

SPORT
SAUDI
FOOTBALLER
OSAMA
AL-MUBARIK
SIGNS PRO
CONTRACT
WITH LEGIA
WARSAW
Page 15



SPOTLIGHT
SWEDEN
TRIAL RAISES
UNCOMFORTABLE
QUESTIONS
ABOUT IRANIAN
REGIME'S PAST
Page 3



& FINALLY
JOSEPHINE
SKRIVER STARS
IN CAMPAIGN FOR
US-EGYPTIAN
LABEL
JACQUIE AICHE
Page 16



QANOON
FOR LAW AND LEGAL CONSULTATIONS CO.

SERVICES

- Digital Escrow and Arbitration
- Business Structure
- Administration Consultant
- Banking and Finance
- Contract Review
- Labour Employment Law
- Real Estate Legal
- Corporate Liquidation

SERVICES@QANOON.COM.SA

THURSDAY, August 26, 2021
www.arabnews.com

ARAB NEWS

SINCE 1975

The Voice of a Changing Region

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Taliban 'face health and economic disaster'

Afghanistan running out of cash

Arab News Jeddah

Afghanistan's new Taliban rulers face a "perfect storm" of health crises and economic disaster, aid chiefs warned on Wednesday.

The militants ordered banks to open on Wednesday for the first time since they seized control of Kabul 10 days ago, but the country has run out of cash because flights that bring in pallets of banknotes have been halted.

The US has frozen nearly \$9.5 billion in assets belonging to the Afghan central bank, the International Monetary Fund has blocked access to \$450 million in emergency reserves, and flights bringing in humanitarian aid and essential medical supplies have been grounded.

David Beasley, executive director of the UN World Food Programme, said about 14 million people in Afghanistan were threatened with starvation.

"There's a perfect storm coming because of several years of drought, conflict, and economic deterioration, compounded by COVID-19," he said.

Meanwhile, Western nations on Wednesday continued the drive to evacuate people from Afghanistan as the Aug. 31 deadline for the withdrawal of foreign troops drew closer, amid fears that many could be left behind to an uncertain fate.

The US and its allies have evacuated more than 80,000 people, including their citizens, NATO personnel and Afghans at risk.

Tens of thousands of Afghans fearing persecution have thronged

Kabul's airport since the Taliban takeover.

Many people milled about outside the airport on Wednesday as soldiers from the US and Britain attempted to maintain order.

Those trying to flee carried bags stuffed with possessions and waved documents at soldiers in the hope of gaining entry. One man, standing knee-deep in a flooded ditch, passed a child to a man above.

Another man, Aizaz Ullah, said: "I learned from an email from London that the Americans are taking people out, that's why I've come so I can go abroad."

British Foreign Secretary Domi-

OPINION

How Taliban 2.0 turned into a lethal force
By Mohamed Chebaro
Page 9



Taliban drug trade hints at a way to protect Afghan culture
By Rym Ghazal
Page 9



nic Raab said the deadline for evacuating people was up to the last minute of the month.

France said it would push on with evacuations as long as possible but they were likely to end soon.

Chancellor Angela Merkel said: "The end of the air bridge in a few days must not mean the end of efforts to protect Afghan helpers and help those Afghans who have been left in a bigger emergency with the takeover of the Taliban."

Qatari foreign minister visits KSA



Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman held talks with Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani at NEOM Palace on Wednesday. They reviewed bilateral relations and aspects of cooperation between the two countries in various fields. Al-Thani delivered a message from the Qatari emir to the crown prince.

SPA

MIDEAST FLASHPOINT

New protest in Gaza as Palestinians demand an end to Israel's blockade

Man dies from gunshot wounds after Israel opened fire on previous demo at weekend

Arab News Jeddah

New protests erupted in the southern Gaza Strip on Wednesday as Palestinians demanded an end to Israel's crippling blockade of the territory.

The demonstrations came after more than 40 Palestinians, including a 13-year-old boy, were wounded by Israeli gunfire during protests on Saturday.

One of the victims, Osama Khaled Death, 32, died of his wounds on Wednesday.

At least 14 people were wounded in the latest protest, including five hit by Israeli gunshots.

Crowds of people approached the border fence with Israel, then fled when an Israeli military vehicle arrived.

Hamas said it had made a "great effort" to avoid bloodshed.

"The enemy must understand this message that we do not want to repeat what happened last Saturday when blood was spilled," spokesman Sobeh Al-Hendi said.

Egypt, which has been trying to broker a long-term ceasefire between the two sides, had appealed to Hamas for calm.

Shortly after the protest ended, Hamas said the border crossing with Egypt would reopen on

BACKGROUND

The demonstrations came after more than 40 Palestinians were wounded by Israeli gunfire during protests on Saturday.

At least 14 people were wounded in the latest protest, including five hit by Israeli gunshots.

Thursday. Egypt this week closed the crossing, the main exit point for Palestinians in Gaza to travel abroad, in a show of frustration with Hamas.

Israel and Egypt have maintained the blockade since Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007. The blockade has devastated Gaza's economy and fueled an unemployment rate of about 50 percent.

Hamas accuses Israel of violating the ceasefire that ended 11 days of violence in May by tightening the blockade.

In particular, Israel has restricted the entry of essential building materials needed for reconstruction.

Israel has demanded the return of the remains of two soldiers killed in a 2014 war, as well as the return of two Israeli civilians believed to be in Hamas captivity.

The Brief

LEBANON RAIDS

Raids in Lebanon discovered millions of liters of subsidized fuel hidden in underground tanks to be sold later on the black market at new prices. **P6**

RUSSIAN STRATEGY

Russia, which sold the S-400 weapon to Turkey, has put the missile defense system on the table in a move that experts see as Moscow's strategy to drive Ankara away from the US and Europe. **P7**

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Sri Lanka's new animal protection laws, which require domesticated elephants to have photo identity cards, will keep a 'check on animal cruelty,' say experts. **P8**

GROWTH

Kingdom in new drive to exploit artificial intelligence

Saudi Arabia aims to be among world's top 5 in AI, with 25,000 new jobs in data science by 2030

Jana Salloum, Sara Alfalaz Riyadh

Saudi Arabia launched a series of initiatives on Wednesday to enhance the Kingdom's global ranking in digital areas such as artificial intelligence.

Among them is a new program called Hima, which aims to support innovation in enterprises with a value of SR2.5 billion (\$670 million), the Minister of Communication and Information Technology, Abdullah Al-Swaha, said at the launch event in Riyadh.

The minister said the Kingdom would increase the number of computer programmers for ev-



Artificial intelligence refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines that are programmed to think like humans and mimic their actions. **AFF**

ery 100,000 citizens as a way to measure the success of creating a capable workforce.

This growth would be supported with the creation of many

technical and digital academies in the Kingdom with leading international partners, he said.

Saudi Arabia aims to be one of the top five countries globally in

AI, and this required the creation of 25,000 specialist jobs in data science and AI before 2030, said Abdullah Al-Ghamdi, head of the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority.

Saudi Arabia will see significant growth in all major areas of digital technology from the Internet of Things to cloud computing, increasing the entire size of the information and communication technology sector to \$27 billion by 2025, Mohammed Al-Tamimi, governor of the Communications and Information Technology Commission, told a forum in Riyadh.

Similarly, the IoT market size is expected to grow at a compound annual rate of 26 percent, while cloud services are expected to make up to 30 percent of the total ICT spend in the Kingdom by 2030, he said.

2 Riyals • Vol. XLVI
No. 263 • 16 pages



The Organization of Islamic Cooperation calls on the international community to take decisive stances to stop the continuous coward threats with ballistic missiles and UAVs that the Houthi militia use to target Saudi Arabia.

Dr. Yousef Al-Othaimen
OIC secretary-general



Radar

KSA today



Baha Light garden

This family-friendly event at the Baljurashi National Park invites visitors to enjoy a special experience with different light exhibitions, an outdoor cinema and food cart area. Doors open from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. until Sept. 20. Entrants must be kids under 12 or immune from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).



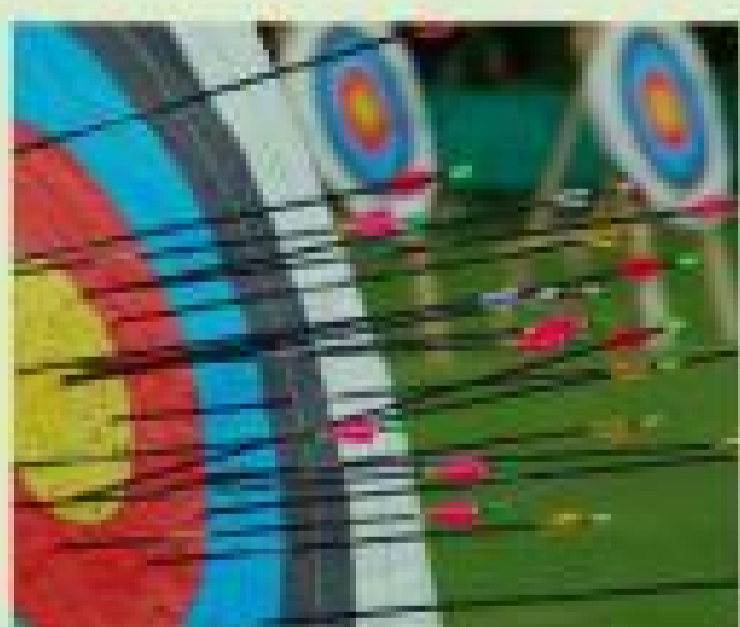
Riyadh Hiking adventure

Adventure seekers get ready to have an amazing trip on Friday to a dramatic geological wonder that gives guests an uninterrupted view of the horizon. "The Edge of the World" trip is organized by the Ghazi Tours team. Booking and more information can be found on experiences.suplif.com



Jeddah Yoga and art

The fast rhythm of modern life can make you lose track of time and forget to take a break for fresh air. This yoga session will allow participants to detach from what keeps their minds busy and enjoy the moment with meditative drawing. Visit upgrade-sa.com for more details.



Riyadh Archery

The Sport Season center is giving men and women the chance to get to grips with archery in a competitive and fun environment. Booking and more information can be found on the Hala Yalla app.

The Register

THE PICTURED THAT MARK THE DAY



Saudi Arabia's Minister of Interior Prince Abdul Aziz bin Saud bin Naif receives the Pakistani ambassador to the Kingdom, Bilal Akbar, in Riyadh on Wednesday. During the meeting, they discussed a number of issues of common interest. SPA

Today's Number

214m

More than 214 million cases of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) have been reported around the world since the outbreak of the pandemic, and nearly 4.5 million people have died after contracting the virus. Infections have been reported in more than 220 countries and territories since the first cases were identified in China in December 2019.

Who's Who



Abdulaziz Albaqous

Abdulaziz Albaqous has been the director of corporate communications and acting director of international relations at the Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee since January 2020.

Prior to that, Albaqous worked as a senior consultant with Hill-Knowlton Strategies public relations company from January 2018 until his latest position at the SAOC.

He worked as international communication senior specialist with the SAOC between February 2016 and November 2017 to strengthen the relations between SAOC and international NGOs and national NOCs, and represent SAOC at international sessions and meetings.

He was a communication services analyst with Tatweer Buildings Co. from August 2014 to February 2016 and a media and internal communication specialist at Education Experts from September 2013 to August 2014.

Albaqous did an executive master's in management of sport institutions in 2018 at the Universitat de Lleida, Spain.

He has a bachelor's in international relations (2006-2011) and a minor in Spanish literature (2010-2011) from Saint Louis University, US, and Madrid, Spain.

Albaqous' trainings include certified master negotiator in March 2015 at Meirc Training and Consulting, and effective event management in October 2015 at Anderson Training which provides development needs for leading organizations to enable transformational growth and sustainability.

He also did a Mini MBA in May 2019 at WPP PLC, a British communications, advertising, public relations, technology, and commerce holding company in London.

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



COLLABORATION BTS & Megan

Both BTS and Megan Thee Stallion were among the top trending topics Wednesday on Twitter after announcing their collaboration on an upcoming remix.

BTS, a seven-member South Korean boy band, announced on social media that a remix of their hit song "Butter" featuring American rapper and songwriter Megan Thee Stallion is slated to arrive Friday.

BTS shared the news on an Instagram story by posting a GIF featuring a yellow heart-shaped butter and Megan's name written on a pink heart background. The rapper quickly commented, "You all do not even understand how excited I am," with several butter emojis attached.

The collaboration will celebrate a historical summer for BTS. So far, "Butter" has controlled the Billboard Hot 100 for nine nonconsecutive weeks, making it the longest-running No. 1 hit of the year in America.

Fans of both artists could not contain their excitement for the upcoming collaboration and flooded Twitter with positive comments as the hashtag "#BTS&MEGANisComing" was trending worldwide.

@TanniesAK tweeted: "Omg I am so excited. Next Billboard Hot 100 hit is on the way."

@purple7rain tweeted: "Best collaboration. This song will bring our energy to the ceiling. Smooth like butter."

'SURREAL' EXPERIENCE

Tom Cruise

A family in the English countryside enjoyed a "surreal" experience after an American movie star unexpectedly landed a helicopter in their Warwickshire garden.

Three-time Golden Globe winner Tom Cruise, who was traveling by helicopter, was running late for a meeting after Coventry Airport was temporarily shut down, according to BBC News. The pilot found a nearby field owned by Alison Webb so Cruise decided to improvise.

Webb and her family were told their field was needed for an unnamed "VIP who was running late," and to their surprise, the "Top Gun: Maverick" star stepped out of the chopper.

"I thought it would be kind of cool for the kids to see the helicopter land in

the garden," Webb said. "He (Cruise) basically arrived and got out and it was like, 'Wow!'"

Cruise exited the helicopter, walked directly to Webb's children and greeted them with an elbow bump. He thanked the family and then invited them to take a ride in the helicopter while he attended the meeting. "It turned out to be an incredible day," Webb said. "It was surreal. I still cannot believe it happened."

The 59-year-old Cruise has spent the past month in Europe working on the latest "Mission: Impossible" production, which was shut down in early 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It resumed filming in September 2020 in Italy and then was moved to London three months later.

According to Variety, the seventh "Mission: Impossible" movie, which also stars Hayley Atwell, Simon Pegg, Ving Rhames, Vanessa Kirby, Rebecca Ferguson, and Henry Czerny, was set to debut in November but the premiere has been pushed back to May 27, 2022.



The Region

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Dubai

•A conference on molecular biology, genetics and cancer research continues in Dubai until Friday. This is a virtual event that brings together experts who speak about early detection and prevention of cancer, prostate cancer, breast cancer, lung cancer, new developments in

cancer treatment, cancer-related symptoms in advanced disease and communicating cancer research to the public.

•The Global Meeting on Public Health and Health Care is taking place in Dubai until Thursday. Its theme is the "Future of Public Health for Humanity and Awareness of its Challenges." The event covers

the latest developments in health care, public health, treatment technologies, implantable technologies, and advances in treatment.

•The Lebanese Arts & Culture Showcase exhibition runs until June 2, 2022. This is a virtual exhibition where people can explore all the artwork from their seats.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

Aug. 26	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Aar	Mughreb	Isha
Makkah	4:45	6:02	12:23	3:47	6:43	8:13
Madinah	4:40	6:00	12:24	3:52	6:46	8:16
Riyadh	4:12	5:32	11:58	3:24	6:19	7:48
Dammam	3:55	5:16	11:42	3:13	6:06	7:36
Abha	4:38	5:54	12:12	3:31	6:29	7:59

Spotlight



If a judge, a prosecutor has defended the security of the people, he should be praised.
Ebrahim Raisi
 Iranian president

IRAN

A dark chapter reopened

Landmark trial in Sweden sheds light on atrocities committed by Iranian regime officials against dissidents in 1988

Ann Tornkvist Stockholm

The Stockholm District Court's thick stone walls have not kept out the sounds of protest. Since the trial of Hamid Noury, 60, began on Aug. 10, Swedish Iranians have gathered daily outside the century-old court building to draw the world's attention to his alleged crimes.

