault on Gaza.

The war has killed some 41,000 people in Gaza after the surprise

Oct. 7 Hamas-led attack that killed about 1,200 people in Israel, and abducted 250 others, with militants still holding around 100 hostages.

While it’s doubtful the politically split Senate would pass the measures, the move is designed to send a message to the Netanyahu regime that its war effort is eroding the US’ longtime

bipartisan support for Israel. Sanders said he is working with other colleagues on the measures.

Key Senate Democrats have been pushing the Biden administration to end the Israel-Hamas war and lessen the humanitarian crisis, particularly in Gaza, where people’s homes, hospitals, schools and entire Palestinian families are being wiped out.

## News Middle East

PEACE PUSH

# Gaza truce best way to ensure stability: Blinken

Egypt won't accept security changes  
on Gaza border, says foreign minister

AFP, Reuters Cairo

**US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday in Cairo that a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza would be the best way to stop violence from spreading in the Middle East.**

This marks Blinken's 10th trip to the region since the start of the war that was sparked by Hamas's Oct. 7 attack on Israel. His visit aimed to salvage stalled negotiations mediated by Egypt, Qatar and the US to end the conflict.

President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi told Blinken in their meeting that Egypt opposed attempts to "escalate the conflict and expand its scope regionally" and called for all parties to act responsibly, the Egyptian presidency said in a statement.

El-Sisi's office said the pair discussed "ways to intensify joint efforts between Egypt, the US and Qatar to make progress on ceasefire negotiations and the exchange of hostages and detainees."

El-Sisi also called for "decisive intervention to remove obstacles to the entry of huge amounts of aid" to Gaza and "ending Israeli violations in the West Bank," it said.

"We discussed the importance of getting this deal across the finish line, something we'll continue to pursue with our Qatari counterparts," Blinken told journalists at a joint press conference alongside Egyptian Foreign Minister Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty.

"We all know that a ceasefire is the best chance to tackle the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, to address risks to regional stability," he added.

Abdelatty said Cairo will not accept any changes to the security arrangements that were in place on its border with Gaza before war broke out.



**US Secretary of State Antony Blinken listens on his earpiece during a press conference in Cairo on Wednesday. AFP**

Security on the border, and whether Israel will maintain a troop presence along a 14-km buffer zone known as the Philadelphi Corridor, have become a focal point of months-long talks aimed at securing a ceasefire and the release of hostages in Gaza.

Israeli troops entered the buffer zone in May as they pursued an offensive around Rafah.

Egypt, which is a mediator in ceasefire talks, says Israel must

withdraw and that a Palestinian presence needs to be restored at the Rafah crossing between Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and Gaza.

"Egypt reiterates its position; it rejects any military presence along the opposite side of the border crossing and the aforementioned (Philadelphi) corridor," Abdelatty said.

Abdelatty also said that any escalation would create hurdles for the completion of a Gaza ceasefire deal.

"Time and again" when the US and other international mediators believe themselves to be making progress in a ceasefire deal for

Israel's and Hamas's war in Gaza, "we've seen an event that makes the process more difficult, might derail it," Blinken said, speaking in answer to a question about the previous day's explosions in Lebanon.

Blinken will not visit Israel on this trip, the first time he has skipped a stop in Washington's closest regional ally since the war erupted.

State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said that was because Washington aimed to discuss bilateral issues with Egypt on this trip and the Gaza ceasefire proposal that US and mediators have been working on was still not ready to present to Israel.

## احصل على الحقائق



# 54%

من النخبين  
يؤمنون بأن  
التغير المناخي  
ناتج عن  
أنشطة بشرية\*

البيانات المصدرة من منظمة أوكس فورم



AGREEMENT

# Philippines resumes sending workers to Kuwait

Only Filipinos with prior work experience abroad will be deployed to Kuwait

Elle Aben Manila

The Philippines has resumed sending workers to Kuwait, with new protections in place to secure their rights and welfare, the Department of Migrant Workers said, as a group of two dozen Filipino domestic workers readies to depart to the Gulf state this week.

Manila has been working to tackle labor concerns related to overseas Filipino workers in Kuwait since last year, when it suspended the deployment of first-time workers following the murder of domestic worker Jullebee Ranara in January 2023.

Bilateral relations saw another setback when Kuwait suspended the issuance of new visas for Philippine nationals in May 2023.

After a series of consultations, the countries reached an agreement in June 2024 to lift their respective suspensions.

"The resumption of OFW



The Philippines' Department of Migrant Workers conducted a pre-departure briefing for Filipino migrant workers bound for Kuwait in this photo shared on Monday. Supplied

deployment was a result of the agreement between the Philippine government and Kuwait, which provides measures for enhanced OFW protection," the DMW said in a statement.

"The 35 OFWs are Filipino domestic workers with prior

experience working overseas and deployed through Philippine and Kuwait recruitment agencies with good track record. Eleven of them were sent off last Friday, led by Secretary Hans Leo Caddac, while the 24 OFWs are set to depart this week."

## Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

### Sneaky passenger

**UK train canceled after squirrel refuses to get off**

A train in Britain was canceled after a pair of squirrels boarded the service and one refused to get off, Great Western Railway said on Wednesday. "We can confirm that the 0854 Reading to Gatwick was terminated at Redhill after a couple of squirrels boarded the train at Gomshall without tickets, breaching railway bye laws," a spokesperson for the railway said. "We attempted to remove them at Redhill, but one refused to leave and was returned to Reading to bring an end to this nutty tail," they added. **Reuters**

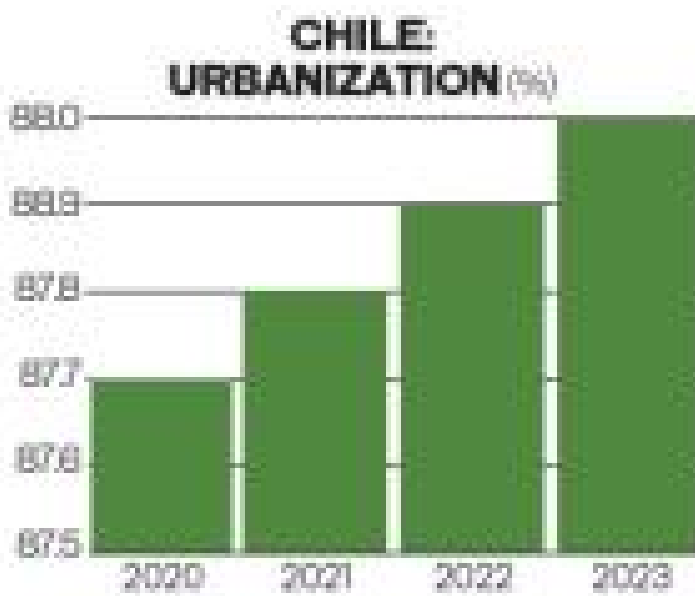
### Situation assessment

**EU chief to meet leaders of flood-hit nations**

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen will meet leaders of several flood-hit nations in the Polish city of Wroclaw today. High winds and unusually heavy rainfall have hit swaths of Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia since last week. At least 22 people have died because of the extreme weather and flooding let loose by Storm Boris in central Europe. She will hold talks with Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer, Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk and Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico. **AFP**

## The Day's FIGURES

Source: Statista



# تقرير واشنطن

## WASHINGTON REPORT

مع رنا أبتير

## الانتخابات الأميركية والعنف السياسي

يوم السبت | 8:00pm KSA

نضع النقاط

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YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

Unquestioned belief, acquiescence and blind following deprive the human being of a thinking mind, as they take away the courage of real questioning.