During a court appearance last week, Noury complained that the protesters' chants and slogans were "insulting," forcing the judge to ask police to request the crowd outside to quieten down.

The trial is connected to the executions of a large number of inmates who were members or sympathizers of the armed leftwing group Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), also known as the People's Mujahedin Organization of Iran, in July and August 1988.

As an alleged assistant to one of the special-tribunal prosecutors, Noury is said to have been a key actor in the executions of suspected MEK members at Gohardasht Prison, a facility on the northern outskirts of Karaj, about 20 km west of the capital Tehran.

The prosecution says that Noury facilitated death sentences, sent prisoners to execution and helped prosecutors gather prisoners' names. He has denied all of the charges while claiming that the sentences were justified because of a fatwa, or religious ruling, by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Iran's supreme leader at the time.

The fatwa, issued in 1988, targeted the MEK, which had been outlawed by the Islamic regime in 1981 and held responsible for a series of anti-regime attacks at the end of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War. The MEK had been operating since 1986 from Iraq, then ruled by Iran's archfoe Saddam Hussein.

The families of the victims of the executions have waited three decades for justice. Now, after a complex Swedish police investigation into the suspected murders of political prisoners, they could soon find a measure of closure.

Survivors of the anti-MEK purge have testified that several inmates already had the hangman's noose around their necks when Noury led them down what was known among prisoners as a "death corridor" to await their hearing.

Noury is alleged to have read out the names of those who would face the specially appointed tribunal, which had likewise been nicknamed "the death commission." Few renounced their allegiance to the MEK, so few ended up avoiding the death penalty.

"It was a kangaroo court where the so-called trial took one to two minutes," Shabin Gobadi, a spokesman for the MEK-affiliated National Council of Resistance of Iran, told Arab News while participating in a protest last week outside the Stockholm District Court by exiled Iranians, former political prisoners and families of victims of the secret executions.

He added: "Noury served pastries to the judges on the 'death commission' and to the prison guards to celebrate a 'good day's work'."

In one witness statement, Noury was described as "particularly cold-blooded" compared with other officials involved in an "industrial production line" system of killing.

Activists managed to lure Noury to Scandinavia with a bogus offer of a luxury cruise, before tipping



Swedish Iranians, left, gathered outside the court in Stockholm, where trial is only possible because the Nordic country recognizes universal jurisdiction, allowing prosecution regardless of where serious crimes were committed. AN photo by Ann Tornkvist

Hamid Noury, below, is on trial at Stockholm District Court, where he stands accused of facilitating the executions of Iranian resistance members. AN photo by Ann Tornkvist

FASTFACT 1988

President Ebrahim Raisi denies responsibility, as deputy prosecutor of revolutionary court of Tehran in 1988, for mass execution of leftist dissidents.

off local police about his scheduled arrival. Since his arrest at Stockholm airport in November 2019, the case against him has expanded.

Kenneth Lewis, representing several of the plaintiffs, told the court that although 500 to 600 prisoners were known to have died at Gohardasht within the space of a few weeks, this was merely one of several prisons where executions were taking place.

A 2018 report by Amnesty International, "Blood-Soaked Secrets: Why Iran's 1988 prison massacres are ongoing crimes against humanity," places the death toll in regime jails at about 5,000.

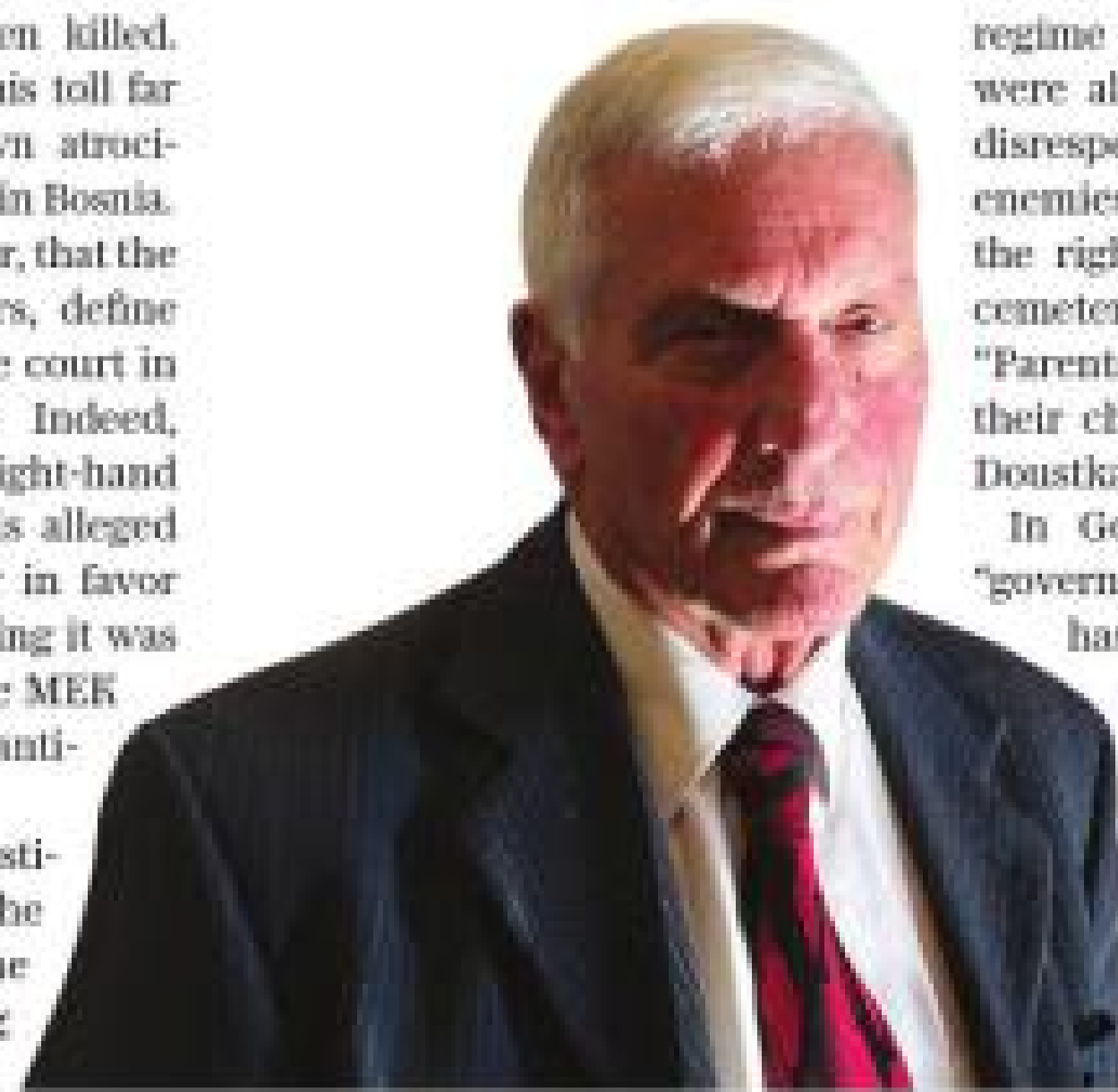
In the wider crackdown, which was not reserved to the prisons, an estimated 30,000 Iranian dissidents are thought to have been killed. Lewis pointed out that this toll far exceeds other well-known atrocities, including Srebrenica in Bosnia.

"It is my belief, however, that the motive, not the numbers, define genocide," Lewis told the court in his opening statement. Indeed, Khomeini's son and right-hand man Ahmad Khomeini is alleged to have argued strongly in favor of the fatwa at issue, saying it was time to "exterminate" the MEK in retribution for its anti-regime activities.

"These executions constitute genocide because the fatwa was issued with the purpose of exterminating the (MEK) based on



Our wish is that a conviction leads to Noury and Iranian regime members being tried for crimes against humanity.

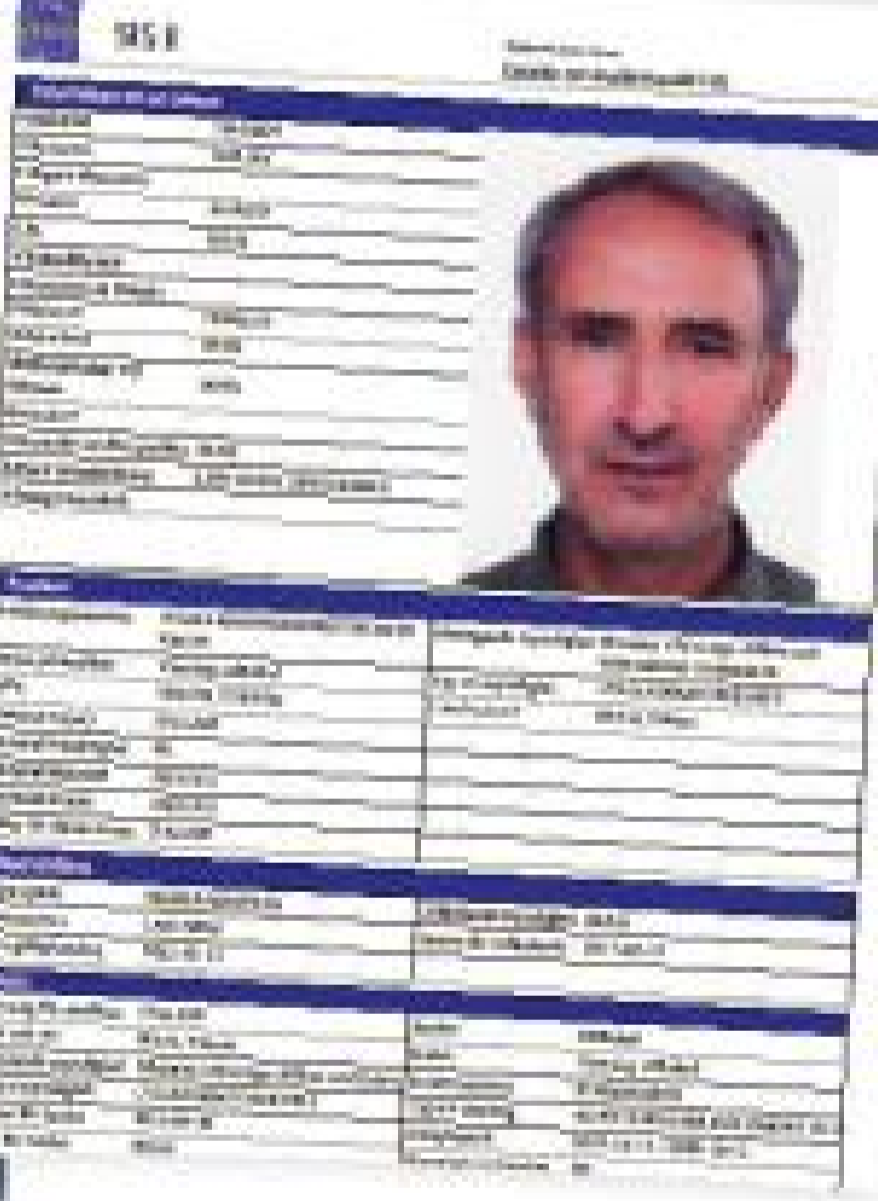


the (regime's) religious opinion," Lewis said.

Ali Doustkam, who fled to Sweden in 1994 and has attended the protests in Stockholm, says that the trauma of the 1988 fatwa persists despite the passage of time. "The prisoners who were executed were discarded in mass graves. Their families have not been able to bury them to this day," Doustkam told Arab News.

According to him, suspected MEK members eliminated by the regime outside the prison system were also treated with the same disrespect in death. Branded enemies of God, they were denied the right to burial in communal cemeteries among the devout. "Parents were forced to bury their children in their backyard," Doustkam said.

In Gobadi's view, the Iranian "government of mass murderers" has not only avoided accountability for its actions, but has rewarded its functionaries for their "ruthless savagery" among them. Iran's new president and former judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi, who Amnesty accuses of being



a member of the "death commission" behind the secret executions.

Raisi has denied involvement, but has praised Khomeini's "order" to carry out the purge.

"It is our ultimate wish that a conviction here leads to Noury and members of the Iranian regime being tried for crimes against humanity at an international tribunal," Doustkam said.

Noury's defense team has contested the evidence against their client, highlighting perceived inconsistencies and unverifiable information in witness testimonies. They have also implied that groups on social media have created echo chambers where inaccuracies have percolated over many years, converting mere hearsay into supposed facts.

The defense has pointed out that none of the witnesses have identified Noury as a member of the actual "death commission" tribunal, meaning he had no formal sentencing powers. They deny Noury worked at the prison.

While such arguments carry weight in a court of law, the families of Noury's alleged victims are in no doubt about his moral guilt.

"He might have been a low-level

operator," Gobadi said. "But he was an integral part of the ruthless regime in Iran."

Although only one individual is standing trial, the families of the victims of the secret executions understand the symbolic value of a successful prosecution and the possible knock-on effects.

"What is unusual about this trial is that it's most importantly an indictment of the entire Iranian regime, and that's a huge problem for them," Lewis, the plaintiffs' lawyer, told Arab News.

While Kristina Lindhoff Carlsson, the lead prosecutor in the case, has ruled that there is sufficient evidence to charge Noury with only 100 killings, the sight of even one suspect being led into a courtroom in handcuffs is unprecedented.

"This milestone trial in Sweden comes after decades of persistence by Iranian families and victims of the 1988 mass executions," Balkees Jarrah, associate international justice director at Human Rights Watch (HRW), said in a statement. "This case moves victims closer to justice for the crimes committed more than 30 years ago."

The trial is only possible in Sweden because the Nordic country recognizes universal jurisdiction over certain serious crimes such as mass murder, allowing for investigation and prosecution regardless of where the crimes were committed.

HRW has said that universal jurisdiction cases are important for ensuring that those who committed atrocities are held accountable. It says the process provides justice to victims who have nowhere else to turn, and that it deters future crimes by ensuring that countries do not become safe havens for rights abusers.

A verdict in this case is expected in April 2022.



An airplane left Riyadh on Wednesday to Algeria after being loaded with various food and shelter items, medicines and medical supplies. SPA

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

KSA regrets Algeria and Morocco cutting ties

KSrelief opens air bridge to Algeria, first aid plane sent to help fight fires

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia said it "regrets" the development in relations between Morocco and Algeria.

The statement comes a day after Algeria severed ties with Morocco due to its "hostile actions," blaming Rabat for the deadly wildfires that spread across the north of the country in recent days.

"The Saudi government hopes that relations between the two countries would be restored as soon as possible," the Foreign Ministry said.

The Kingdom called on both sides to give priority to dialogue

and diplomacy to find solutions to contentious issues to open a new page for relations between the two countries, in a way that benefits their people, achieves security and stability for the region, and enhances joint Arab action.

Meanwhile, the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center KSrelief, at the directive of King Salman, opened an air bridge to Algeria laden with emergency assistance to alleviate the impact of fires that recently erupted in some Algerian cities, resulting in great human and material losses.

An airplane, the first in the air bridge, left King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh on Wednesday to Algeria after being

HIGHLIGHT

The Kingdom called on both sides to give priority to dialogue and diplomacy to find solutions to contentious issues to open a new page for relations between the two countries, in a way that benefits their people, achieves security and stability for the region, and enhances joint Arab action.

loaded with various food and shelter items, medicines and medical supplies.

The move demonstrates the humanitarian role of Saudi Arabia and the solid relations between the two countries.

Since its inception in May 2015, KSrelief has implemented 1,705 projects worth more than \$5.43 billion in 69 countries. The initiatives were carried out in cooperation with 144 local, regional and international partners.

According to a recent KSrelief report, the countries and territories that benefited the most from the center's various projects were Yemen (\$3.9 billion), Palestine (\$368 million), Syria (\$309 million) and Somalia (\$207 million).

FIGHTING PANDEMIC

COVID-19 centers intensify efforts to inoculate students

Arab News Jeddah

Jeddah's COVID-19 vaccination centers have intensified their efforts to inoculate students at different educational stages who wish to complete their two doses prior to returning to classrooms.

King Abdul Aziz University has allocated a vaccination center at its headquarters for staff, students and their families to provide immunization services through more than 50 clinics.

These clinics are staffed by volunteers from the university's staff and students, in accordance with the best health standards and precautionary measures.

As part of preparations for physical attendance, the university also inaugurated the COVID-19 vaccine center at its branch in Rabigh, with a capacity of 1,000 appointments a day.

This is to raise the level of readiness and implement safety plans to tackle the virus before the start of the new academic year.

The General Directorate of Education in Jeddah also sought to ensure the commitment of all students to complete two doses of the vaccine to preserve public health.

Meanwhile, a study released by the Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention showed that the unvaccinated are about 29 times more likely to be hospitalized with COVID-19 than those who are fully vaccinated.

The study was based on more than 43,000 infection cases in Los Angeles between May 1 and July 15.

Director of the center, Rochelle Walensky, said in a statement: "Vaccines are the best tool we have to take charge of this pandemic."

Meanwhile, 35,088,272 people in the Kingdom have to date received a jab against COVID-19, including 1,577,843 elderly people. About 62.3 percent of the population has received the first dose while 38.46 percent had received both doses. At this rate, it is expected that 70 percent of the population will have received both doses by Oct. 8, 2021.

Saudi Arabia on Wednesday reported eight more COVID-19-related deaths, taking the overall toll to 8,505.

There were 321 new cases, meaning that 543,028 people had contracted the disease. A total of 4,141 cases remained active, of which 1,083 patients were in critical condition.

Of the newly recorded cases, 74 were in Riyadh region, 57 in the



More than 35 million people received a jab against COVID-19.

INNUMBERS

543,028

Total cases

530,382

Recoveries

8,505

Deaths

4,141

Active cases

Makkah region, 32 in the Eastern Province, and 20 in the Madinah region.

In addition, the ministry said that 549 patients had recovered from the disease, increasing the total number of recoveries in the Kingdom to 530,382.

The region with the highest recovery rate is Riyadh at 178, followed by Makkah at 87 and Eastern Province at 59. Saudi Arabia has so far conducted 27,097,223 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests, with 67,929 carried out in the past 24 hours.

Testing hubs and treatment centers set up throughout the country have dealt with hundreds of thousands of people since the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

Among them, Taakad (make sure) centers provide COVID-19 testing for those who show no or only mild symptoms of the virus or believe they have come into contact with an infected individual. Tetamman (rest assured) clinics offer treatment and advice to those with virus symptoms such as fever, loss of taste and smell, and breathing difficulties.

Appointments for both services can be made via the ministry's Sehlaty app.

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Fighting terror

Arab coalition intercepts Houthi drone targeting KSA

Saudi Arabia's air defenses have intercepted and destroyed a drone launched by the Houthi militia in Yemen toward the Kingdom's southwestern region.

The Arab coalition said that the missile was targeting Khamis Mushayt, adding it was taking all operational measures to protect civilians from such attacks.

Meanwhile, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation strongly condemned the latest Houthi militia attempt to target civilians and civilian objects with a bomb-laden unmanned aerial vehicle, praising, at the same time, the Saudi forces' efficiency in intercepting and destroying the UAV before reaching its target.

Secretary-General Dr. Yousef Al-Othaimen renewed his calls on the international community to take decisive stances to stop the continuous threats with ballistic missiles and UAVs that the Houthi militia uses to target civilians and civilian objects.

He also voiced the OIC's support of all procedures that Saudi Arabia is taking to deal with the practices of the terrorist Houthi militia, maintain its security and stability and preserve the safety of its citizens and residents. SPA Riyadh

Opportunities

Arts authority launches training program

The Saudi Theater and Performing Arts Authority has launched the second advanced training program in acting and directing, aimed at discovering local talent and building professional tools and skills.

The authority said that the program's activities would continue on the King Abdul Aziz Public Library stage in Riyadh for 10 days, with the participation of 50 male and female trainees selected from more than 150 applicants.

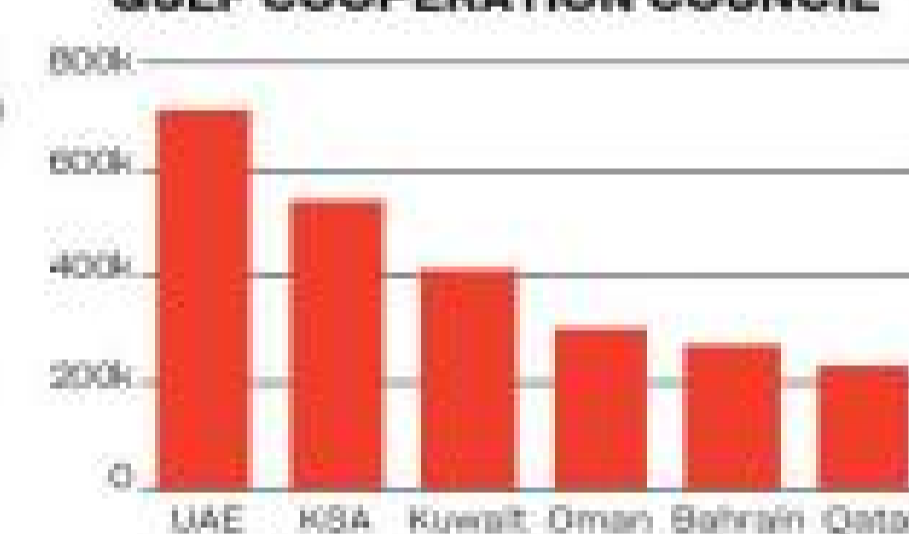
The applicants were chosen based on their previous experience in performance and acting and knowledge of the English language.

The program will present two workshops and include professional training to develop the performance of talented people in the fields of theater and directing.

The authority used a training team from the US and Spain. The program aims to enrich trainees with global theatrical experiences and enhance job opportunities for theater practitioners. It seeks to reach talented people in their regions and provide them with professional experience in their homeland. AN Jeddah

The Day's FIGURES

CORONAVIRUS CASES IN THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL



Source: Worldometers

Diplomatic Quarter

EMBASSY ACTIVITIES



Indian Ambassador Dr. Ausaf Sayeed and Prince Saad bin Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz bin Mubarak Al-Saud inaugurated the exhibition. Supplied

Riyadh

Art exhibition highlights Saudi-India cultural commonalities

The Indian Embassy in Riyadh organized an art exhibition this week to celebrate 75 years of Indian independence and the establishment of Saudi-India diplomatic relations.

The exhibition was put up by prominent Saudi artist Ahmad Al-Salama in collaboration with famous Indian artist Sabiha Majeed.

They brought together varied works from both nations, including pointillism, calligraphy and batik art to highlight cultural commonalities and affinities.

The exhibition was inaugurated by Indian Ambassador to the Kingdom Dr. Ausaf Sayeed. In his inaugural remarks, the envoy underlined that art is the aptest representation of the civilizational ties between the Indian and Saudi people.

He commended the artwork presented at the exhibition whose theme was the cultural connect

between Saudi Arabia and India.

The special guest at the event was Prince Saad bin Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz bin Mubarak Al-Saud. He was briefed on the different artwork on display. He appreciated the artwork of both the artists and congratulated them for their initiative to celebrate Saudi-India friendship.

Al-Salama, an exponent of pointillism, is a conceptual artist, designer and has been a consultant of fine art for more than three decades. Sabiha hails from Udaipur in Rajasthan and has been living in the Kingdom for more than 15 years. She has worked on several painting series representing Indian and Saudi heritage and their shared cultural commonalities.

The exhibition was visited by diplomats, Saudis, expat art lovers and artists from many nationalities.

News Saudi Arabia



They produced and gave away 700 postcards showing local scenes and the country's major tourist attractions during the trip. The finished product can be viewed on the family's Instagram account, Traveler Crews. Supplied

'SAUDI ARABIA IS NOT ONLY SAND AND DESERT'

Traveling Saudi family on mission to change perception of KSA

Al-Rifai, his wife, and daughter create unique postcards that feature prominent sites from around the Kingdom

Saleh Faraed Jeddah

As Saudi Arabia's tourism sector aims to attract 100 million visitors annually, a Saudi man, his wife and their daughter are trying to boost the country's tourism profile locally and internationally.

The family has always been fascinated with tourism in their homeland and launched an initiative in 2019 to change perceptions about their country. They create unique postcards that feature the most prominent sites in the Kingdom under the slogan "Saudi Arabia is not only sand and desert."

"We are an extremely adventurous family that wants to show the world how Saudi Arabia looks on a simple, old-fashioned, but still effective, postcard," said Bandar Al-Rifai, 45, who works in incident and change management.

"The postcards feature photos we took while visiting each place in our beloved country as we want to change the stereotype about Saudi Arabia."

The postcard project is a family affair as Al-Rifai is joined by his



wife Shuaa, 39, a freelance interior designer, and their seven-year-old daughter, Farrah.

To document their journey, every family member has specific roles. Al-Rifai is the leader while Shuaa is the navigator, cook, and designer. Farrah is the model, who also handles the camera, cellphone drone and reads the booklets about the different places they visit.

The finished product can be viewed on the family's Instagram

account, Traveler Crews.

Their motivation to explore the beauty of their homeland was prompted when a friend praised them for their world travels but then asked if they had anything to share about Saudi Arabia.

It was at that moment when Al-Rifai paused to think. For a well-traveled person with zero knowledge about his own country, the question motivated him to look inward and launch a tourism mission that will benefit

HIGHLIGHTS

- The family has always been fascinated with tourism in their homeland and launched a 2019 initiative to change perceptions about their country. They create unique postcards that feature the most prominent sites in the Kingdom under the slogan "Saudi Arabia is not only sand and desert."

- The postcard project is a family affair as Al-Rifai is joined by his wife Shuaa, 39, a freelance interior designer, and their 7-year-old daughter, Farrah.



Saleh, Farasan Island, Al-Soudah, Al-Shaq Great Canyon, Rijal Almaa village, Umm Jarsan Cave, Wadi Al-Disah, Jabal Al-Qadr volcanic mountain, and more.

"Many people do not know about the existence of volcanoes in Saudi Arabia," he said. "There are more than 2,000 dormant volcanoes, three of which are semi-active."

Their family's favorite expedition so far started at the end of January and ran through mid-March.

"It included the whole west south, west and west north of Saudi Arabia," Al-Rifai said.

"Plus, I was a marshall for the 2021 Diriyah E-Priz for the third time and, Inshallah, will do the same for December's Saudi Arabian Grand Prix."

They produced and gave away 700 postcards showing local scenes and the country's major tourist attractions during the trip.

"We received many requests to host people who received our postcards," Al-Rifai said. "If they come to Saudi Arabia, they ask for help with directions on how to visit what they saw on our cards in person."

was sending postcards. Not only did postcards serve as an easy way to communicate with someone, but they were also fun to collect."

To bring attention to the beauty of Saudi Arabia, Al-Rifai and his family, originally from Jeddah and now living in Riyadh, set out to discover all of the country's famous monuments.

Al-Rifai said the project includes a large number of different sites from around the country that include the ancient city of Mada'in

the Kingdom.

"I work with an international company and there was an expat colleague who referenced Saudi Arabia as a 'sandpit,'" Al-Rifai said. "It gave me the power to change this even if it was a small thing like a picture or a video. Then we ended up with postcards."

Explaining why they chose postcards, Al-Rifai told Arab News: "It helps you stand out from the crowd. Back in the late 1800s and early 1900s, everyone

EMPOWERMENT

Saudi Arabia expands women's representation in workplace

Arab News Jeddah

More female employees are joining workplaces and boardrooms in Saudi Arabia, with gender equality a key target of a regional drive to improve environmental, social and governance standards.

While measurable progress has been achieved in recent years, there is room for further improvement to consolidate these changes into a lasting and broad-based transformation.

"Saudi Arabia recognizes that it has a large, untapped pool of talent. There is plenty of work being done to leverage this asset, as empowering women is a goal of Vision 2030," Lilac Ahmad Al-Safadi, president of the Saudi Electronic University, told Oxford Business Group. In recent

years the country has implemented a raft of measures designed to expand women's economic inclusion. These have ranged from allowing women to drive cars, to changes in labor and family law.

The changes have helped to achieve measurable results; more than 51,000 Saudi women joined the job market in 2020, and the Kingdom aims to provide jobs to about 1 million women by 2030.

The World Bank report awarded Saudi Arabia 80 points out of 100, slightly below the UAE and on par with Chile.

In addition to expanding participation in the workplace, the new measures aim to boost entrepreneurship among women.

"Micro-businesses are an often-overlooked segment of economy,

The changes have helped to achieve measurable results; more than 51,000 Saudi women joined the job market in 2020, and the Kingdom aims to provide jobs to about 1 million women by 2030. Shutterstock

despite generating a notably positive social impact — particularly in relation to the economic empowerment of women," Ibrahim Al-Khashid, CEO of the Kingdom's Social Development Bank, told OBG. "However, Saudi Arabia is increasingly paying attention to the segment."

The number of female entrepreneurs in the Kingdom is reported to have increased by 50 percent in 2019, while a 2020/21 report by Global Entrepreneurship Monitor found that the highest rates of entrepreneurial intentions among women were reported in MENA, with Saudi female entrepreneurs driving this trend.

Looking to the talent

HIGHLIGHTS

- The number of female entrepreneurs in the Kingdom is reported to have increased by 50 percent in 2019, while a 2020/21 report by Global Entrepreneurship Monitor found that the highest rates of entrepreneurial intentions among women were reported in MENA, with Saudi female entrepreneurs driving this trend.

- Looking to the talent pipeline, more young Saudi women are opting to study science, technology, engineering and maths, and 38 percent of Saudi STEM graduates are women.

pipeline, more young Saudi women are opting to study science, technology, engineering and maths and 38 percent of Saudi STEM graduates are women.

In some fields this share is higher. According to UNESCO, 59 percent of students enrolled in computer science in Saudi Arabia are women, compared to 14 percent and 16 percent in the US and the UK, respectively.

The SEU's Al-Safadi was appointed president of the institution in 2020, becoming the first female president of a Saudi coeducational university. This month the SEU launched WEmpower, a women's research accelerator, to give female faculty and postgraduate students a chance to learn from research experts.



News Middle East

Whirling dervishes wow Cairo

The whirling dervishes band — Mawlay Ensemble — performs at the El-Sawy Culturewheel Center in Cairo. Whirling — a sort of moving meditation — sees performers twirl to the hypnotic rhythm of prayer, until they reach a trance-like state.

Reuters



STRONG POSITIONS

No end in sight to Lebanon's political deadlock

Georgi Azar Dubai

More than 12 months since Lebanon's Cabinet resigned and with the country teetering on the brink of collapse, politicians look unlikely to form a much-needed government any time soon, sources warn.

Najib Mikati, a billionaire businessman, is the latest to take on the mantle, promising a swift formation of a government within a month when he was appointed on Jul. 26.

"I gave my proposals, President Michel Aoun approved most of them and he made some remarks which are acceptable. God willing, we will be able to form a government soon," Mikati said two days later. A month has passed, and Mikati is facing the same fate as his two predecessors — Mustapha Adib and Saad Hariri — who both failed to come to terms with Aoun.

"What is happening now is merely a continuation of what has transpired over the past 12 months, with each political bloc maneuvering based on its own calculations," Rosana Bou Monsef, a political analyst and veteran columnist for Lebanese daily An-Nahar, told Arab News.

At the core of the issue, she said, is the president's Free Patriotic Movement trying to secure favorable terms in the upcoming government, which could stay in power until after Aoun leaves office next year.

"It is becoming increasingly clear that the problem doesn't lie with who will head the government but with the president's group's unwillingness to form a government except on its terms," Bou Monsef said.

Further complicating matters is Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah's announcement on Aug. 19 that the party had secured fuel shipments from Iran.

"The Iranian fuel has put Mikati in an extremely tough position as his government program was based on cooperating with the international community and Gulf countries to secure financial assistance for Lebanon," Bou Monsef said.