Dr. Ahmad Al-Barqawi  
(Contemporary Syrian-Palestinian academic)

# Opinion

## Rich countries cannot buy their way out of migration crisis

MOHAMED CHEBARO

Another week and yet another plan to reduce migration to Europe comes to life. But I am not sure any nation can pay their way to stemming the flow of people determined to make it to somewhere safe — whether for legitimate reasons or otherwise — in a bid to change their life and destiny.

Migration is today a source of political instability in many Western countries. It has become the step ladder on which the extreme right and populist politicians are climbing to power or amplifying the failures of the state, while offering no substantial, valid remedies to the problems.

From Donald Trump's plans for mass deportations if he returns to power in the US to Italy trying to block refugees from departing from Africa and building new centers to process would-be immigrants in Albania. Now Sweden, a long-term haven for the war-weary and persecuted, has decided to start paying migrants who are willing to leave the Scandinavian country,

Sweden was for decades seen as something of a humanitarian superpower, but over recent years it has struggled to integrate many of its newcomers. Its anti-immigration right-wing government last week announced its willingness to pay 350,000 Swedish krona (\$34,000) to those willing to voluntarily return to their countries of origin. With this, it has become the latest nation hoping to start a major shift in its migration policy due to what it describes as an inability to welcome and support a large number of arrivals.

In Europe generally, the go-to solution for nations struggling to cope with migrant arrivals seems to be to throw money at the problem. Though that has produced some results at certain times, with the number of new arrivals dropping, this has only lasted until the migrants find new routes or new people smugglers to help them reach their destination.

Italy has this year seen a 64 percent reduction in the number of new arrivals from Africa after focusing on dealing with the problem "upstream," since a naval



Mohamed Chebaro is a British-Lebanese journalist with more than 25 years of experience covering war, terrorism, defense, current affairs and diplomacy. He is also a media consultant and trainer.

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blockade tactic failed to stop boats loaded with refugees crossing the Mediterranean. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's government has pioneered outsourcing deals with authoritarian governments and failed states, which have allegedly engaged in illegal collective deportations and abused refugees seeking to reach Europe.

Being paid the equivalent of \$34,000 could be a handsome return for any refugees in Sweden that have reached a dead end. But they are a very small minority and no amount of money is likely to be enough to lure most away from a life that has given them access to a welfare state, a house, education and healthcare for their loved ones.

The issues of migration, asylum, economic migration and human trafficking have been plaguing the mainly rich Western world and there are no easy solutions. This is a time when nations are suffering from aging populations, reduced birth rates and dwindling resources.

The solution that still eludes most of these nations is their failure to offer a fair and accessible application system that

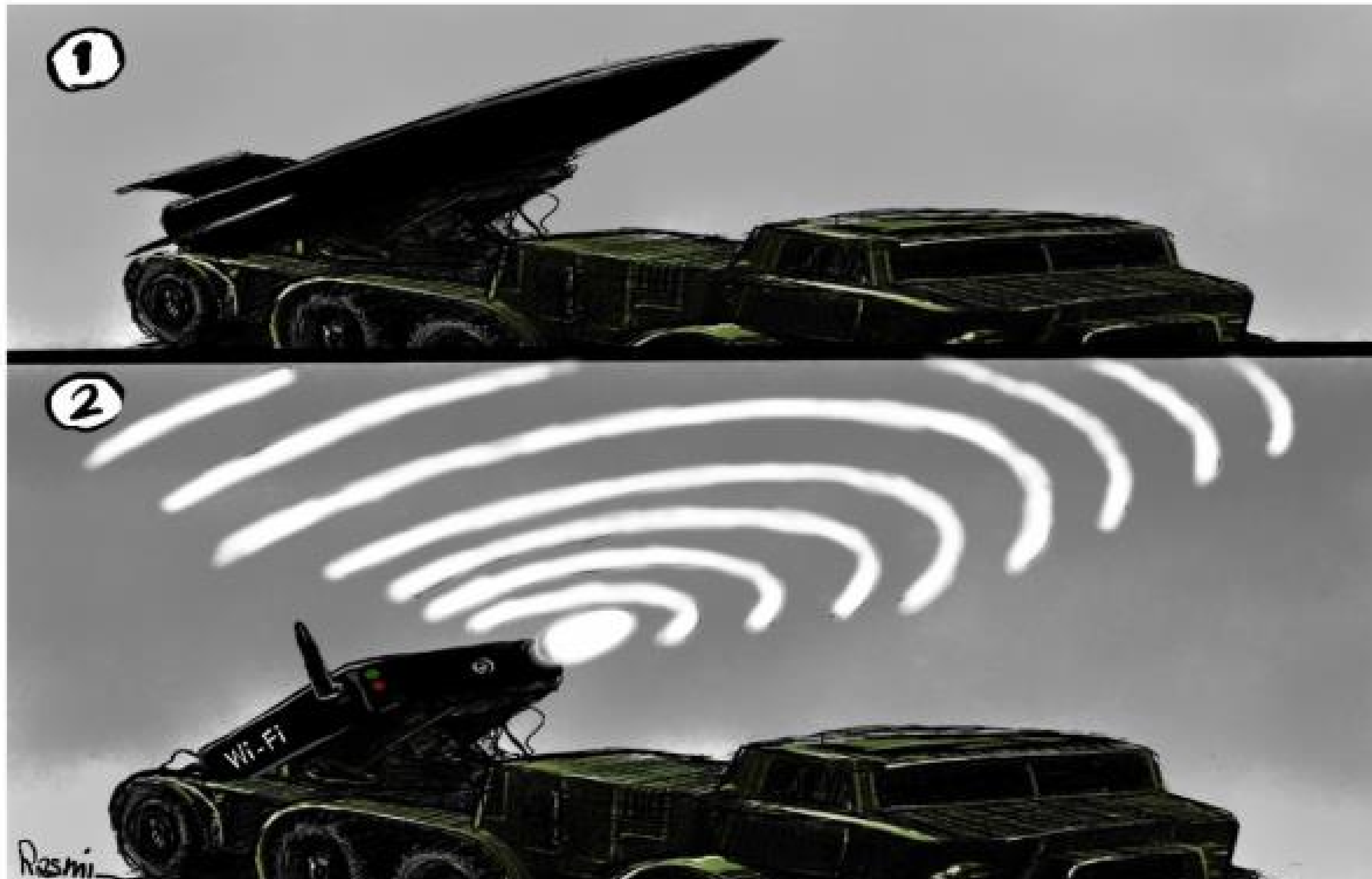
could sift through millions of applicants annually. These same countries also often lack an agile vetting system to monitor and apprehend those who abuse the system or play it to their advantage.

Once new arrivals have been granted the right to remain, countries still fail to provide them with adequate orientation that might turn them into well-integrated, productive citizens who understand the rights and duties governing their new life. This is one reason for the increased communal hostilities and toxic narratives plaguing the immigration debate.

Until such a day, it is unlikely that a refugee or economic migrant will want to take a one-off cash payment and return to a less certain life and face unemployment and insecurity. Until further notice, certain nations will continue to be much-desired destinations for people who are ready to do anything — even risk their lives in small boats, be fleeced of their life savings by human traffickers or, in some extreme cases, face modern slavery — in return for a path to the shores of Europe or the US.

No amount of money is likely to be enough to lure most immigrants away from a life that has given them access to a welfare state

COURTESY: AMAL RASHID/ASHRAF AL-AWLAT



The timing of the report on Afghanistan holds significant weight, but it remains unclear if it will influence voters

## How will Afghanistan feature in the race for the White House?

MARIA MAALOUF

Three years after the chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan, both Democrats and Republicans are revisiting the incident. Neither side is providing a credible or comprehensive explanation as to why Kabul fell into the hands of the Taliban on Aug. 15, 2021. Instead, the lack of an Afghan strategy on the part of both the Biden and Trump administrations is being filled with mutual accusations of "you lost Afghanistan." The issue now is how the Afghan problem will fit into the 2024 presidential election campaign.