The possibility of Mikati stepping down is now gaining traction, Bou Monsef noted, "despite the international community urging him to move forward with negotiations."

Sami Fatfat, a Future Movement MP, held out hope that a government would be formed but assured his party is "looking into different options, including mass resignations" if Mikati steps down.

"The next couple of days will be decisive," he noted.

NATION IN TURMOIL

Lebanon raids discover hoarded fuel, medicine and baby formula

Operation reveals partnership between brother of Hezbollah minister and NewPharm Company

Najla Houssari Beirut

Raids carried out by Lebanon security forces discovered millions of liters of subsidized fuel hidden in underground tanks to be sold later on the black market at new prices. Some of the tanks were merely covered by sand.

"Monopolized" medicine and baby formula were seized, too.

News of the hoarding has only added to the anger of Lebanese citizens, who have been suffering through exhausting fuel and medicine shortages for months. Long queues outside gas stations and empty shelves at pharmacies are common across the country.

The largest quantities of hidden subsidized fuel were found in Hawsh Al-Omara in Zahle, Bekaa, where more than 1.5 million liters of gasoline were seized.

Scenes of Caretaker Health Minister Hamad Hassan raiding depots in the south of Lebanon and the Shouf area that contained medicine missing from pharmacies have also left citizens fuming.

The depots contained medicine that could treat patients COVID-19,

blood pressure, and respiratory problems. Antibiotics and thousands of infant formulas — all subsidized at the official rate (\$1-1,500 LBP) — were also discovered.

"The raids are based on an electronic tracking system of 'monopolized' medicine," Hassan said. "The system is very precise and accurate."

The raid operation revealed a partnership between Hussein Fneish, brother of Hezbollah minister Mohammed Fneish, and Issam Ahmed Khalifa, of the NewPharm Company in Lebanon.

However, the timing of Hassan's raids were criticized. Lebanon's Central Bank has not opened credit lines for imports for three months as laws were put in place to prohibit free imports.

"These security campaigns and raids should have been carried out earlier," Issam Araji, head of the Health Parliamentary Committee, told Arab News.

"Medicine and fuel should have never been hoarded. Following these raids, Lebanon seemed like a floating city in a sea of gasoline and diesel. The dangerous part is that the fuel was being stored in residential neighborhoods"

Aragi, who is also a cardiologist, said he had warned authorities about the hoarding of medicine for more than a year.

"But they insisted that people were storing the medicine in their houses," Araji said. "People cannot afford their daily bread, how would they be able to store all of the medicine? I think that the health minister has finally decided

BACKGROUND

Adnan Naccouzi, 69, suffered a stroke while waiting in a long queue for gas in the hot weather and without drinking water. He has been recovering inside the intensive care unit at a Beirut hospital for the past 24 hours.

to take action because he received information about companies hiding and storing the medicine. These campaigns will all be in vain unless offenders are punished to deter others."

Although the country has started to unload ships of imported fuel and distribute it to gas stations, queues outside the filling stations did not get any shorter on

Wednesday. Most drivers parked throughout the night and slept in their cars, hoping to fill up their vehicles in the morning.

Adnan Naccouzi, 69, suffered a stroke while waiting in a long queue for gas in the hot weather and without drinking water. He has been recovering inside the intensive care unit at a Beirut hospital for the past 24 hours.

Authorities have said fuel will be sold according to new prices, amid a gradual reduction of fuel subsidies.

As of Wednesday, a 20-liter canister of gasoline was sold for 133,000 Lebanese pounds (\$88) and the same canister of diesel for 99,000 pounds. The cost of transportation has automatically increased, where the fare rose to 20,000 pounds for each passenger, more than double the price of the previous day.

Despite the public calls to arrest monopolists and put them in prison, hoarding is classified by the Lebanese penal code as a misdemeanor and sanctioned either by a fine or up to six months in prison.

Meanwhile, Judge Ghada Aoun issued a search and investigation warrant against Lebanon's Central Bank Gov. Riad Salameh. This

comes five days after setting a date for an investigation session — that he did not attend — over accusations of money laundering and money transfers abroad.

Lebanon's State Prosecutor Ghassan Oueidat in April dismissed Judge Aoun from the case. But she has insisted on proceeding with her investigations and broke into a money exchange company with the help of activists from the Free Patriotic Movement.

In other developments, the country's caretaker premier Hassan Diab will not appear before Judge Tarek Bitar, who is investigating last year's Beirut blast. Diab was supposed to be questioned as a defendant in the case on Thursday, but has insisted that he should be questioned by the Supreme Council for the Trial of Presidents and Ministers.

Judge Fadi Sawan, the investigating judge who preceded Bitar, listened to Diab's testimony in his capacity as a witness more than a year ago. In that testimony, Diab acknowledged the presence of the ammonium nitrate that was illegally stored at the port and explained why he changed his mind about visiting the site just days before the explosion.

POLICY CLARIFIED

Jordan will only be transit point for Afghan evacuees on their way to US

Raed Omarl Amman

Afghan citizens coming to Jordan will not be granted "refugee status" and will stay for a short period before their planned resettlement in the US, a senior official said on Wednesday.

The Jordanian Foreign Ministry announced on Monday that Jordan has agreed to the transit of 2,500 Afghan citizens through its territory on their way to the US.

The ministry said the decision was made for humanitarian reasons to help alleviate the repercussions of the crisis in Afghanistan.

In remarks to Arab News, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Deifallah Al-Fayez said that Jordan, under an agreement with the US, will have no commitments toward the Afghan citizens. "The Afghan citizens will not be granted any refugee status. They will stay in Jordan for a very short time until the procedures related to their resettlement in the US are completed," he said.



Afghanistan is facing a crisis. AFP

Asked whether the Afghans have arrived in the country, Al-Fayez would not comment: "All I can say is that the Afghan citizens will be sheltered in closed areas and will stay there for a very short period."

Another official, who preferred anonymity, said that the 2,500 Afghan citizens have already arrived in Jordan aboard a US military evacuation flight and have been sheltered near an air force base in the northeastern desert.

Deputy Prime Minister Tawfiq Kreishan said: "They will not be resettled in Jordan and all has been arranged with the concerned sides to transport them via the Queen Alia International Airport."

SECURITY

Egypt FM targets Sahel terrorist organizations

Mohammed Abu Zaid Cairo

Egypt wants to intensify bilateral and regional efforts to combat terrorist organizations and organized crime groups in the Sahel region in central Africa, with a focus on reconstruction and development in the post-armed conflict stage.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry made the announcement during a meeting with his Sierra Leonean counterpart David Francis in Cairo on Tuesday, according to the Middle East News Agency.

The central Sahel region, which includes Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, is facing one of the fastest growing displacement crises in the world — yet one of the most

forgotten. More than 2.7 million people have been forced to flee their homes and at least 13.4 million are in dire need of humanitarian assistance, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Ahmed Hafez, the spokesman for Egypt's Foreign Ministry, said the two ministers share a desire to enhance trade and improve political relations.

Both ministers signed a bilateral agreement on cooperation in the field of political consultation. They also partnered on two memorandums of understanding to enhance cooperation in the fields of culture and youth. Their aim is to facilitate communication between officials from the two countries while promoting cultural dialogue.

HIRING

Sales Supervisor & Van Sales man

Candidates aged 25 - 35 Years, with Min 2 Years Exp in FMCG Sales (Poultry/Dairy) ,

Valid KSA License (Heavy or Med)

Benefits : Salary • Commission • Accommodation • Telephone • Medical.

Forward your CV with all documents to :

arabianfarms.jobs@gmail.com

News International

DIPLOMACY

Russia playing S-400 card in Turkey for strategic purposes, say experts

Ankara hasn't yet fully activated defense system in a move seen as an olive branch to Biden administration

Menekse Tokyay/Ankara

Amid increased contact between Turkey and the Western world over developments in Afghanistan and the potential refugee influx, Russia has placed the S-400 missile defense system on the table - a move that experts see as a strategy to drive Turkey away from the US and Europe.

Based on the comments by the head of Russia's arms exporter Rosoboronexport, the Interfax news agency said that Kremlin and Ankara are about to sign a contract to supply Turkey with a second batch of S-400 air defense units.

Turkish officials have not yet reacted to the claim.

The statement, which is seen as a move to damage Turkey's improved ties with the West and with

Ukraine, coincided with the Crimea summit in Kiev, which Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu attended earlier in the week.

Turkey's initial purchase of S-400 from Russia was a sticking point with the US and the NATO allies, rendering Ankara subject to a series of US sanctions.

The US is concerned that the Russian defense system could compromise security if Russia becomes able to secretly acquire classified information on US and NATO weaponry.

The US has forbidden Turkey's participation in the F-35 fighter jet program, and last month President Joe Biden said he would maintain sanctions on Turkey under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) for buying the Russian system.

New sanctions from Washington could be disastrous for Turkey when its economy is still weak amid pandemic conditions.

Turkey's military test-fired the S-400 in the Black Sea province of Sinop in October 2020. However, it has not fully activated the defense system, in a move considered an olive branch to the new US administration.

Since the S-400 missiles remain the soft underbelly of Turkish-US ties, Moscow is most likely trying to keep this issue high on the agenda as a political instrument to make sure that Ankara remains distant from Washington.

"Considering that Turkey has not yet fully activated even the first batch of the S-400 system, it is not reasonable for Ankara to make a new agreement with Moscow on this issue," Prof. Emre Ersen, a

Russia expert at Marmara University in Istanbul, told Arab News.

Ersen thinks the repeated statements from Russian officials regarding the S-400 seem to reflect Russia's unease about the prospects of closer Turkish-US ties under the Biden administration as Ankara has been trying to mend ties with its Western allies in the past few months.

"The latest developments in Afghanistan and Turkey's possible role in this issue have provided a new momentum for Turkey's strategic relations with the West," he said.

Mevlut Cavusoglu and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov discussed the latest developments in Afghanistan on Aug. 18 and insisted on the necessity of ensuring security there.

But, a couple of days later Cavusoglu made a controversial statement during the Crimean Platform meeting in Kiev on Aug.

23, saying Turkey has not and will not recognize the illegal occupation of Crimea by Russia and will support Ukraine's territorial integrity.

"Since the S-400 missiles remain the soft underbelly of Turkish-US relations, Moscow is most likely trying to keep this issue high on the agenda as a political instrument to make sure that Ankara remains distant from Washington," Ersen said.

Under the \$2.5 billion deal that was signed in 2017, Russia was to supply Turkey with four batteries of S-400 surface-to-air missiles.

"So far, Turkey has bought two batteries, and the second batch was optional. However, Ankara and Kremlin have been negotiating loan agreements for a couple of years. No official has spoken about the purchase of the second unit since January 2020," Aydin Sezer, an Ankara-based Russia expert, said.

According to Sezer, Russia's messages aim to keep Turkey away from the West at times when Ankara attaches importance to its transatlantic ties.

"It is not realistic to expect Ankara to proceed with the purchase of a second batch of S-400 when it is making lobbying efforts to return to the US F-35 fighter jet program at the same time. Therefore, it keeps its silence and will only react positively to such politically motivated calls when a new crisis emerges in its ties with the West," he said.

Ankara and Washington held intense negotiations about the responsibility for security at Afghanistan's Kabul international airport following NATO's withdrawal and Turkey has used the airport mission offer as a potential area of cooperation to mend frayed ties with the US and other NATO allies, which have been tense over many issues.

Egypt tourism bounces back

Tourists visit Karnak Temple in Luxor, Egypt, on Wednesday. Egypt's tourism revenues were between \$3.5 and \$4 billion during the first half of 2021 and the country received about 3.5 million visitors during the same period.

AFP



WAR ON CRIME

Dubai confirms arrest of Italian drug baron

AFP Dubai

Dubai authorities on Wednesday confirmed they have arrested one of Italy's most wanted international drug barons and his right-hand man, after years on the run.

Raffaele Imperiale, considered to be one of Italy's most dangerous fugitives, was a top operative from the Naples organized crime world.

A statement on Wednesday said Dubai police had arrested Imperiale.

"It also arrested Imperiale's right-hand man Raffaele Mauriello, who is responsible for plotting and executing murders and assassinations using unlicensed firearms," the statement added.

Dubai police said Imperiale had been living under a false identity in the name of Antonio Rocco, and had used multiple cars to conceal his movements.

"Imperiale chose to live in an

SHADOW WAR

Israel claims Iran launched drone strike on tanker

Defense chief Gantz has previously warned Israel is prepared to take military action against Iran

AP, Reuters Jerusalem

Israel's defense minister on Wednesday accused Iran of launching a deadly drone strike on an oil tanker last month from its territory and reiterated that Israel would act alone if needed to stop Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.

Benny Gantz spoke as Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett was visiting Washington to discuss Iran with Biden administration officials during his first state visit in Washington.

The Mercer Street, an oil tanker that was sailing in the Arabian Sea off Oman, was struck by a drone aircraft on July 29. The attack killed two, a British national and a Romanian. The tanker is managed by a firm owned by an Israeli billionaire.

The US, Britain and Israel have all blamed Iran for the drone strike on

the Mercer Street, but no country has yet offered evidence or intelligence to support their claims. Iran has denied any wrongdoing.

"Our assessment is that the UAV employed in the Mercer Street attack was launched from Iranian territory and approved by Iranian leadership," Gantz told foreign diplomats in a briefing. His remarks were released by his office.

Gantz, a former Israeli army chief, has previously warned that Israel is prepared to take military action against Iran and called for international action to halt Iranian aggression.

The two countries have been locked in a shadow war for years, which in recent months has taken a higher profile after a long string of attacks on merchant vessels.

The attacks began after then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew in 2018 from the nuclear deal between Iran and



FAST FACT

The Mercer Street that was sailing in the Arabian Sea off Oman, was struck by a drone aircraft on July 29.

world powers, which saw Iran limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

President Joe Biden has said he's willing to rejoin the accord, but talks over salvaging the deal have stalled in Vienna.

Gantz doubled down on those threats on Wednesday, saying that Israel "has the means to act and will not hesitate to do so — I do not rule out the possibility that Israel will have to take action in the future in

order to prevent a nuclear Iran."

Pope's comments

Meanwhile, Israel's top Jewish religious authorities have told the Vatican they are concerned about comments that Pope Francis made about their books of sacred law and have asked for a clarification.

In a letter, Rabbi Rasson Arousi, chair of the Commission of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel for Dialogue with the Holy See, said the comments appeared to suggest

Jewish law was obsolete.

Vatican authorities said they were studying the letter and were considering a response. Rabbi Arousi wrote a day after the pope spoke about the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, during a general audience on Aug. 11.

The Torah contains hundreds of commandments, or mitzvot, for Jews to follow in their everyday lives. The measure of adherence to the wide array of guidelines differs between Orthodox Jews and Reformed Jews.

At the audience, the pope, who was reflecting on what St. Paul said about the Torah in the New Testament, said: "The law (Torah) however does not give life.

"It does not offer the fulfillment of the promise because it is not capable of being able to fulfil it ... Those who seek life need to look to the promise and to its fulfillment in Christ."

BACKGROUND

Police in Naples had said Imperiale was arrested on Aug. 4 in Dubai in coordination with Interpol and Europol.

isolated home with an overlooking spot to monitor those who approach him," the statement cited Jamal Salem Al Jallaf, director of the Criminal Investigation Department, as saying.

"He intentionally had avoided registering a precise address to mislead authorities."

Police in Naples had said Imperiale was arrested on Aug. 4 in Dubai in coordination with Interpol and Europol. Jallaf said police raided Imperiale's house, and also seized large sums of cash, luxury watches and paintings.

Extradition proceedings were under way, he added.

Imperiale — part of the Amato-Pagana clan within Naples' Camorra organized crime syndicate — left Italy for Amsterdam in the 1990s to manage a coffee shop, and began allying himself with Dutch traffickers, according to Italian daily La Repubblica.

ولا تأمن من النطاعم خاتم - ولا تأمن من المشارب شارب
ولا تأمن من كثر من مكابيه - إذا لم تكن بالمرء تلك المكابيه
(أبو فراس الحمداني)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB
*I am not content with my gains,
unless gained with honor.*
Abu Frass Al-Hamdani
(Medieval poet and prince from Aleppo)

Opinion

How Taliban 2.0 turned into a lethal force

MOHAMED CHEBARO



Mohamed Chebaro is a British-Lebanese journalist with more than 20 years' experience covering war, terrorism, defence, current affairs and diplomacy. He is also a media consultant and trainer.

Step away from the dust and turmoil created by the hasty evacuation efforts at Kabul airport and it appears that after 20 years in the shadows the Taliban are in total command of Afghanistan's destiny.

Ignore the emotionally driven news coverage justifying or questioning the wisdom behind the US withdrawal, and we can see a smiling Taliban leadership happy to stand by and watch, offering vague statements about a future Afghanistan for all, under Shariah rule of course, and where the place of women will be determined by the extremist interpretation of religious texts.

For an observer who has covered Afghanistan before and after 9/11, there can be only one conclusion: Thank you, America, for arming the Taliban, and for making terrorist groups around the world look on in envy as their fellow "mujahideen" win the lottery.

According to some estimates, the US may have left more than \$100 billion of military hardware, including armored vehicles, light combat aircraft and a fleet of helicopters, to the Taliban 2.0.

The talks in Doha that led to the withdrawal

now look like a mere capitulation, with only one vague guarantee that Afghanistan will no longer be a haven for groups willing to attack the West. But why would these groups stay in Afghanistan when other sanctuaries are available in countries such as Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen, not to mention European and US suburbs that are able to produce their own type of Islamist extremists.

Those in government, it seems, fail to see the impact this rushed withdrawal will have on the West's global standing. Former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair has criticized the West's loss of "strategic will," claiming that Russia, China and Iran will take advantage of the continued retreat.

Meanwhile, up to 80,000 Taliban fighters now can enjoy an armory fit for a modern, lethally equipped fighting machine of 300,000 troops, which the US and NATO had trained in the two decades before their surrender in a matter of days. Even more alarmingly, these light drones, high-tech communication systems and advanced weapons could also reach terror groups scattered around the globe.

Many claim now that they saw all this

coming. But I recall many informal discussions with military and civilian officials working in Afghanistan and Western capitals who insisted they were rebuilding the Afghan political system along a Western model of "one man one vote" and the rule of law. A lot of effort was wasted transporting ballot boxes to remote villages instead of trying to understand that the dynamic of authority and loyalty in that society works differently.

Like Lebanon, the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and even Iraq, Afghanistan is a country whose people are a mix of ethnic, linguistic, tribal, religious and sectarian groups, all united by a competitive, yet conservative, outlook on life. The West hoped that liberal democracy would replace age-old patriarchal traditions, with tribal codes instead of police and laws.

The national Afghan army rebuilt by the US and NATO consisted of members of various communities. Recruits and their local commanders must have noted that their government was sidelined in the Doha talks and that national reconciliation talks were going nowhere. These soldiers knew better than anyone else that fighting the Taliban without the help of their foreign mentors

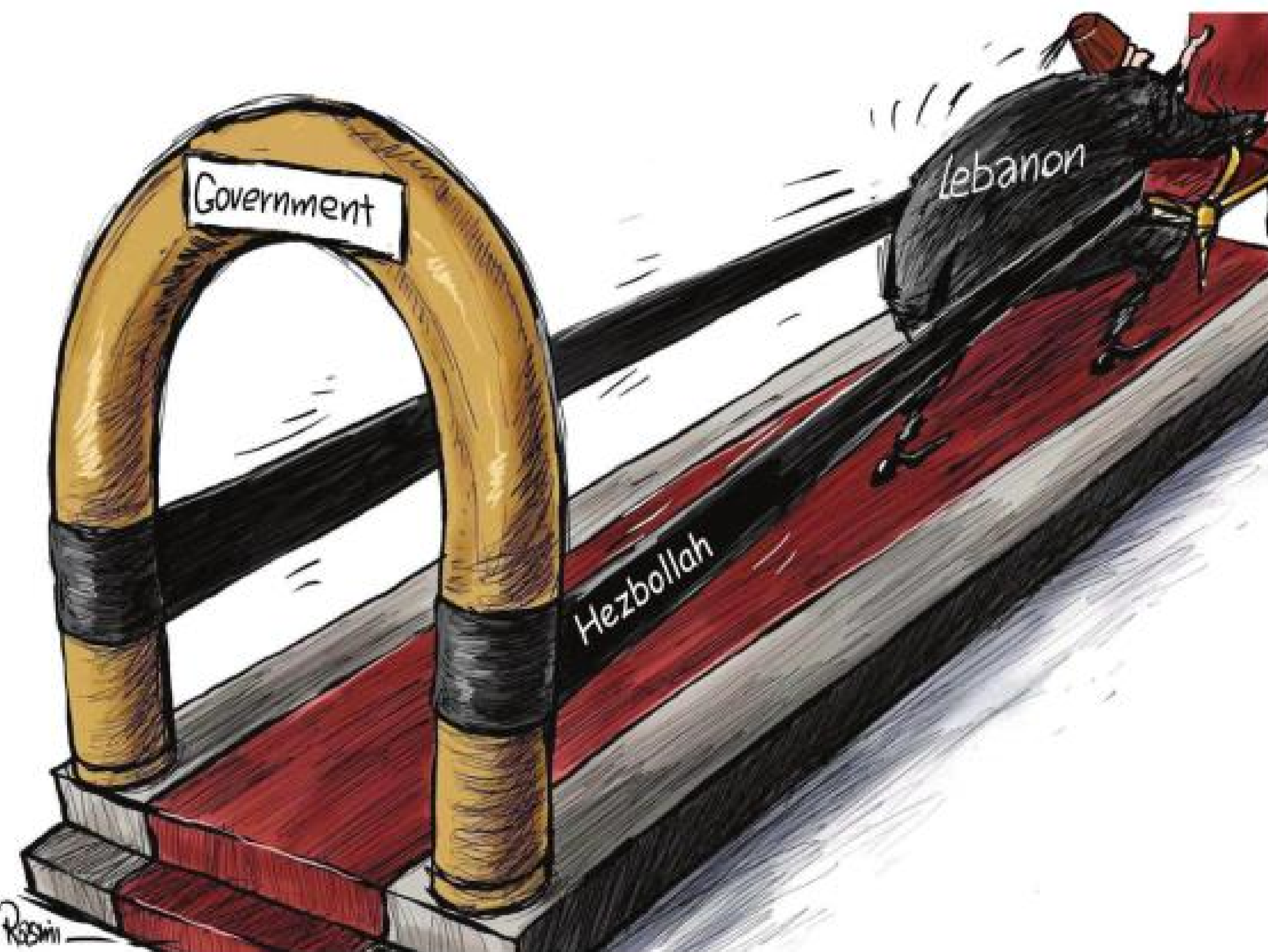
would be futile. Hence, the ground was set for them to lay down their weapons, encouraged by Taliban propaganda that reached deep into towns and villages.

The national army's collapse in Afghanistan is not new. The previous Afghan army built by the former Soviet Union was routed by the mujahideen in the early 1990s. Today, though, the failure of the army and police force, as well as the departure of President Ashraf Ghani, leaves the country facing the unknown.

Despite faint hopes that the neo-Taliban have become more mature operators, able to preserve and build on what has been achieved over two decades of foreign-assisted rule, the early signs are not encouraging. The rapid collapse of the army and the West's chaotic evacuation have only emboldened the militants, which means it is business as usual for this vigilante group seeking to uphold its vision of righteousness against evil.

It will not be long before the Taliban reinstate their old rules, and resort to torture and brutal punishments, while truckloads of exported opium and now weapons ensure enough income for their survival.

Despite faint hopes that the neo-Taliban have become more mature operators, the early signs are not encouraging



It is tempting to think that the Taliban have changed — after all, the rest of the world certainly has

Taliban drug trade hints at a way to protect Afghan culture

RYM GHAZAL



Rym Tina Ghazal is editor of an arts and culture magazine, and a former war correspondent. ©Synkization Bureau

Intolerance: Be like the ocean. Many may not know that those words — a call for the acceptance of diversity — by the 13th-century poet Rumi may actually be those of one of Afghanistan's legendary figures.

Rumi has been claimed by Turkey, Iran and even parts of the Arab world, but he is believed to have been born in 1207 in Balkh, north of what is present-day Afghanistan. It will be interesting to see what the Taliban make of Rumi and other totemic representatives of the cultures that once blossomed in the land now called Afghanistan. And if their consideration is less than positive, what can be done to protect the country's historical patrimony?

For now, the signs do not augur well. Soon after swooping down on Kabul, the Taliban announced they were a changed group that now wanted peace. They declared an "amnesty" for all who previously worked against them, and said they were even willing to work with "our sisters." Shortly after that, they blew up a statue.

Did they destroy it because they believed statues promote idolatry or because it depicted a man who was their enemy? It is impossible to say for certain. But it is possible that the statue of Abdal Ali Mazari, a champion of Afghanistan's ethnic Hazara minority who was executed by the Taliban in 1995, ticked more than one box.

Of course, Mazari's statue had no great cultural or artistic value. Its destruction has

made it more famous than it would ever have been otherwise. But more interestingly, it stood in Bamiyan province. For it was in Bamiyan, in 2001, that the Taliban blew up two massive, 1,500-year-old statues of Buddha carved into a mountainside. The destruction of the statues remains possibly the biggest act of wanton destruction of culture in modern history.

So, is the demolition of the Mazari statue a sign of things to come? With the fight against the "others" — the occupying foreign forces — now over, will the fight now turn inward against the "others" in Afghanistan's historic, religious and social tableau?

Those "others" are plentiful in the country. Afghanistan has a wealthy heritage and history, and a diversity of identities that have been overshadowed by wars and conflicts. It was from Afghanistan that Buddhism spread to China. Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism thrived in the land before — and after — the arrival of Islam in the 7th century. As a major waystation on the age-old trade routes connecting India with Iran and China, Afghanistan is filled with the remains of ancient cities, monasteries and caravanserais that hosted famous travelers such as the 14th-century Moroccan Ibn Battuta and the 13th-century Venetian Marco Polo.

Ancient artifacts literally are strewn across its geography. About 80,000 of these now are housed in the National Museum. The Taliban destroyed a number of such relics in the museum the first time they came to power. But

in February this year, its leaders forbade selling artifacts. They told their followers to "robustly protect, monitor and preserve" relics, halt illegal digs and safeguard "all historic sites."

We shall have to see if that injunction holds. Will the Taliban, for example, protect the historical heart of the city of Herat? It is currently on a UNESCO heritage site tentative list. Herat was captured by Alexander the Great in 330 B.C. during his campaign against the Achaemenids. It later became a major outpost for the Hellenistic Seleucid empire.

Then, there is Balkh, which gave birth not only to Rumi but also Ibn Sina — better known in the West as Avicenna — and the poet Ferdowsi, both from around the turn of the first millennium. The name Balkh may be more familiar to those who frequent Western museums as Bactria, the ancient civilization that dates back to the early third millennium B.C. From the Seleucids to the Sassanians to many others, the history of civilization is layered in the ground of Balkh and many other cities like it across Afghanistan — sites such as Mes Aynak, home to a complex of at least seven Buddhist monasteries and under which may be Bronze Age structures.

It is tempting to think that the Taliban have changed — after all, the rest of the world certainly has. We want to believe that they will police adherence to their injunction to do no harm to the country's historical and cultural heritage. The problem is, the militants are committed to keeping

themselves pure from the poison of modernity. The future has not caught up with them and likely never will. And aside from their own version of an imagined past, the rest is dust to them.

But there may be a way out. The Taliban frown on drug use. But they do not have a moral problem with other people using it. In 2000, they banned poppy cultivation, much like they have banned trading in historical artifacts today.

That poppy ban, however, eventually evaporated. Today, the Taliban control the world's largest supply of illegal opiates — accounting for 80 percent of the global opium and heroin market. A record harvest in 2017 yielded sales the equivalent of 7 percent of Afghanistan's gross domestic product.

The intriguing question is whether the Taliban can be induced to protect the heritage of Afghanistan if they were paid to do so. They may have no use and see no value in a sculpture of a Bactrian woman, for example. But can they be persuaded to keep it safe if it was a source of income? Can an international trust fund be established for this? And maybe for the safekeeping of artifacts outside Afghanistan? (Though, until when?)

There are many questions, including the moral one of privileging the safety of cultural items over the safety and well-being of people. Yet, surely, it is still one that would be useful to have. But the first question is, will the Taliban take part?

Opinion

New rules for a fairer future

GLORIA ABRAHAM PERALTA

This year, governments can ensure that better international rules help get us back on track toward a fairer and more sustainable agricultural trading system, and overcome recent setbacks in our efforts to tackle hunger and malnutrition. The UN Food Systems Summit in September, the UN climate conference in November and the World Trade Organization ministerial conference starting later that month provide policymakers with ample opportunity to deliver.

The coronavirus pandemic, economic downturns, climate change and conflict have all contributed to an increase in hunger and malnutrition. And the recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is the latest in a series of warnings that show why governments must take immediate bold action to address the challenges we face.

In particular, governments should focus on correcting and reducing the distortions burdening food and agricultural markets. If policymakers can improve how these markets function, vulnerable producers and consumers stand to benefit most.

Clearly, business as usual is not an option. According to recent estimates from UN agencies, between 720 million and 811 million people faced hunger in 2020. Moreover, moderate or severe food insecurity has climbed slowly for the past six years, and now affects nearly one in three people globally. We must change course if we are to achieve the sustainable development goal (SDG) of ending hunger and malnutrition by the end of this decade.

The expected increase in the world's population to nearly 10 billion by 2050 adds a further element of urgency. Better rules regarding trade and markets



can help improve food security by supporting efforts to create jobs, raise incomes and boost agricultural productivity sustainably. Better-functioning markets would also bolster the food system's resilience to global warming, as temperature and precipitation patterns change, and extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, and storms become more frequent and intense.

Furthermore, countries have negotiated and signed a growing number of new bilateral and regional trade agreements as they seek to improve their market access and deepen integration with trading partners — both in neighboring regions and farther afield. But efforts to update global trade rules for food and agriculture have advanced only slowly.

In the run-up to the WTO's ministerial conference, I am chairing talks among negotiators on a slate of seven farm-trade topics, including subsidies for goods such as cotton, restrictions on food exports, and the challenge of improving farmers' access to markets.

Ministers could take a significant step forward by agreeing to an outcome on food and agriculture that helps to rebuild trust, lays out a path forward and galvanizes political engagement.

Today, we must strive to overcome the pandemic, build more inclusive and sustainable economies, and lay the foundations for a fairer and more resilient future. An agreement at the WTO that improves food and agricultural trade rules would be an important start.

Gloria Abraham Peralta, ambassador of Costa Rica to the World Trade Organization, is chair of the Special Session of the WTO Committee on Agriculture. ©Project Syndicate

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

Health diplomacy is a powerful tool to combat future global threats

SARA AL-MULLA



Many would contend that the coronavirus pandemic is a tragic, yet avoidable, catastrophe. In retrospect, perhaps our principal oversight was the lack of swift, coordinated global efforts to contain the outbreak, coupled with an absence of interconnected alert systems, differing preparedness measures and poorly aligned messaging.

Indeed, the pandemic served as a harsh wake-up call, highlighting the need for enhanced global health policy coordination between different regions and across multiple sectors.

The world will face numerous global health challenges in the near future as a result of intensifying transnational factors directly affecting population health. These include globalization, climate change, natural disasters, pollution, weak healthcare systems, food insecurity, mass migration, infectious diseases, and poverty. As such, global health diplomacy will be more important than ever to channel the required resources to improve health outcomes, respond to public health crises, upgrade health security, ensure equitable access to healthcare, and promote peace and security.

Global health diplomacy can be conducted in a variety of venues centering on health, such as the World Health Assembly. Partnerships can be forged with a cast of influential actors, such as governments, international organizations, academic institutions, research centers, think tanks, policy networks, foundations, civil society and the private sector.