Republicans believe that Democrats are vulnerable on the issue of Afghanistan. It was the Biden administration that failed to stop the Taliban's onslaught on Kabul and protect the government of then-President Ashraf Ghani. More problematic was the Daesh suicide bombing attack on Kabul airport that killed 170 Afghans and 13 American military personnel during the evacuation.

Republicans in Congress last week released

a report, which was the culmination of a three-year investigation into the factors and circumstances that led to the US failure in Afghanistan. Among its findings were: "(The Biden administration) had the information and opportunity to take necessary steps to plan for the inevitable collapse of the Afghan government, so we could safely evacuate US personnel, American citizens, green card holders and our brave Afghan allies."

The timing of the report on Afghanistan holds significant weight in the 2024 election race, but it remains unclear if it will influence voters. The report aims to blame President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris for failing to maintain the pro-Washington government in Afghanistan. According to Texas Republican Rep. Michael McCaul, who chaired the investigation as a member of the House Foreign Relations Committee, "at each step of the way, the administration picked optics over security."

The report itself is a thorough attempt to uncover what happened in Afghanistan. It spans more than 350 pages and includes



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testimony from numerous senior military officers at the Pentagon. Seven lengthy public hearings were held and about 20,000 pages of State Department documents and correspondence were examined.

Additionally, the report made several good recommendations, such as emphasizing the need for future noncombatant evacuation operations to succeed and calling on Congress to establish standard operating procedures for such drawdowns. It also urged the State Department and Department of Defense to brief Congress on plans for noncombatant evacuation operations when an embassy has been designated a high-threat post.

However, such a policy option will likely not establish foreign policy consensus or national security reconciliation between Republicans and Democrats. The Biden administration and the Harris campaign have placed the blame on the Trump administration for the deal it signed with the Taliban in February 2020. On the other hand, the Trump campaign argues that

Biden botched the Afghan deal and that his administration could have followed its schedule to ensure a safe American pullout from Afghanistan.

Afghanistan was discussed in last week's presidential debate between Trump and Harris, but without reference to the report. Trump attempted to use the strategic retreat from Afghanistan as an indication of joint Biden-Harris responsibility, emphasizing that the withdrawal left billions of dollars of equipment behind and that Harris played a direct role in the debacle, which embarrassed America on the world stage.

In conclusion, the Trump campaign succeeded in forcing a discussion about Afghanistan during a debate that was watched by 57 million people in the US. Most likely, there will be more debates about Afghanistan in the remaining weeks of the campaign. However, the ultimate arbitration on Afghanistan will come from Afghan Americans living in the US. They can make the best judgment on what transpired in their home country.







There are a lot of building blocks we are working on, and eventually now ramping up the number of sites.

**Ulf Schulte**  
EVQ chief operating officer



# Business



Saudi Arabia aims to convert 30 percent of Riyadh's vehicles to electric by 2030, as part of a broader strategy to cut emissions in the capital by 50 percent and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. SPA

INTERVIEW

## Availability of charging stations crucial for e-mobility growth

Saudi Arabia's EV ecosystem calls for charging every 100 km, says executive

**Nirmal Narayanan,**  
**Manal Al-Barakat** Riyadh

**Saudi Arabia's electric vehicle ecosystem requires charging stations every 100 km along highways to support its growth, said a senior executive.**

Speaking to Arab News at the EV Auto Show in Riyadh, Mohamed Al-Mubarak, general manager of Charging Arabia, emphasized

that the widespread availability of refueling infrastructure is essential to reducing range anxiety, ultimately benefiting the e-mobility sector. This comes as Saudi Arabia aims to convert 30 percent of Riyadh's vehicles to electric by 2030, as part of a broader strategy to cut emissions in the capital by 50 percent and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060.

Al-Mubarak said: "It is important to have it (EV charging stations) on highways, so people can travel

with their cars. As you know, the electric car ranges between 300 to 400 km, now up to 500 km. At least every 100 km, there should be a charging station."

**By 2030, I think there will be thousands of electric cars in Saudi Arabia.**

**Mohamed Al-Mubarak**  
Charging Arabia GM



Charging Arabia, which operates in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Saudi Arabia, focuses on EV charging station operations, AC and DC charger installations, and mobile charging services.

He said the company is concentrating on the Saudi market because "the government is helping people

in the EV charging business." Al-Mubarak added: "Although there are only 1,000 cars in the market, it is not a big number. But it's on the right track, and I think it's going with the vision. By 2030, I think there will be thousands of electric cars in Saudi Arabia."

He revealed that the company has partnered with Saudi-based charging manufacturer Alfanar to enhance the Kingdom's EV infrastructure. "As a charging

station operator, we need to have chargers everywhere — public places, petrol stations, shopping malls, and public parking — so people can charge their cars," said Al-Mubarak.

Currently, Charging Arabia operates two stations in Riyadh and plans to expand with over 100 facilities in the Eastern Province. Al-Mubarak also identified electricity load management as a challenge as the number of EVs grows.

SUPPORT

## Experts call for enhanced incentives to boost EV adoption

**Sulafa Al-Khunaizi** Riyadh

The Saudi government holds the key to developing the necessary infrastructure for electric vehicles, a top official said at the EV Auto Show underway in Riyadh.

Speaking at a panel discussion titled "Charging Ahead: Building the Backbone of Saudi Arabia's EV Revolution," Mansour Al-Makahlas, head of the eMobility division at Solutions Valley, a part of Saudi Electric Co., outlined the essential steps needed to advance the market.

Al-Makahlas stressed the importance of expanding charging infrastructure to encourage participation from chief product officers.

"In order to attract users to come to Saudi (Arabia) or to buy this vehicle, they need to release the incentive. They need to build more charging stations; they



Experts at a panel discuss ways to strengthen Saudi Arabia's EV ecosystem. AN photo

need to support the CPO to get into this market."

He continued: "There must be an incentive from the government, such as the case in Europe and the US. CPOs know that the return on investment is long-term. It's not short-term. So an incentive must be there."

Alhareth Al-Hisan, founder and CEO of iCharge, noted that Saudi Arabia has a strong foundation for EV adoption globally. "It has the grid capacity, it has the political will, and it has the ability for the customer to

spend on the expensive electric vehicle."

Al-Hisan pointed out that planning is a primary concern in the regional EV industry and suggested that Saudi Arabia could benefit from Europe's approach to infrastructure development. "When the infrastructure for electric vehicles started in Europe, it was heavily planned and very detailed where to place them, how to place them," he said.

Wolfgang Ademmer, chief marketing officer at the

sustainable mobility firm Alpitronic, also encouraged Saudi Arabia to follow Europe's lead. Ademmer emphasized the need for a comprehensive plan to support industry participants and ensure their success in the EV sector.

Li Bo, vice president of Huawei Digital Power Strategy and Marketing for the Middle East and Central Asia, and director of Huawei EV Charging Business for the same region, predicted a rise in the vehicle-to-EV charging ratio.

GROWTH

## Saudi EV sector to advance significantly, say top executives

**Arab News** Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's electric vehicle industry is poised for substantial advancements in the coming years, according to officials during a panel discussion at the EV Auto Show.

Held in Riyadh on Sept. 18, the panel titled "The Landscape of Electric Charging in Saudi Arabia" featured Ali Ghnaim, CEO of Gasable, who shared encouraging insights about the local community's embrace of the Kingdom's transition to EVs.

"We find that the willingness to have an electric vehicle in Saudi Arabia at around 60 percent," he noted.

Mohammed Al-Musawa, head of ASX E-Mobility, emphasized the importance of collaboration among companies and dealerships. He stated: "The goal of this market is the dealership and then we complement the dealership

with the charging infrastructure. So, everyone here plays a very vital role in just providing the facility or facilitating the infrastructure to the dealerships itself, to the end users, giving them the assurance that we will be there. We will give you the choices."

**We find that the willingness to have an electric vehicle in Saudi Arabia at around 60 percent.**

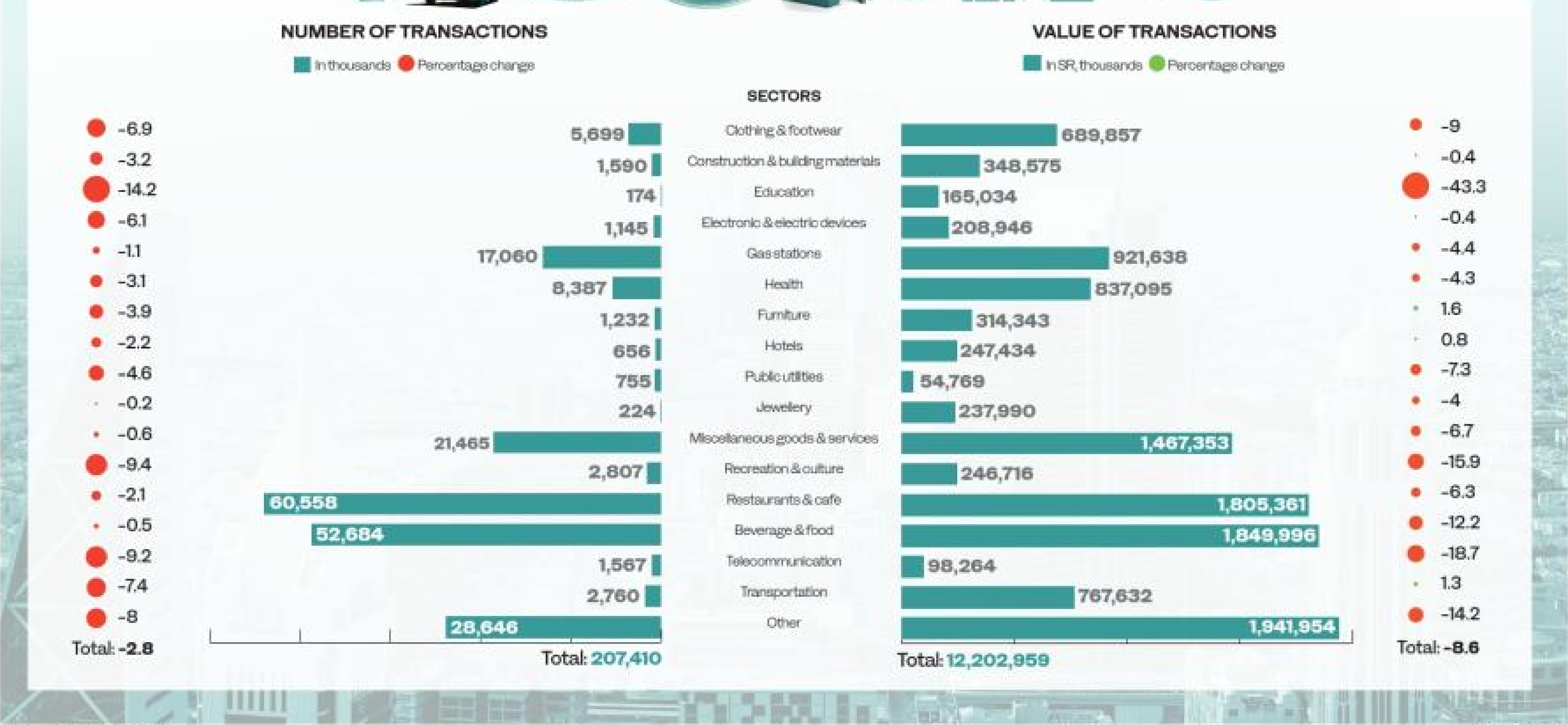
**Ali Ghnaim**  
Gasable CEO

Rohit Ramesh, manager at CITA EV and a panelist, highlighted two of the Kingdom's mega-projects, NEOM and The Red Sea, which are crucial to the EV sector. "All these sites already have these EV charger infrastructures in the development phase itself," he said.



Transaction trends: A weekly snapshot of Saudi Arabia's point-of-sale activity

WEEK FROM SEPT. 8 TO 14, 2024



PAYMENTS BY CARDS

Spending rises in transport, furniture with food leading cashless transaction volumes

Overall value of the POS transactions dipped for the second week in a row; official data

Miguel Hadchity Riyadh

Furniture and transport spending in Saudi Arabia registered the highest increase in weekly point-of-sales transactions from Sept. 8 to 14, according to central bank data.

The weekly bulletin released by SAMA revealed that spending on furniture rose to SR314.3 million (\$83.74 million), marking a 1.6 percent increase for the week, while expenditure on transportation came in at SR767.6 million — up 1.3 percent on the previous seven days.

The food and beverages sector preserved the biggest share of the POS data at SR1.84 billion, followed by restaurants and cafes at SR1.8 billion and miscellaneous goods and services at 1.46 billion.

Spending in the top three largest categories accounted for SR5.1 billion out of this week's total value.

The overall value of the POS transactions dipped for the second week in a row, dropping by 8.6 percent compared to the previous week to reach SR12.2 billion.

The latest figures showed that spending in the education sector continued to lead the dip, recording the highest decrease at 43.3 percent, with total



In terms of card preference, debit cards dominate the overall card payment space, accounting for 85 percent of the overall card payment value in 2023. File

transactions reaching SR165 million.

This week marks one month of constant declines in the education sector, after surging for four consecutive weeks, coinciding with the start of the academic

year on Aug. 18. During the first week of September, spending on telecommunication saw the second-largest decline at 18.7 percent to SR98.2 million.

Spending on culture and recreation recorded the third biggest

HIGHLIGHTS

- Riyadh dominated POS transactions, representing 34.8 percent of the total, with spending in the capital reaching SR4.2 billion.
- Jeddah followed with a 6.8 percent decline to SR1.7 billion, accounting for 13.9 percent of the total, and Dammam came in third at SR620.4 million, down 6.3 percent.
- Abha saw the largest decrease in spending, down by 13.1 percent to SR152.4 million.

dip with a 15.9 percent negative change, reaching SR246.7 million.

Expenditure on construction materials and electronic devices recorded the smallest decline at 0.4 percent each, reaching SR348.5 million and SR208.8 million, respectively.

Geographically, Riyadh dominated POS transactions, representing 34.8 percent of the total, with spending in the capital reaching SR4.2 billion — a 6.7 percent decrease from the previous week.

Jeddah followed with a 6.8 percent decline to SR1.7 billion, accounting for 13.9 percent of the total, and Dammam came in third at SR620.4 million, down 6.3 percent.

Abha saw the largest decrease in spending, down by 13.1 percent to SR152.4 million. Tabuk and Hail also experienced downsticks, with expenditure dipping 13 percent and 11.7 percent to SR230.5 million and SR189.2 million, respectively.

In terms of the number of transactions, Abha recorded the highest decrease at 4.6 percent, reaching 3,195. Alkhobar recorded the smallest decrease at 2 percent, reaching 4,373 transactions.

Cashless payments in Saudi Arabia are expected to surge by 7.6 percent in 2024 to SR550 billion (\$146.8 billion) as compared to SR511.5 billion the previous year, a report said.

The report issued by Global Data, a London-based data analytics and consulting company, projected the Saudi card payments market to grow at an annual rate of 6.4 percent between 2024 and 2028 to reach SR705.2 billion.