Global health issues have been in the spotlight across numerous policy agendas, spearheaded by the World Health Organization and its partners. One of the key policy priorities is bolstering countries' preparedness to manage health emergencies and pandemics by strengthening healthcare systems and training medical workers. Equally important is the formulation of strategies to contain menacing communicable diseases, such as malaria, measles, and polio.

There is also a need for the global community of experts to collaborate on research projects and share updated evidence-based research and solutions available on a wide range of health issues. Additionally, accelerating the development of treatments and vaccines through funding efforts will ensure we are ready to fight off health threats. Working on advancing universal health coverage for

Sara Al-Mulla is an Emirati civil servant with an interest in human development policy and children's literature. She can be contacted at www.aramorelous.com.

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

disadvantaged segments, such as low-income groups or refugees, is an important aspect of upholding their human rights.

Furthermore, identifying a set of unfair critical determinants of health inequalities, such as gender, ethnicity, income, education, disadvantaged rural areas, employment, or disability, will also need to be a priority for public health officials.

There are many successful examples of global health diplomacy. The 2014-2016 West Africa Ebola outbreak was successfully contained thanks to such efforts.

The Middle East has many experiences and achievements in the area of global health diplomacy. A recent example came during a 2013 polio outbreak in Syria and Iraq. The success of the response depended on partnerships with the governments of eight countries: Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Turkey. The incident was declared a public health emergency and a coordinated strategic response plan engaged a number of international stakeholders to vaccinate 27 million children.

Global actors including the World Health Organization, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, UNICEF, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Rotary International, and GAVI, the vaccine alliance, all got involved. As a result, polio was contained in the region within six months of its identification.

In future, more coordination with international organizations will be needed to champion the region's health agenda. Political instability and intensifying conflicts in recent decades have disrupted essential healthcare services for citizens, in addition to displaced individuals, migrants and refugees fleeing conflict zones.

Furthermore, the region should capitalize on fruitful partnerships with regional and international stakeholders to manage health challenges, such as the Middle East respiratory syndrome, malnutrition, humanitarian health relief, communicable diseases and vaccine enrolment. It is essential that the region's policymakers voice their health priorities in global venues in order to leverage transformative cooperation and policy solutions from world-class health experts and funders.

The future will require nations to rethink global health diplomacy as a powerful tool, helping us to collectively withstand impending global health threats and ensuring improved health for all.

Pandemic widening a bitter US political divide

RAY HANANIA



America is a divided country, and not just between those who hate former President Donald Trump and those who hate his successor, Joe Biden. The coronavirus pandemic has not only turned US politics on its head, but also created a new political schism that is changing lifestyles in the country.

Failure to understand this new phenomenon in the American psyche can land you in political trouble, especially with foreign countries or foreign leaders seeking US support.

Not everyone in the US agrees that COVID-19 is a deadly disease. Well, they do not believe that the virus is deadly to everyone. They believe the virus is deadly only to those who have a wide range of health-related challenges, such as cancer, a heart condition or asthma. Therefore, they also believe that the pandemic threat is mainly to those above the age of 50, since most illnesses tend to worsen with age.

At the core of this debate is an argument over whether the government has the right to impose restrictions requiring people to be vaccinated, wear face masks or limit their social interactions.

Some believe that these precautions are actually government efforts to curtail the freedoms that have been constitutionally guaranteed to all of the country's 328 million citizens.

The pandemic has found itself dovetailing neatly with the foundations of the two major political parties.

Republicans, who are more conservative, believe individuals should be rewarded based on how much they work and that no one should impose restrictions on what can be said or how they live their lives.

Democrats, who are more liberal, believe that the government should provide financial welfare and healthcare support to the poor and that the financial costs should be covered by the rich and wealthy. Government, they be-

lieve, should provide healthcare to the needy, the elderly and especially the poor.

Republicans believe that the threat of the virus is being overblown and is being used by the Democrats to control the nation's political system, thereby giving the party more powers and control. Democrats believe that Republicans are using the pandemic to expose Democratic constituents to challenges that will affect their ability to vote and engage in political activism, and so reduce voting numbers.

The political battlegrounds are clear: Should children be forced to wear face masks in school? Should everyone be forced to get vaccinated? Is COVID-19 a genuine health threat or is it being exaggerated by political profiteers?

These questions are being used in an emotional back-and-forth between Democrats and Republicans to undermine individual rights, and bludgeon political rivals into silence and submission.

Worse, the data is being routinely manipulated to reflect a personal viewpoint rather than as evidence of an across-the-board reality.

This polarization has made it all but impossible to defeat the virus since half the nation lives under mandatory restrictions and vaccinations that never seem to completely safeguard everybody, while the other half lives as if the threat is purely a question of individual choice.

Meanwhile, the makers of the three major COVID-19 vaccinations have been laying low, enjoying astronomical profits from their serums. The scale of their profits has fueled public suspicions that the pandemic is being exploited by pharmaceutical giants, and reinforced conspiracy theories and fears about whether the vaccinations will have long-term, unknown consequences.

In the end, the political debate is hindering the campaign to defeat the virus, with some believing the divisions are weakening the nation's resolve.

Ray Hanania is an award-winning former Chicago City Hall political reporter and columnist. He can be reached on his personal website at www.Hanania.com.
Twitter: @RayHanania

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

srmq

Saudi Research & Media Company

Established in 1987 by
Prince Ahmad bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz

ARAB NEWS

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

Founded in 1975 by
Hisham & Muhammad Ali Hafiz

Editor in Chief
Faisal J. Abbas

ARAB NEWS WELCOMES FEEDBACK FROM READERS

Letters sent from within the Kingdom should include the writer's name, address, phone and ID numbers. E-mails from readers abroad should include a name and city.

Letters should be mailed to P.O. Box 478, Riyadh 11411, Saudi Arabia.
Tel: +966012128000 • Fax: +966014418971 • E-mail: general@arabnews.com

EDITORIAL: general@arabnews.com MARKETING: marketing@arabnews.com

TOLL FREE NUMBER: 8002440070

PRINTED AT: AL-MADINA PRINTING AND PUBLICATION CO., JEDDAH

Bahrain 200 Fils; Iran 200 R; Egypt LE 3; India 10 Rs; Indonesia 2000 R; Japan 250 Y; Jordan 250 Fils; Kuwait 200 Fils; Lebanon 1000 L; Morocco 2 D; Oman 200 P; Pakistan 10 Rs; Philippines 20 P; Qatar 2 QR; Singapore \$3; Syria 20 L; Thailand 40 BHT; UAE 2 AED; UK 50 P; US \$1.50; Republic of Yemen R 50; Sudan 25 P

SRPC AND AFFILIATED AGENCIES

JEDDAH: Tel: (966-2)283-6200, Fax: (966-2)283-6228. RIYADH: Tel: (966-2)212-8000, Fax: (966-1)442-8084. DAMMAM: Tel: (966-1)363-3838, Fax: (966-1)363-3444. ABU DHABI: Tel: (971-2)601-5938, Fax: (971-2)601-7390. CAIRO: Tel: (202-3)748-3773, (202-3)748-2996, (202-3)336-8854, Fax: (202-3)748-2884, (202-3)748-3885. MOROCCO: Tel: (212-5)37263-890, Fax: (212-5)37263-898

JORDAN: Tel: (962-6)592-7101, (962-6)591-7102, (962-6)593-8408, Fax: (962-6)593-7100

LONDON: Tel: (44-20)7831-8181, Fax: (44-20)7831-2310

ADVERTISING AGENT

Tel: (Inside Kingdom) 020000417. RIYADH: Tel: (966-1)441-1444, Fax: (966-1)441-0996. JEDDAH: Tel: (966-2)251-3333, Fax: (966-2)664-8740. DAMMAM: Tel: (966-1)363-3344, Fax: (966-1)363-3231. UAE: Tel: (971-4)391-4440, Fax: (971-4)391-0035. LONDON: Tel: (+4420)7604-8950. PARIS: Tel: (+33)15377-6400. PAKISTAN: Tel: (92-2)587-4214, (92-2)587-4215, (92-2)11111-7223, Fax: (92-2)587-4302

Email: hq@alkhaleejah.com, Web: www.alkhaleejah.com

DISTRIBUTION AGENT

TOLL FREE: (866)800-244-0070. Head Office (Riyadh): PO Box 6216, Riyadh 11555, Tel: (966-1)4418933, Fax: (966-1)2127774. E-mail: info@saudi-distribution.com. Western Region: Tel: (966-1)363-0909. Eastern Region: Tel: (966-1)367-3555. Southern Region: Tel: (966-1)7221-8003. Northern Region: Tel: (966-1)324-2070. Dubai: Tel: (971-4)391-8933, Fax: (971-4)391-8254. Abu Dhabi: Tel: (971-2)673-3355, Fax: (971-2)673-3384. Kuwait: Tel: (965)483-4992, Fax: (965)483-4730. Manama: Tel: (973)-21807770

SUBSCRIPTION

Head Office: (Riyadh): P.O. Box 22304, Riyadh 11495, Tel: (966-1)4418933, Fax: (966-1)4423955. TOLL FREE: (866)800-244-0070. Email: info@arabmediaco.com, Web: www.arabmediaco.com.

PRINTING CENTER

Riyadh: P.O. Box 90202, Riyadh 11523, Tel: (966-1)2128000, Fax: (966-1)2884900. Jeddah: P.O. Box 324, Jeddah 21441, Tel: (966-1)2830-8000, Fax: (966-1)2830-4000. Dammam: Tel: (966-1)3647-1960. Email: mpp@rmp-cc.com.

ARAB NEWS

Disclaimer
Views
expressed by
writers in
this section
are their
own and do
not necessarily
reflect Arab
News' point
of view.

Cloud services are expected to make up to 30 percent of the total ICT spend in the Kingdom by 2030.
Dr. Mohammed Altamimi
CITC governor



Business



Individual stock and derivatives are already assigned a unique identification number to allow regulators and market participants to identify, track and quantify risks from trades. Shutterstock

MARKET WRAP

Digital identifiers to help crypto market go mainstream

Cardano predicted to become the third-largest digital currency

Rayana Alqubali Riyadh

Digital token identifiers or DTIs to identify crypto assets will be launched in September in the latest sign of how the fast growing, unregulated market is adopting the hallmarks of mainstream investing.

The new digital token identifiers or DTIs will be registered at the DTI Foundation, a not-for-profit unit of Etrading Software, a fintech company that provides market infrastructure.

Individual stock and derivatives are already assigned a unique identification number to allow regulators and market participants to identify,

track and quantify risks from trades.

As the crypto assets sector grows in size, regulators and the market will need identifiers to track it better, Sassan Danesh, managing partner at Etrading Software, told Reuters.

Bitcoin, the leading cryptocurrency, traded higher on Wednesday, rising by 0.04 percent to \$48,385.90 at 6:37 p.m. Riyadh time.

Ether traded at \$3,182.20, down 1.38 percent, according to data from Coindesk.

Meanwhile, Nigel Green, chief executive of DeVere Group, which has \$12 billion on watch, expects Cardano's price to rise to more than \$3 next month.

He also predicts that Cardano will become the third-largest digital currency in the world after Bitcoin

HIGHLIGHTS

● **Bitcoin, the leading cryptocurrency, traded higher on Wednesday, rising by 0.04 percent.**

● **Ether traded at \$3,182.20, down 1.38 percent.**

● **The new digital token identifiers will be registered at the DTI Foundation.**

and Ethereum. "Cardano is now just behind the major headline grabbers Bitcoin and Ethereum."

Cardano's price is up more than 36 percent in the past week, and the market capitalization is currently \$90.6 billion. Since the beginning

of the year it is up 1,300 percent. Cardano price reached an all-time high of \$2.44 in May.

Adoption

Vast Bank, formerly Valley National Bank, based in Tulsa, Oklahoma, has been experimenting with customers' purchases of cryptocurrency using their bank accounts in a mobile app throughout the first half.

While it is now ready to get customers to buy Bitcoin and seven other cryptocurrencies in the same place where they check account balances.

"You've probably seen the surveys that have said 60 percent of folks that haven't engaged with crypto yet are saying they would like to, but they'd like to do it

through their bank," Vast CEO Brad Scrivner said. "I believe that crypto is going to essentially become this feature within banking," CoinDesk reported.

Green mining

Crypto exchange KuCoin has launched a proof-of-work mining suite that it says will provide significantly lower mining fees and improve mining efficiency.

CEO Johnny Liu said that the pool will try to incentivize green mining by offering discounts to miners who use renewable energy.

Rising energy consumption in Proof of Work mining has angered regulators, particularly in China, and many companies are trying to find ways to make the industry sustainable.

ENERGY

Oil falls below \$71 after EIA data as two-day rally stalls

Shatha Almasoudi Riyadh

Brent crude fell below \$71 a barrel following a two-day rally that added about 8 percent to the international benchmark, as Energy Information Administration data showed US inventories fell as expected last week.

Brent fell 0.8 percent to \$70.60 a barrel at 6:06 p.m. Riyadh time. WTI, the US benchmark, was 0.5 percent lower at \$67.33.

US commercial crude oil inventories in the week ended Aug. 20 decreased by 3 million barrels from the previous week, the Energy Information Administration data showed today. At 432.6 million barrels, US crude oil inventories are about 6 percent below the five-year average for this time of year.

Total motor gasoline inventories decreased by 2.2 million barrels last week and are about 3 percent below the five-year average for this time of year.

Russian oil output has dropped so far in August after a fire at Gazprom's West Siberian processing plant forced the company to cap production in the area.

The unplanned drop comes after the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, including Russia, agreed to start a new round of crude production hikes from August. The alliance will add 400,000 barrels a day to the market each month until all its halted production comes back online.

OPEC's crude exports over the first half of August rose by about 500,000 barrels a day compared with the July average, with Saudi Arabia and the UAE leading the gains, according to data published today by Vortexa.

Mexico's state oil firm said it expected to resume production by Aug. 30.

An oil spill caused by leakage from a power plant inside one of Syria's oil refineries is spreading along the coast of the Mediterranean country, Syria's state news agency said. The spill reached the coastal town of Jableh in Syria about 20 kilometers (12 miles) north of the refinery in the town of Baniyas, satellite photos showed Wednesday.

Weekly data from the American Petroleum Institute showed crude inventories fell 1.6 million barrels for the week ended Aug. 20, while gasoline stockpiles fell 1 million barrels.

Edtech startups: Where's that unicorn?

SARA HAMDAN

It is every parent's favorite time of year: Children are going back to school. However, beneath the excitement of buying new lunchboxes is an undercurrent of worry this year. Will we face weeks of distance learning again? It's likely. The good news — like it or not — is that education technology is having a major moment in the Middle East and North Africa. EdTech startups: Get your highlighters out.

The pandemic gave a boost to online learning, but it seems the habit is here to stay. Shireen Yacoub, CEO of Edraak, the first Arabic open online course program backed by the Queen Rania Foundation, saw a 158 percent uptick in users from March 2020 until year end. They now cater to over 5 million adult learners and about 70 percent are logging in on smartphones. In a region with high smartphone and internet penetration (over 90 percent), EdTech has a major opportunity in a part of the world with a social

media-savvy, young population. Sounds great, right? But there are systemic issues that need to be addressed before we pass out the gold stickers.

"Imagine a family with four kids: Who gets the smartphone? Access to devices, data bundles and reliable internet are crucial to access platforms, solutions and content," said Yacoub. "This is what deepens the equity gap and why it's critical to leverage public-private partnerships."

Despite additional challenges including fragmentation and digital payment blocks, there's a ripe opportunity for EdTech startups looking for government or VC funding. My research led to staggering figures: 50 percent of the world's out-of-school children — that's 150 million kids — are in the MENA region, according to a 2021 Global Ventures report.