Promoting digital payments is crucial for Saudi Arabia, as the Kingdom's Vision 2030 aims to reduce cash transactions and increase the share of electronic payments to 70 percent of all transactions by 2025.

In terms of card preference, debit cards dominate the overall card payment space, accounting for 85 percent of the overall card payment value in 2023.



## Business News



Boosting exports, particularly non-oil goods, is crucial for Saudi Arabia as it continues its economic diversification efforts. File

## MARITIME TRADE

# Saudi Arabia sees 14.6% rise in container traffic in 2023

Volume of outbound cargo amounted to 203.5 million tonnes; GASTAT

Nirmal Narayanan Riyadh

**Saudi Arabia's ports saw a 14.6 percent increase in both inbound and outbound container traffic in 2023 compared to the previous year, official data showed.**

According to the General Authority for Statistics, inbound container traffic at the Kingdom's ports reached 3.4 million twenty-foot equivalent units in 2023, while outbound traffic totaled 2.2 million TEUs.

The report revealed that the quantity of outbound cargo amounted to 203.5 million tonnes in 2023, a strong indication of the Kingdom's rising exports. King Fahd Industrial Port in Yanbu handled the largest volume of outbound cargo, totaling 89.8 million tonnes.

Boosting exports, particularly non-oil goods, is crucial for Saudi Arabia as it continues its economic diversification efforts aimed at reducing its dependency on oil revenues.

The quantity of inbound cargo reached 105.1 million tonnes in 2023, with Jeddah Islamic Port managing the largest share, handling 38.9 million tonnes of imports.

GASTAT also noted a 33.8 percent rise in ship traffic at Saudi ports in 2023 compared to the previous year.

"The total ship traffic at Saudi ports was 19,082 ships. King Fahd Industrial Port in Yanbu had the highest ship traffic, with 6,538 ships, followed by Jeddah Islamic Port with 4,411 ships, and King Abdulaziz Port in Dammam with 2,516 ships," stated GASTAT.

Total cargo handled at the

## FASTFACTS

• Inbound container traffic at the Kingdom's ports reached 3.4 million twenty-foot equivalent units in 2023, while outbound traffic totaled 2.2 million TEUs.

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• Total cargo handled at the Kingdom's ports in 2023 amounted to 334 million tonnes, with 121.3 million tonnes of unloaded cargo and 213 million tonnes of loaded cargo.

Kingdom's ports in 2023 amounted to 334 million tonnes, with 121.3 million tonnes of unloaded cargo and 213 million tonnes of loaded cargo.

Jeddah Islamic Port recorded the highest unloaded cargo volume at 38.9 million tonnes, while King Fahd Industrial Port in Yanbu had the highest loaded cargo volume at 89.8 million tonnes.

Passenger traffic at the Kingdom's ports also rose by 11.5 percent in 2023, with over 1 million travelers arriving and departing. Jazan Port handled the largest number of passengers, totaling 484,598.

The report highlighted that the number of cranes at Saudi ports reached 989 in 2023, and the total area of the Kingdom's ports covered 104 sq. km, with Ras Al-Khair Port being the largest at 23 sq. km.

## REPORT

## Kuwait-Japan trade surplus hits \$543m

Nour El-Shaerl Riyadh

Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan rose 15 percent year on year to 76.9 billion Japanese yen (\$542.8 million) in August, official data showed.

This marks the first increase in



Imports from Japan to the Middle East rose by 12.8 percent, driven by higher demand for cars and machinery. Reuters/File

two months, driven by a surge in Kuwaiti exports to Japan, according to a preliminary report by the Japanese Ministry of Finance.

The Gulf nation has maintained a trade surplus with Japan for 16 years and seven months.

Kuwaiti exports to Japan grew by 11.8 percent in August to 98.4 billion yen, rebounding after two

months of declines. Meanwhile, Kuwaiti imports from Japan rose for the fourth consecutive month, increasing by 1.9 percent to 21.5 billion yen.

In contrast, the Middle East's overall trade surplus with Japan fell by 4.8 percent to 852.2 billion yen in August, as exports from the region dropped by 1 percent compared to the previous year.

Shipments of oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas, and other natural resources, which account for 94.7 percent of the region's exports to Japan, declined by 2.3 percent.

Imports from Japan to the Middle East, however, rose by 12.8 percent, driven by higher demand for cars and machinery.

Japan, the world's third-largest economy, recorded a trade deficit for the second consecutive month in August, totaling 695.3 billion yen. This was influenced by the ongoing depreciation of the yen, which has continued to push up the cost of imports.

Japan's exports rose 5.6 percent, supported by shipments of semiconductor manufacturing equipment.

## BizBriefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

### Manufacturing

#### US industrial production jumps in August

US industrial production surged in August as motor vehicle manufacturing bounced back after plummeting in July, the Federal Reserve said on Tuesday, shortly before kicking off a two-day meeting on interest rates.

Total industrial output exceeded expectations to rise by 0.8 percent last month from a revised 0.9 decline in July, the US central bank said in a statement, pinning much of the rise on "a recovery in the index of motor vehicles and parts."

The index "jumped nearly 10 percent in August," it added. **AFP**

### Trade

#### Japan's exports rise at a much slower pace: data

Japan's exports rose at a much slower-than-expected pace in August and shipment volumes continued to slide, data showed, a sign that slowing global demand was weighing on a fragile economic recovery.

Japan is seeking to drive sustainable economic growth, backed by higher wages and solid consumption, though external risks from a potential slowdown in the US and a weak Chinese economy are clouding the outlook.

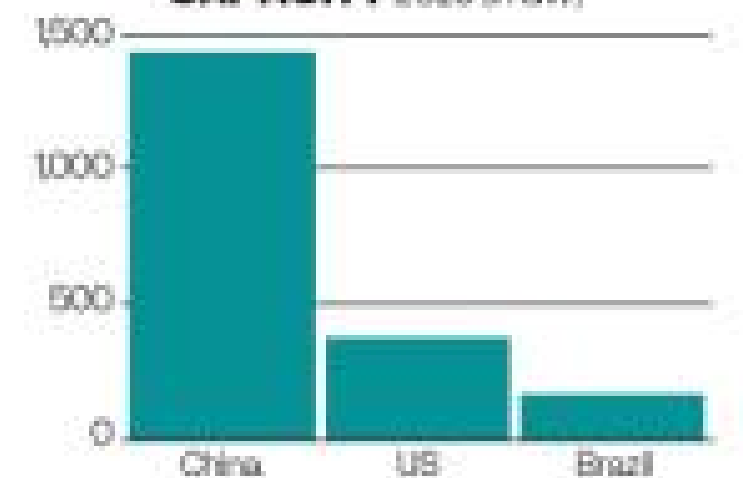
Total exports rose 5.6 percent year on year in August, up for a ninth straight month, data showed. **Reuters**

## Chart of THE DAY

The leading countries for installed renewable energy in 2023 were China, the US, Brazil.

Source: Statista

### RENEWABLE ENERGY CAPACITY 2023 (in GW)



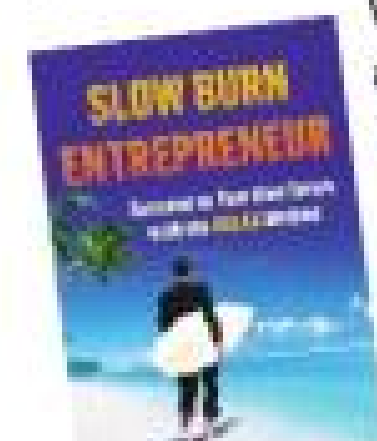
## What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

### Slow Burn Entrepreneur

MICHAEL WEBER

In this step-by-step guide, Michael Weber shares the life hacks of successful entrepreneurs, showing how to break rules for maximum profit and utilize rest and reflection to ignite creativity, says a review published on



goodreads.com. Focusing on self-development and sustainable growth is vital for success as an entrepreneur—

Weber's tools, tactics, and personal examples help you do just that. Gain the confidence to get your business off the ground.

### Interest

#### Indonesia apex bank delivers 25 bps rate cut

Indonesia's central bank delivered its first rate cut in more than three years on Wednesday, opting to move hours ahead of the widely expected start of the US Federal Reserve's easing cycle in a bid to bolster growth.

Bank Indonesia trimmed the benchmark rate by 25 basis points to 6 percent, its first rate cut since February 2021. Only 3 out of 33 economists polled by Reuters had predicted the move, while all the others expected rates to be held steady.

BI also cut the overnight deposit facility and lending facility rates by the same amount to 5.25 percent and 6.75 percent, respectively. **Reuters**

### Real estate

#### UK house prices rise for fifth month

British house prices rose by an annual 2.2 percent in July, the fifth monthly rise in a row but the pace of increase cooled and was below a revised 2.7 percent increase in the 12 months to June, the Office for National Statistics said on Wednesday.

The ONS said house prices in London fell 0.4 percent.

But no change in British consumer price inflation in data published earlier on Wednesday prompted investors to trim expectations of a cut in interest rates. The ONS also said its gauge of private rents rose by 8.4 percent in the year to August. **Reuters**



Mark Penn

Chairman and CEO, Stagwell

Marketers who miss out on MENA will miss out on one of the biggest consumer growth stories of our decade.

Corporate

PRESS RELEASES FROM THE WORLD OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE

SENIOR LEADERSHIP

Sunil John to spearhead Stagwell growth in MENA

Stagwell, a challenger network built to transform marketing, has appointed Sunil John as senior adviser of Stagwell MENA.

John will head Stagwell's forthcoming MENA office, spearheading growth and enhancing collaboration among local agencies and partners.

He will also develop new client solutions, utilizing his extensive regional network to support brands aiming for both regional expansion and global reach.

John, named the Best PR Professional in the Middle East by PRWeek in 2023 and 2020, brings

more than three decades of regional experience to Stagwell, having founded ASDA BCW, the region's leading PR consultancy, and been instrumental in shaping the public relations landscape in the Arab world. During his time at ASDA, he launched Proof Communications, a specialist digital and design firm; OnePoint5, an ESG advisory; and led the annual Arab Youth Survey, a groundbreaking thought leadership platform capturing the hopes and aspirations of the 200 million Arab youth.

Additionally, as an advisory board member of the Dubai

International Chamber since July 2021, John has been influential in reinforcing Dubai's status as a global trade hub.

"Marketers who miss out on MENA will miss out on one of the biggest consumer growth stories of our decade," said Mark Penn, chairman and CEO, Stagwell. "As we focus on becoming more competitive internationally, Sunil's unparalleled experience in MENA and

his leadership are what Stagwell needs to deepen our presence and help our clients succeed in this crucial market."

"I am excited to join Stagwell and contribute to its unique technology-driven offering in the marketing services landscape," said John. "The opportunity to integrate my experience, my love of research and insights, and my focus on digital transformation and technology with Stagwell's innovative

approach will bring value to a region that is one of the fastest growing in the world. As a challenger network, I believe Stagwell will be the company that creates significant impact for our clients in the MENA region."

John's appointment comes at a time when Stagwell is opening a new chapter in the region after recently announcing its intent to acquire Consulum, a leading government advisory firm that specializes in strategic communications, public policy and leadership support in MENA and other global markets.

Sunil John, senior adviser, Stagwell MENA.

STRATEGIC EXPANSION

Wallan Trading opens Renault showroom in Jeddah

Wallan Trading Company, the official distributor of the French car brand Renault in Saudi Arabia, opened a new showroom in Automall Jeddah, King Abdulaziz Road. The opening ceremony was attended by Jerome Pannaud, managing director of Renault operations in Africa, the Middle East and Asia Pacific, and Abdulaziz Al-Wallan, vice chairman of Wallan Holding, in addition to a selection of senior officials, industry leaders and media representatives.

The Renault showroom at AutoMall Jeddah features a range of new Renault models, including the new Renault Arkana, which belongs to the compact multi-purpose coupe category. In addition, the showroom offers a variety of models that are highly popular among admirers of the French automaker in the Saudi market, such as the versatile Renault Koleos, the modern sedan Renault Megane, Renault Duster, and Renault Express.

This new showroom in Jeddah marks the first Renault facility in the western region of the Kingdom under the Wallan Trading umbrella. It follows the opening of a state-of-the-art center for the brand earlier this year in Riyadh, with further showrooms and centers scheduled to open in key regions across the Kingdom.

Vice Chairman Al-Wallan said: "The opening of a dedicated Renault showroom in Jeddah

Jerome Pannaud, managing director of Renault in Africa, the Middle East and Asia Pacific, and Abdulaziz Al-Wallan, vice chairman of Wallan Holding, inaugurate the new showroom.

under the umbrella of Wallan Trading comes as part of the company's expansion strategy following the announcement of its strategic partnership with the Renault Group in the Saudi market last year, 2023, as an

official distributor of its products. This aims to serve customers of the French brand in Jeddah and its surrounding areas, and to remain close to them."

He added: "We are working through our expansion strategy across the main regions of the Kingdom to highlight Renault's significant industrial, innovative, and technological capabilities, and to offer a diverse range of products and modern models backed by the latest

technologies and innovative services to the Saudi market. Our goal is to ensure a premium ownership experience that befits our customers and the

prestigious French brand."

Wallan Trading Company, a subsidiary of Wallan Holding, is one of the oldest companies in the Kingdom's automotive sector. With more than 45 years of experience, it provides high-quality products and services to its customers. In addition to its partnership with Renault, the company represents major global automobile manufacturers such as Hyundai, Genesis, Geely, and Zeekr.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

KFUPM, Johns Hopkins Aramco Healthcare host health & bioengineering boot camp

King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, in partnership with Johns Hopkins Aramco Healthcare, recently hosted their inaugural Summer Boot Camp in Health and Bioengineering Applied Research and Innovation. The event is in line with

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and its National Biotechnology Strategy.

Held from Aug. 11-15, the event attracted more than 80 participants, including students, researchers, scientists, and health professionals from across the region, all eager to engage in advanced research

techniques and explore the latest advancements in health and bioengineering innovation.

This boot camp represents a cornerstone of KFUPM's strategic transformation, emphasizing interdisciplinary research and hands-on experience at

all academic and professional levels. Structured around five key research areas, the program provided participants with a comprehensive journey through the applied research process, covering everything from idea generation and publication to

innovation and commercialization. Over the course of five intensive days, participants delved into critical topics such as biodata collection and analysis, manuscript writing, and the development of bioengineering solutions for healthcare challenges.

Corporate Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Technology

Dyson unveils National Day gift guide

This Saudi National Day, Dyson has curated a luxurious gift guide commemorating the nation's 94th celebration under the theme, "We Dream, We Achieve." In line with the Kingdom's rich culture and extraordinary vision, Dyson's pioneering technology and sophisticated designs will elevate everyday experiences, the company said.

From quick-drying hair care solutions in sophisticated colorways to newly launched state-of-the-art headphones, Dyson offers exceptional gifts to match the unique style and passion of any Saudi national.

The viral Dyson Airstait is now available in the sleek, limited-edition Onyx Black and Gold colorway. The revolutionary straightener uses only air, and no hot plates, to dry and straighten hair without causing heat damage.

Security

Cybercriminals target kids' video games

The number of unique users targeted by cybercriminals using popular children's games as a lure surged by 30 percent in the first six months of 2024 compared to H2 2023, according to Kaspersky experts. Researchers analyzed gaming risks for young players, and discovered that more than 132,000 users had been targeted by cybercriminals.