Nafez Dakkak, managing director and CEO of the Queen Rania Foundation's UK office, writes that "the total addressable market is



Sara Hamdan is a former Merrill Lynch banker, New York Times journalist and editor at Google. She writes on startups, women in business, and post-COVID-19 work trends.

significantly larger if we factor in the reskilling and upskilling of adult workers needed across MENA as a result of the fourth industrial revolution." This is particularly true in the Gulf, where rapid digital adoption demands an agile future workforce.

Dakkak says that "global EdTech platforms like Coursera and Udemy also have over 15 million users from the region alone — and this demand is translating into investment activity." Last year, five regional EdTech startups received over \$20 million in total funding, according to MAGNITT. And yet, we don't have an EdTech unicorn in the Arab world yet.

"We are yet to see a significant number of exits in education (certainly in MENA, but also globally)," explained Dakkak. "That is starting to change more rapidly (not least because of the pandemic). Examples include Coursera's IPO earlier this year and Duolingo's impending IPO."

Local startups, including Noon Academy, Lamsa and Baima are taking note. Lamsa, which caters to young children, has the largest reach with 17 million users to date.

"The market size of the pre-school digital learning opportunity is no less than \$2 billion with only a handful of players capturing it," said Badr Ward, CEO of Lamsa. "I am extremely optimistic that 'EdTech's sleeping giant' is about to wake up. I expect 2022 to be a disruptive year for the EdTech landscape across the region with mass adoption, consolidation, and deals similar in size to fintech."

Ward projects the market size of digital learning to reach \$1 trillion in 2026. Between now and 2050, the world will have 2 billion more learners, according to the Global Ventures report. With all this promise and change, there's no doubt that regional EdTech startups are poised for growth. We just have to be ready for the pop quiz.

Business Saudi Arabia

DEVELOPMENT

KSA 'being reborn' as Vision 2030 unleashes \$1tn real estate, megaprojects

Almost \$300 billion of the total spend is dedicated to new infrastructure, says report

Arab News Riyadh

Almost \$1 trillion in real estate and infrastructure projects have been announced across Saudi Arabia since 2016 as the Kingdom's economy is transformed under Vision 2030, analysis carried out by global property consultant Knight Frank has revealed.

According to Faisal Durrani, Knight Frank's head of Middle East research, "Saudi Arabia is a country being reborn."

Durrani said: "The ambition that underpins Vision 2030 is being borne out in reality and we are rapidly closing in on \$1 trillion in developments, all of which are colossal. And this is only about a third of the total spend planned."

He added: "The number and value of megaprojects around the country are set to transform the country's real estate landscape, standard of living, lifestyle offering and, perhaps most importantly, showcase the Kingdom's vision for an ultra-modern future to a global audience."

According to Knight Frank, almost \$300 billion of the total spend is dedicated to new infrastructure, including extensive passenger rail networks and a new \$147 billion airport for Riyadh, which is expected to be the home base for a new national airline.

"The scale of infrastructure improvements in the country is phenomenal," Durrani said.

"The aggressive targets laid out by the government to attract about 100 million annual visitors to the country by 2030 means both adequate and first-class gateways need to be created. We are already seeing the first of these trickling through, including the new cruise



The number and value of megaprojects around the Kingdom are set to transform the country's real estate landscape, standard of living and lifestyle offering. File

terminal at Jeddah Islamic Port. These developments are not vanity projects but will have a significant impact on economic growth."

The cruise industry itself is set to create up to 50,000 jobs nationally, according to the Public Investment Fund and 1.5 million cruise visitors are expected annually by 2028.

Knight Frank highlighted eight

new cities that are planned, mostly along the Red Sea coast, where almost \$575 billion is being spent to deliver over 1.3 million new homes and over 100,000 hotel rooms.

NEOM alone will cost an estimated \$500 billion and is being positioned as a new vision for future cities. The new metropolis will use cutting edge technology

to create one of the most innovative and sustainable places in the world.

Meanwhile, Riyadh is poised to become entrenched as the Kingdom's commercial hub, with more than 100,000 new homes expected by the end of 2023 and close to 3 million square meters of office space in the pipeline, along with over 12,000 hotel rooms,

spread across megaprojects worth an estimated \$63 billion.

"Delivering these projects at such speed is incredible, but clearly comes with its own challenges and opportunities. Regulations that govern the sale and lease of all property asset classes need to be carefully looked at if the Kingdom is to deliver a globally attractive investment landscape," Durrani said.

HIGH LIGHTS

● NEOM alone will cost an estimated \$500 billion and is being positioned as a new vision for future cities.

● Riyadh is poised to become entrenched as the Kingdom's commercial hub, with more than 100,000 new homes expected by the end of 2023.

INVESTMENTS

Saudi industrial sector attracts \$18.7bn in 7 months: Minister

Deema Al-Khadair Jeddah

The Saudi industrial sector attracted investments worth SR70 billion (\$18.7 billion) from the beginning of 2021 till the end of July, Bandar Alkhorayef, minister of industry and mineral resources, said in a tweet.

"This leap is a translation of the support of our wise leadership and the industrial transformation that the Kingdom is witnessing, a golden age for industry, and an important indicator that reflects the attractiveness of the sector and its ability to attract capital," the minister said.

A separate statement issued by the ministry said it approved the establishment of 48 new factories in July with a total investment of SR50 billion while the number of new industrial units that became operational reached 78.

The number of Saudis and expatriates working in the Kingdom's industrial sector jumped by 1,101 and 1,830 respectively in July 2021.

The total number of industrial units in the Kingdom now stands at 10,166 with investments over SR1.3 trillion.

The Kingdom's industrial

economy covers 16 strategic sectors and is distributed over 13 administrative regions throughout the country, according to the report from the ministry's National Center for Industrial and Mining Information.

Riyadh is home to the largest number of factors, at 4,079. The Eastern Province recorded 2,206 factories, Makkah has 1,911, and Al-Qassim region 428, followed by Al Madinah with 416 factories, the report showed.

The strategic sectors in the Kingdom include metals, food and plastic products, machinery and equipment, the specialized chemical industry, basic and medium chemicals, automobile factories, refined oil products, pharmaceuticals, medical supplies, renewable energy, marine and aviation, military, and building materials.

Building materials dominate the Kingdom's industrial sector with 2,016 factories, followed by 1,705 working in the production of metals, 1,445 food factories, 1,317 for plastic and rubber products and 571 machinery and

This leap is a translation of the support of our wise leadership and the industrial transformation that the Kingdom is witnessing, a golden age for industry.

Bandar Alkhorayef
Minister of Industry and mineral resources



equipment factories.

Saudi Arabia's Industrial Production Index (IPI) rose by 11.9 percent in June 2021 from a year earlier and by 3.6 percent from May, official data showed.

"Development of this sector is one of the pillars of Saudi Vision 2030 to create a competitive economy and sustainable development," Dr. Osama Ghanem Al-Obaidi, economic adviser and international economic law expert, told Arab News.

"Saudi Arabia aims at developing promising industries in food, medicine, and medical supplies, as well as military industries, and industries relating to oil, gas, and petrochemicals, mining, and chemicals," he said.

The Kingdom is anticipating increased industrial activity in coming years through advanced technology.

Advanced technology from the Fourth Industrial Revolution is expected to generate around SR1 trillion for the Saudi economy in new revenue streams, a senior Saudi official told a conference in Riyadh last month.

AVIATION

Saudi restoration of global connectivity is key for saving jobs, GDP losses: IATA

Arab News Riyadh

The International Air Transport Association welcomed measures taken by Saudi Arabia to revive the aviation industry as it battles to save more than a quarter of a million related jobs in the Kingdom amid a downturn in travel due to the pandemic.

In 2019, Saudi Arabia's aviation sector supported 977,000 jobs and SR240 billion (\$64 billion) of the GDP, IATA said in a statement. The pandemic has put 361,000 of those jobs and SR85 billion of the GDP at risk, while passenger demand is not expected to return to 2019 levels before 2024, it said.

The measures Saudi Arabia has taken include: Opening up the Kingdom for tourists; removing quarantine for vaccinated travelers; expanding the facilitation of religious traffic to the holy cities; reinstating visa processing for international passengers; enhancing systems and health measures across all airports.

"We welcome the recent steps taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to restore air travel and enhance the passenger experience during a challenging time for

aviation," said Kamil Al-Awadhi, IATA's regional vice president for Africa and Middle East.

"Saudi Arabia recognizes aviation as a catalyst for economic growth and modernization, and we are pleased to see the Kingdom's continued prioritization of aviation as a key to

HIGHLIGHTS

● In 2019, Saudi Arabia's aviation sector supported 977,000 jobs and SR240 billion (\$64 billion) of GDP.

● The measures Saudi Arabia has taken include: Opening up the Kingdom for tourists; removing quarantine for vaccinated travelers.

● The Kingdom also expanded the facilitation of religious traffic to the holy cities.

achieving Vision 2030."

"After more than one year of border closures, the kick-off of the National Aviation Strategy will bring to life plans to triple the number of passengers to the Kingdom and fly to 250 destinations," he said.

Business News



Deposit growth outpaced loans at most banks through Q2 as consumers and businesses cut spending amid economic uncertainty. Shutterstock

REBOUND

UAE top banks return on equity hits 5Q high

Operating income increased by 2.8 percent quarter over quarter, says report

Luzette Strauss Alkhalaf

The UAE's 10 largest banks posted a strong rebound in profitability and balance sheet metrics in the second quarter of the year, as economic conditions continued to improve, according to a report by management consultant Alvarez & Marsal.

Return on equity climbed to 10.9 percent, its highest level for five quarters, from 9.8 percent in the first quarter, co-authors Asad Ahmed, head of Middle East Financial Services at A&M, and Sumit Mittal, senior director, wrote in the report. Emirates NBD

and Commercial Bank of Dubai reported the highest RoE among the top 10 banks, with 12.5 percent and 13.3 percent, respectively.

A 2.8 percent quarter-over-quarter increase in operating income coupled with a 9.3 percent drop in impairment charges as borrowers met their obligations were the key drivers of profitability, they said.

Deposit growth outpaced loans at most banks through the second fiscal quarter of 2021 as consumers and businesses cut spending amid economic uncertainty, bolstering already robust liquidity.

Loans and advances increased by 1.9 percent quarter over quarter, aided by a rebound in Dubai's mortgage market, which saw an almost doubling

HIGHLIGHTS

- Loans and advances increased by 1.9 percent QoQ.
- Aggregate net interest margin remained stable at 2.05 percent.
- The average coverage ratio rose to 92.3 percent in the second quarter.

of deal volume between December 2020 and June 2021. Deposits rose by 2.1 percent.

Aggregate net interest margin remained stable at 2.05 percent in the second quarter as industry-wide

credit yields remained suppressed while cost of funding declined marginally.

The average coverage ratio — a measure of a company's ability to cover its fixed charges — rose to 92.3 percent in the second quarter from 91 percent in the first three months of the year. Three of the nation's 10 largest banks — Emirates NBD, Mashreq Bank and RAK Bank — have a coverage ratio of more than 100 percent.

The other seven lenders in the report are First Abu Dhabi Bank, Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank, Dubai Islamic Bank, Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank, Commercial Bank of Dubai, National Bank of Fujairah and Sharjah Islamic Bank.

California stays laid-back despite challenges

FRANK KANE

When America sneezes, the rest of the world catches cold, goes the old adage. But it's equally true that if California is feeling poorly, the rest of the US will also be under the weather.

The economy of the Golden State is so big that it is a decisive force in determining the economic well-being of the other 49 states. If California were a country, it would rank as the fifth biggest in the world, worth more than India, France or the UK. What happens in California really matters to the rest of us.

It matters especially to Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Middle East because California is a huge customer in the global oil and gas markets, as well as a destination for investment by the region's big sovereign wealth funds and wealthy private investors in sectors ranging from high-tech to real estate.

A recent visit to its biggest conurbation — Los Angeles and its huge metropolitan sprawl — found the state in relatively good health but with a few worrying symptoms that are giving some pause for thought.

On the face of it, California is virtually over the lockdowns brought on by the coronavirus pandemic. The international airport was packed with arrivals from all over the world, as well as from "staycation" visitors from other parts of the US.

The freeways were busy and subject to annoying tailbacks, which seemed purely down to the volume of traffic. Downtown was hectic, and the big tourist attractions, like the Hollywood Walk of Fame and the Universal Studios theme park, were doing a roaring trade in LA glitz and glam.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom declared the state open for business as usual in mid-June, after a long regime of social distancing and backed by a rapid roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines. Like President Joe Biden, Newsom appeared to be declaring victory over the virus that caused more deaths in the US than any other country. LA was ready to party again.

But that reopening has resulted in a big recent spike in COVID-19 infections that has forced the state authorities to reimpose some restrictions, in particular again recommending (though not mandating) the wearing of masks in public places and in big crowds.



Frank Kane is an award-winning business journalist based in Dubai. Twitter: @frankanedubai

"No mask, no entry" is a common sign in shops and restaurants. Fortunately, the southern Californian climate allows many social activities to take place in the relative safety of the outdoors.

How long the restrictions will remain in place depends on the progress of the delta variant, as well as another new strain, the lambda variant, that has also surfaced in the American west.

The new caution Newsom has been forced to embrace comes at a worrying time for the state's Democratic governor, who is facing a "recall" vote in mid-September that could see him replaced by a Republican. One of the reasons for the discontent among Californian voters, ironically, was Newsom's attendance at a birthday dinner party in breach of pandemic rules.

Adding to this mix of uncertainty are the environmental and energy challenges southern California faces. The region is bone dry in summer, and destructive wildfires are commonplace.

I watched in shocked fascination one sunny afternoon as a hillside not more than two miles away caught fire, with palm trees going up in flames, as planes water bombed the area just a short drive from Downtown.

California is a massive consumer of water and energy and has recently come alive to the benefits of desalination to produce the water consumers' and industry needs. The bigger problem for the state is the irregularity of electricity supplies in peak times, causing some experts to call for a halt in the renewable projects blamed for causing the shortages.

As a hub of the US oil industry, California is acutely aware of the challenges faced in the transition to cleaner forms of energy.

None of this seemed to matter to the guests crowding around the pool at the swanky Beverly Hills Hotel in the west of Los Angeles, which included a significant number of Middle East visitors and their families.

Regardless of pandemic, political or environmental problems, California will continue to be a magnet for business investment in the US, as well as a laid-back playground for the rest of the world.

BizBriefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Solar energy

Consortium gets \$600m for Sudair project

A consortium of ACWA Power, Saudi Aramco, and PIF-owned Iadeel, will obtain financing for the 1.5GW Al-Sudair solar scheme of \$600 million at 110 basis points (bp) with fees at 150bp, a banking source told CNBC Arabia.

The first phase of the project is expected to begin producing electricity during the second half of 2022 at the second-lowest price ever achieved globally for a solar PV project, 1.239 cents per kWh.

The plant will meet the energy needs of 185,000 houses and reduce carbon emissions by about 2.9 tons annually.

A specialized team of experts from the Saudi Energy Ministry selected the project site and carried out preliminary studies to achieve the highest levels of efficient energy production.

AN Riyadh

Expansion

Mubadala invests in Korean medical aesthetics giant

A consortium, which includes Abu Dhabi wealth fund Mubadala, has acquired 46.9 percent equity interest in Hugel, a Korean manufacturer of cosmeceutical products.

The investment is a new addition to the company's growing portfolio of global businesses, including India's Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd. and Europe's largest veterinary chain IVC Evidensia.

Other members of the consortium include CBC, Asia's largest healthcare investment firm in Singapore, and South Korea-based GS Holdings Corp. and IMM Investment Corp.