Kaspersky looked into the threats disguised as popular kids' video games and analyzed the period from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024. Throughout the reported period, Kaspersky security solutions detected more than 6.6 million attempted attacks, where cybercriminals used the brands of the kids' games as a lure.

Smart Mobility

Dubai Civil Aviation Authority takes part in ITS event

The Dubai Civil Aviation Authority is participating in the 30th edition of the World Congress and Exhibition on Intelligent Transport Systems, a global event in the field of smart mobility and digitization of transportation. Organized by ERTICO and hosted by the Roads and Transport Authority of Dubai, the event runs from Sept. 16 to 20 at Dubai World Trade Centre.



We all want to repay the fans who have stayed with the franchise over the years, and we promise that they will see a much different Punjab Kings going forward.

Ricky Ponting Punjab Kings coach



## Sport News

PFL MENA 3

# Al-Selawe banking on edge in experience

MMA star takes on Omar El-Dafrawy of Egypt in Riyadh tomorrow

Arab News Riyadh

When Jarrah "The Jordanian Lion" Al-Selawe first burst onto the Professional Fighters League, he was already one of the Middle East's best homegrown talents, and was seen as a trailblazer, opening doors for other fighters from the region to reach a global platform like the PFL.

On Friday, a worldwide audience will get to see him in top-class MMA action at PFL MENA 3 in Riyadh, but getting here has not been a straightforward ride for the welterweight fighter.

A two-division champion in the Brave Combat Federation, Al-Selawe was already a star on the regional circuit and planning to become a household name on the world stage. Early on, it looked as if he was well on his way, impressing in the PFL Challengers Series to earn a spot on the league's global roster.

With an opportunity at a million-dollar purse during the 2022 PFL regular season, the Jordanian star defeated UFC veteran Gleison Tibau in his league debut and put himself in prime position to make the playoffs. He lost to Magomed Umalotov in his next outing, denying him a spot in the postseason that year, but he looked a likely contender in years to come.

The following season, a PFL playoffs berth continued to elude him as Al-Selawe suffered losses in both his regular season assignments and it looked as if his days in the SmartCage were done.

After a quick stint back in Brave CF where he scored a



Worldwide audience will get to see Jarrah Al-Selawe in top-class MMA action at PFL MENA 3 in Riyadh. PFL

bounce-back win, the man who was once seen as the blueprint for Middle Eastern stars to succeed in the PFL is now back in the PFL's SmartCage and just two wins

away from capturing PFL gold.

At PFL MENA 3 on Sept. 20, Al-Selawe makes his postseason debut when he faces Omar El-Dafrawy in the welterweight

semifinal co-main event at Boulevard Riyadh City, with the winner punching his ticket into the inaugural PFL MENA Championships.

With his experience in the PFL's million-dollar global tournament, Al-Selawe believes that he has the edge over his Egyptian opponent.

"I've faced more skilled fighters in the past, and I've beaten them," the 32-year-old said. "I have a lot of respect for Omar, and I am not underestimating his abilities, but I have complete confidence in myself and I believe that my experience makes victory more within my reach."

The significance of the moment is not lost on Al-Selawe — a championship win could be his ticket back to the PFL's million-dollar regular season, the way it helped, for example, Dakota Datcheva, who was crowned PFL Europe Champion last season, and is now on track for a PFL World Championship.

"Winning the PFL MENA Championship is what every fighter strives for, because it means so much for us to become champions," he said.

Speaking of the PFL's global tournament, Al-Selawe looks back at his difficult experiences there as ways to improve his game and become an even better version of himself.

"I've worked hard during my training sessions to address the mistakes that I made during my previous fights," he said. "Since then, I've developed my skills and focused on every small detail in preparation for this upcoming fight."

"I'm looking to be at the highest level that I can be, and with good preparation, I will be able to claim victory. El-Dafrawy won't be able to defeat me," he said.

PFL MENA 3 will feature semifinal bouts in the bantamweight, featherweight, lightweight and welterweight divisions.

## Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

### Cycling

**Van Aert to stay at Jumbo 'forever' with new deal**

Former Tour de France stage winner Wout Van Aert has signed a contract extension with Jumbo-lease a Bike until he retires, the Dutch team announced on Wednesday.

Belgian Van Aert, 30, has also won multiple one-day races and helped teammate Jonas Vingegaard to the 2023 Tour title since joining the outfit in 2019. **AFP**

### IPL

**Ponting named Punjab Kings head coach**

Former Australian skipper Ricky Ponting was named as the head coach of Punjab Kings on Wednesday for the next four seasons of the money-spinning Indian Premier League tournament.

Ponting said he was excited to take up the new challenge.

"We all want to repay the fans who have stayed with the franchise over the years, and we promise that they will see a much different Punjab Kings going forward," he said. **AFP**



### Farewell, Toto

**Italian World Cup striker Schillaci dies at 59**

Former Italy striker Salvatore Schillaci, a star of the 1990 World Cup on home soil, has died at the age of 59, his former clubs Inter Milan and Juventus said on Wednesday.

Schillaci led Italy to their third-place finish in 1990, winning the Golden Boot for his six goals during the tournament, including in the semifinal against Argentina and in their third-place victory over England.

"A football icon is leaving us, a man who has entered the hearts of Italians and sports fans around the world," Italy's prime minister Giorgia Meloni posted on X.

"Salvatore Schillaci, known by everyone as Toto, the striker from the magic nights of Italia '90 with our national team."

**Reuters**

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### POWERBOAT RACING

# Team Abu Dhabi duo set for battle to decide world powerboat title race

Arab News Porto da Regua, Portugal

Team Abu Dhabi's Rashed Al-Qemzi and Mansoor Al-Mansoori are primed for a tense climax to the UIM F2 World Championship in Portugal this weekend, which could see either of them crowned world champion on Sunday.

Four-time champion and strong favorite Al-Qemzi goes into the final round of the championship at Vila Velha de Rodao holding a six-point lead over Lithuania's Edgaras Riabko, who is four points ahead of Al-Mansoori in third position.

This means that second place in the Grand Prix of Portugal II would be enough to clinch the title for Al-Qemzi and take him into the record books as the first-ever

Team Abu Dhabi's Rashed Al-Qemzi is favorite to win a record fifth F2 powerboating championship. Supplied



five-time winner of the F2 crown.

However, a repeat of last weekend's result, which saw Al-Mansoori win the penultimate round in Porto da Regua, would see him installed as world champion for the first time should Abu Dhabi teammate Al-Qemzi finish fourth for the second race in eight days.

While there is no question of

team orders giving priority to either of them, the two Emirati drivers will be taking no unnecessary risks that could jeopardize the arrival of an 18th world title at the Abu Dhabi Marine Sports Club since Guido Cappellini became team manager nine years ago.

"We're teammates and friends, but we both want to win the title,

## HIGHLIGHT

**Rashed Al-Qemzi aims for place in record books as teammate Mansoor Al-Mansoori targets first F2 world crown.**

and we both know what we have to do," said Al-Qemzi, who had already secured his fourth F2 triumph before rounding off last season with victory on the Tagus river in Vila Velha de Rodao.

"The team will make sure both boats are set up perfectly, as they are for every race. Then it's up to us. It's also up to us not to do anything that could hurt the team."

Al-Mansoori's first target is to aim for a second successive pole position on Saturday. "That can make a huge difference on Sunday,

but it will be tough to qualify first, as it was last weekend, and all season," he said.

"It's the last race of the season and apart from the top three, all the other drivers will be fighting hard for a good start position. I want to get the best out of myself and my boat. I can't do more than that."

Riabko finished third last Sunday in Porto da Regua, where he won the penultimate round last season, and he will be aiming for a third career victory in Portugal in the hope that it will be enough to secure the world title.

While the top three battle it out for F2 glory, Sweden's Mathilda Wiberg, Britain's Matthew Palfreyman and Frenchman Nelson Morin are among a cluster of drivers who could still have a big say in the championship decider.



Margot Robbie's production company LuckyChap will produce a movie based on the hit video game series 'The Sims.' Gaming giant Electronic Arts, which publishes the series, announced it was working with Amazon MGM Studios on the film.

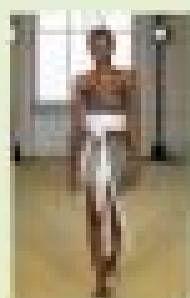


# & Finally

## TheSix

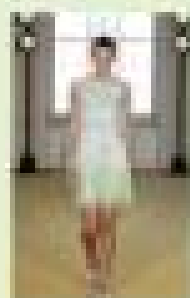
### Noon By Noor

Bahraini label Noon By Noor unveiled its Spring/Summer 2025 collection during London Fashion Week. Read on for six insights about the new line.



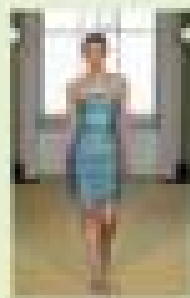
#### 'Ray of Light'

The new collection is titled "Ray of Light" and draws inspiration from the interplay between light and shadows.



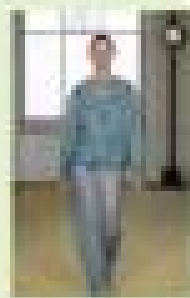
#### 'Hidden layers'

Designers Shaikha Noor Rashid Al-Khalifa and Shaikha Haya Mohamed Al-Khalifa "explored how light can transform and reveal hidden layers within garments," according to the show notes.



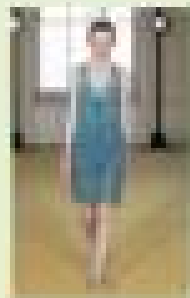
#### Artistic Inspiration

The designers said inspiration was sparked when they hung a tulle dress against sunlight. "The image we saw was beautiful, reminding us of early Man Ray photographs and the more modern work of Katerina Jebb," Shaikha Noor said.



#### Translucent Fabrics

The theme is reflected in the use of translucent fabrics and layered textures that explore concepts of illumination and depth.



#### Layering Effect

Linen tuxedos were paired with long skirts and dresses were worn over other garments to create a layered effect.



#### Unique Soundscape

Composer Uwe Doll created a unique soundscape for the presentation at London's Somerset House.

CLOSE UP

# From London to Milan, Nora Attal dominates fashion week

Arab News Dubai

**British Moroccan model Nora Attal made a mark at London Fashion Week, walking in high-profile shows such as Burberry, Simone Rocha and Nensi Dojaka — all within a span of just two days.**

At the Burberry show, she showcased a casual ensemble featuring light beige knee-length shorts paired with a striped, collared button-down shirt that was slightly tucked in at the front. Over this, she sported a muted olive green blazer with rolled-up sleeves. Her outfit was complemented by a large, quilted shoulder bag and matching beige and cream-colored loafers, the latter of which were adorned with small studs.

British designer Daniel Lee has been steering Burberry's creative direction for the past two years with innovative flair. For women, he reimagined the classic trench coat into various forms including a cropped jacket, a halter cape or

**Nora Attal hit the runway for Burberry, right, and Nensi Dojaka, below, this week.**  
Getty Images



a parka with shoulders covered in silk organza faux feather trims, layered over delicate dresses or skirts, blending elegance with a sportier, even military style.

For men, the influence of sportswear fashion was even stronger, with lightweight materials and functional cuts, giving rise to outfits of flowing pants and tartan zip-up jackets, paired with sneakers or loafers.

The collection also gave a nod to the resurgence of Y2K fashion, with low-rise trousers, cargos and capris that end below the knee.

The show was attended by Arab figures including Saudi producer Moahammed Al-Turki, Australia-born model Shanina Shaik — who is of Saudi, Pakistani and Lithuanian descent — and Dubai-based influencer Ola Farahat.

For the Simone Rocha show, Attal donned an ensemble that featured a long-sleeved, sheer top with a fitted bodice. Beneath this, a satiny black dress was visible, designed with a cinched waist. The dress extended into a flowing skirt that daringly split high on the thigh.

Meanwhile, the model stepped out on the Nensi Dojaka runway in a form-fitting, short black dress. The design included an asymmetrical neckline, with one shoulder adorned with delicate, ruffled white fabric.

After wrapping up her appearances at London Fashion Week, the model headed to Milan to partake in its fashion week that started on Tuesday. She kicked off her runway engagements by walking for Alberta Ferretti, wearing a black strapless, figure-hugging mini dress embellished with beadwork and lace detailing.



'OFFICE ROMANCE'

## Jennifer Lopez to star in Netflix rom-com

Arab News Dubai

Jennifer Lopez is ready to return to Netflix with her next feature for the streamer, this time pairing with two-time "Ted Lasso" Emmy winner Brett Goldstein for the romantic comedy "Office Romance." There was a hot bidding war for the feature, which Netflix won. Goldstein and Joe Kelly are co-writing the rom-com, according to a report from Deadline.

Both Lopez and Goldstein recently had films premiere at the Toronto Film Festival. Lopez was at TIFF with the sports drama "Unstoppable," about championship wrestler Anthony Robles.

BONG JOON HO

## 'Mickey 17' gets first trailer

Arab News Dubai

British actor Robert Pattinson is killed over and over again in the first trailer for "Mickey 17," famed South Korean filmmaker Bong Joon Ho's long awaited new film after his 2019 Academy Award Best Picture winner "Parasite."

In the film, Pattinson plays Mickey Barnes, a space colonist known as an expendable. Expendables do the most dangerous jobs the colony has to offer, and often die in the process, only to be brought back to life via human printing technology.

The film is based on Edward Ashton's 2022 novel "Mickey 7," which centers on the seventh iteration of Mickey Barnes. In the movie, that number has been increased to 17.



Robert Pattinson in 'Mickey 17.'

REVIEW

## 'I Am Georgina,' Season 3 — reality TV, Saudi style

Saffiya Ansari Dubai

Netflix's "Soy Georgina" ("I Am Georgina") is back, and this time it explores Argentine model Georgina Rodriguez's life after her move to Saudi Arabia with partner Cristiano Ronaldo in 2023.

The reality show dominated the Netflix Top 10 in 46 countries after the release of season two. One episode was set entirely in Dubai and showed the Burj Khalifa lit up for

Rodriguez's 28th birthday.

The model-meets-Middle Eastern-luxury formula seems to be one the producers were keen to continue, with fans taken on a whirlwind tour of the Kingdom in season three as Rodriguez and her family explore life in the country.

However, the high-end hotels and stunning seascapes are interspersed with moments of real introspection and fragility, which take this program from stereotypical reality TV territory to something



Season 3 hit Netflix on Sept. 18.

altogether more inviting and — dare I say it? — heartwarming.

One of the most touching aspects of the show is Rodriguez's relationship with her children — the couple have five, the eldest of whom was born to another mother. The opening scenes of the season show Rodriguez's worrying about, and praising, her kids and it offers a new side to the woman we are more used to seeing on fashion billboards.

There are, thankfully, no

engineered high-drama interactions and although it does sometimes feel like a carefully staged advertorial, there are candid caught-on-camera moments where the star seems tense and nervous at public events.

She is also not one to shy away from talking about her humble roots and being honest about the sometimes-taxing reality of her life in the spotlight and what it takes to be a poster girl for all things glamour.