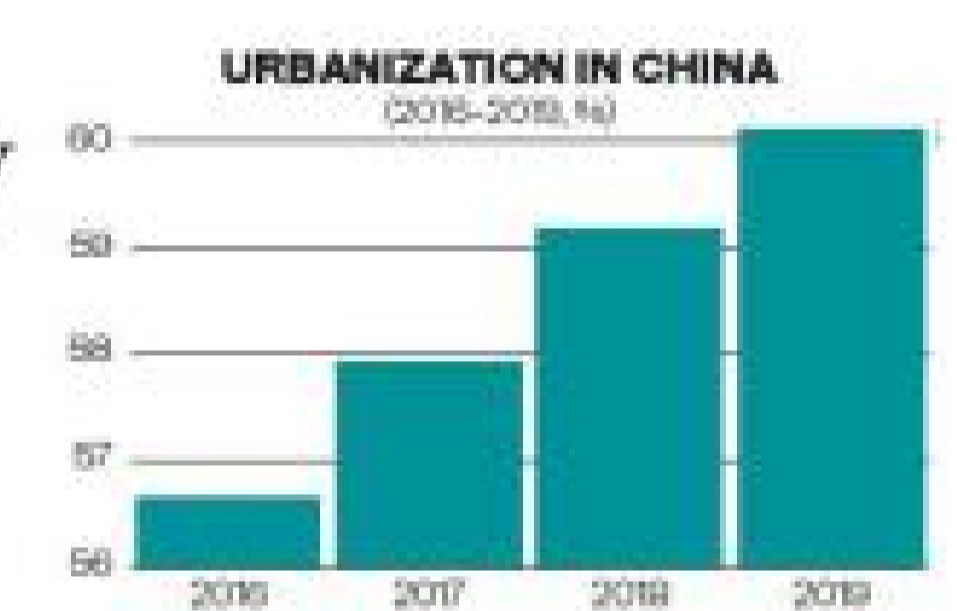
"CBC will continue to develop its global healthcare portfolio with strong support from our global investors," CBC Managing Director Michael Keyoung said in a statement. As for Mubadala, the investment body has supported Abu Dhabi's efforts to pursue non-oil investments.

AN Dubai

Chart of THE DAY

In 2019, 60.31 percent of China's total population lived in urban areas and cities.

Source: Statista



What We're Reading

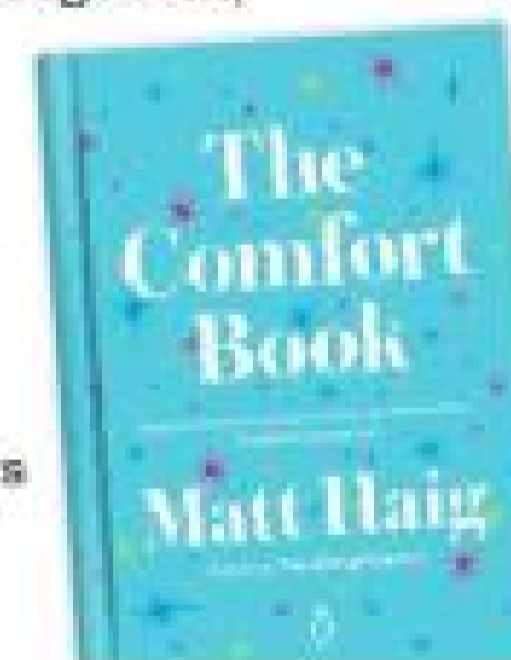
FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

The Comfort Book

MATT HAIG

This book is for anyone who is in search of hope, looking for a path to a more meaningful life, or in need of encouragement, published on goodreads.com.

Years ago, Matt Haig began writing notes to his future self. These notes were meant as gifts to his future self.



Offerings of hope to help himself through anything. As time went on, he added new thoughts and stories, and he turned them into this book so that everyone could draw on this well of reassurance and encouragement. Each of its short meditations gives a new perspective on life.

Alternatives

Siemens to assist Egypt in developing hydrogen project

Egypt is working with global company Siemens Energy to develop the country's hydrogen industry, kicking it off with 200 MW of electrolyzer capacity.

The pilot project is part of a long-term partnership between Siemens and the Egyptian Electricity Holding Co., the pair said in a statement.

It is meant to drive early technology deployment, secure certifications, and define logistic concepts as the country pursues to develop a hydrogen-based industry with export capabilities.

"The agreement will support EEHC and the Egyptian state in opportunities to localize and maximize the use of the green hydrogen industry," EEHC's Mohamed Shaker said.

Earlier in January, the two bodies signed a letter of intent to cooperate on scaling up Egypt's hydrogen-based industry.

AN Dubai

Remedy

India plans to ask state banks to expand lending

India is planning to ask state-run banks to reach out to every district to expand lending to boost demand in the economy, the finance minister said, a move that comes at a time when most lenders are already seeing an increase in bad loans.

A similar exercise was undertaken in 2019-20 when the government ordered state-run banks to hold more than 400 loan fairs to spur growth that had started showing signs of weakness even before COVID-19 hit the country.

"There will be a credit outreach even this year in every district of the country," Nirmala Sitharaman said in a news conference on Wednesday.

India has taken various steps to help revive the economy after two devastating waves of coronavirus infections that have led to a record economic contraction. Reuters

As the first giga-project to implement SAP solutions, The Red Sea Development Company shows how the Saudi government is leading digital transformation.

Ahmed Al-Faifi
SVP and MD, SAP Middle East North



Corporate

PRESS RELEASES FROM THE WORLD OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

SAP partnership boosts TRSDC's digitization efforts

The Red Sea Development Company, which is driving the development of the giga-project The Red Sea Project, announced that its strategic alliance with global technology company SAP is helping streamline its digital innovations.

The Red Sea Project is a regenerative tourism destination spanning 28,000 square kilometers and more than 90 unspoiled islands along Saudi Arabia's west coast. The first phase of 16 hotels across five islands and two inland sites will begin opening in late 2022.

With tourism representing the second most important sector in the Kingdom, TRSDC is spearheading the diversification envisioned by Vision 2030 through a unique, year-round tourism offering that promotes sustainability and environmental enhancement, cultural conservation and economic stimulation.

"In order to align The Red Sea Development Company's internal process speed with our goals and project deadlines, we needed to replace our manual processes with digital processes," said Ammar Alomani, IT applications associate director of TRSDC. "Thanks to our digital transformation with SAP, our procurement is more controlled, transparent, and efficient. We also have real-time insights and decision-making capabilities for our financials, procurement, and employee experiences."

Several TRSDC departments underwent a digital transformation: Finance with the SAP S/4HANA real-time business suite, its procurement with the



The Red Sea Project is a regenerative tourism destination spanning 28,000 square kilometers and more than 90 unspoiled islands along Saudi Arabia's west coast.

HIGHLIGHT

TRSDC's procurement process is now fully automated, from vendor registration through to management and full sourcing. Vendors can easily register on the company's website, and the company can gain information on registered and international vendors, and invite vendors not registered for tenders.

SAP Ariba digital platform, and its talent management with the SAP SuccessFactors human experience management suite.

TRSDC's procurement process is now fully automated, from vendor registration through



Ammar Alomani,
IT applications
associate director
of TRSDC.

to management and full sourcing. Vendors can easily register on the company's website, and the company can gain information on registered and international vendors, and invite vendors not registered for tenders. Procurement is integrated with the financial system, with contract milestones completed through payment processes.

"As the first giga-project to implement SAP solutions, The

Red Sea Development Company shows how the Saudi government is leading digital transformation," said Ahmed Al-Faifi, senior vice president and managing director, SAP Middle East North. "We will share global best practices to support Saudi Vision 2030, especially in tourism and hospitality."

TRSDC has now also implemented a full commerce automation process with additional digital features.

FUTURE OF BANKING

ANB saves 40,000 hours of manual work with Automation Anywhere's RPA platform

Automation Anywhere, a global leader in robotic process automation (RPA), recently announced a collaboration with Arab National Bank to automate back office processes with intelligent software bots. The bank has completed 2 million requests since then, saving 40,000 hours of manual work, with support from Automation Anywhere partner, Orion Valley. ANB has automated 35 manual repetitive business processes within the bank using Automation 360, the world's only cloud native, AI-powered RPA platform. More than 100 software bots now perform tasks within the bank's operations, compliance, HR and other departments.

"Automation Anywhere technology is enabling the future of banking, by allowing financial institutions like ours to achieve significant cost savings, whilst providing higher levels of productivity and efficiencies," said Aiedh Al-Zahrani, COO, ANB. "We successfully migrated more than 100 bots onto the Automation 360 platform, with almost zero downtime, thus saving an estimated 40,000 hours of manual work."

Established in 1979, ANB is a Saudi-listed joint stock company that ranks among the 15 largest banks in the Middle East and is headquartered in Riyadh.

ANB aims to continue to streamline routine pro-

cesses, improve quality of work and decrease associated operating costs. Deploying intelligent automation offers a way to meet these objectives.

"Today, banks and other financial institutions need to remain competitive but also must meet multiple industry regulations involving extremely time-consuming processes requiring dedicated human resources," said Milan Sheth, executive vice president, IMEA at

FASTFACT

More than 100 software bots now perform tasks within the bank's operations, compliance, HR and other departments.

Automation Anywhere. "At its core, intelligent automation can automate mundane, repetitive business processes, and allow banks to take control of compliance costs, improve their risk profiles, and refocus their employee efforts toward innovation."

ANB plans to continue implementing additional software bots to further streamline bank processes in order to take advantage of the resulting additional cost efficiencies.

Automation Anywhere's Bot Store is the world's first and largest marketplace with more than 1,200 pre-built, intelligent automation solutions.

Aiedh Al-Zahrani,
COO, ANB



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Greater unity key to tackle global challenges: Survey

The world needs greater unity and collaboration and must share innovations and expertise if humankind is to tackle its most pressing challenges, according to an overwhelming majority of respondents in a global study by Expo 2020 Dubai.

Reem Al-Hashimy, UAE minister of state for international cooperation and director general of Expo 2020 Dubai, said: "As we learn to live with a changed world and rebuild from COVID-19, some things remain constant, such as our desire to reach out to one another, between communities and across borders, to enable progress through the exchange of knowledge, ideas and perspectives. We are eager to see a new era of global cooperation, one that equips us to deal with real-world challenges in the pursuit of sustainable prosperity for all."

The 2021 survey of more than 22,000 people across 24 countries explored sentiment in a world irrevocably changed by COVID-19. Conducted in partnership with YouGov, it followed a similar study carried out in 2019, before the pandemic.

The number of respondents who are optimistic about their own future with regards to the Expo sub-themes of Opportunity, Mobility and Sustainability increased to 85 percent, up from 60 percent in 2019.

Notably, 86 percent of respondents said international cooperation was crucial to solving challenges such as the global health pandemic, while more than half said sharing expertise and innovations, and collaboration between individuals and communities was critical to over-



The Sustainability pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, which will be held from Oct. 1 to March 31, 2022.

NUMBER

86%

of respondents said international cooperation was crucial to solving challenges such as the global health pandemic.

coming humanity's obstacles and helping to build a more prosperous future.

Al-Hashimy added: "We developed this study to better understand how humanity can shape a brighter future for all. The results align closely with our own Expo programming, which commits to real-life impact across essential topics such as gender equality and women's empowerment, inspiring and enabling our youth, and harnessing tech, innovation and cre-

ativity in the pursuit of a cleaner, safer, healthier tomorrow."

When respondents were asked to rank their priorities for the future, increasing opportunities for youth emerged as the highest, followed by the meaningful involvement of all people with respect to environmental laws and policies (environmental justice), and then international collaboration.

Despite only 32 percent saying they are hopeful about humankind's ability to combat climate change, three in five (61 percent) said they were optimistic about the world's sustainable future.

Comparing nations, optimism toward a global sustainable future was higher in countries such as Indonesia (82 percent), India (72 percent), the UAE (72 percent) and Nigeria (69 percent) versus Canada (42 percent), Germany (36 percent), France (35 percent), the UK (30 percent) and Sweden (30 percent), echoing the findings of the 2019 study.

Corporate Briefs

THE BEST OF THE BEST

Annual Awards

SABB named 'best bank in Saudi Arabia'

Saudi British Bank (SABB) has been named the "Best Bank in Saudi Arabia" for 2021, by banking magazine Euromoney.

The award is given as part of the magazine's annual Excellence Awards event to honor the best financial institutions around the world.

SABB received this award based on its positive results in several areas, the foremost being profitability, growth, geographical coverage, expanding the circle of strategic partnerships, implementing digital banking plans, as well as the ability to adapt to changing market conditions, especially in light of the global pandemic.

Tony Cripps, managing director of SABB, said: "We are delighted to be named the 'Best Bank in Saudi Arabia' by Euromoney, especially under the current challenging environment. SABB is committed to providing its customers with the best banking experience while also introducing initiatives and products that continue to address the objectives of the Kingdom's Vision 2030."

Promoting Reading

Sharjah Book Authority's campaign lands in KSA

"If you're into something, you're into books," the slogan of Sharjah Book Authority's recently launched global cultural campaign, has made its way into the biggest malls across Saudi Arabia, sending out a universal message that whatever be it that triggers one's interests or passions, there is a book out there to fuel their curiosity.

Titled "Into Books," the campaign emphasizes that the world of books is vast and meaningful, and people just need to make an effort to find the first one that they can connect with to be hooked to the written word for life.

As part of its biggest-ever global campaign, SBA is offering discounts of up to 50 percent on books through its collaboration with major e-commerce stores. To avail the discount, individuals must scan the QR code found on advertisements or visit <https://sba.gov.ae/intobooks>

Corporate Milestone

NPC marks 50 years of office automation success

The UAE's leading office equipment company National Printing Center LLC is celebrating more than 50 years of office automation success.

NPC has come a long way since it first started in Abu Dhabi in 1969. At that time, typewriters were the standard office equipment used, engineering drawings were being printed on ammonia diazo machines (blueprints) and Epson had only just invented the dot matrix printer in Japan. NPC has provided office printers to countless clients in government departments and the private sector in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah and Ras Al-Khaimah. The portfolio of products it sells includes many of the models offered by Epson, HP and Rowe.

"The service and maintenance agreements NPC provides, offers its clients value for money as well as peace of mind thus enabling them to focus on their core operations without interruption," a statement said.

Saudi Arabia's Maryam Al-Muraisel lost her first table tennis match but will try to bounce back on Thursday.



Sport News

TOKYO 2020 PARALYMPIC GAMES

Saudi Arabia's Maryam Al-Muraisel falls short in table tennis opener

She loses in straight sets but will get the chance to bounce back on Thursday

All Khaled Dubai

Maryam Al-Muraisel kicked off Saudi Arabia's participation at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games with a defeat to Seo Su-yeon of South Korea in the table tennis women's singles competition on Wednesday morning.

In the Classes 1-2 Group C match at Tokyo Metropolitan Gym, the Saudi lost 3-0 (11-1, 11-1, 11-2) but will be in action again on Thursday afternoon (1:40 p.m. KSA) against Nadezhda Puspasheva of the Russian Paralympic Committee.

In Class 6 Group C, Maliak Alieva of the RPC defeated Najlah Aldayyem of Iraq 3-1 (5-11, 11-2, 11-5, 11-9). The Iraqi will get the opportunity to improve on her performance when she takes on Lee Kun-woo of South Korea on Thursday morning.

Also in the table tennis women's singles, Jordan's Faten Eleminat lost 3-0 (11-2, 11-5, 11-5) to Xiaodan Gu of China in Class 4 Group D and on Thursday takes on Joyce de Oliveira of Brazil.

The early morning swimming competition saw Ayaallah Tewfik of Egypt finish sixth in the women's 50m freestyle S6 first heat, while compatriot Zeyad Kahil came fifth in the men's 200m freestyle S5 heat one at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre.

Meanwhile, in the wheelchair basketball women's tournament, Algeria lost their opening match 74-25 to China at Musashino Forest Sport Plaza.

Algeria also lost 12-4 to Japan in the Group A goalball men's preliminary match at Makuhari Messe Hall in Tokyo. The North African team will face Lithuania in its second match on Thursday.

Paige Greco of Australia claims first Paralympic gold medal

Australian cyclist Paige Greco earned the first gold medal of the Tokyo Paralympics, winning the 3,000-meter individual pursuit on Wednesday on the track at the velodrome.

It was the first of 24 gold medals up for grabs on Wednesday as the Paralympics got underway in the middle of a pandemic that has seen new cases in Tokyo soar since the Olympics opened just over a month ago.

Medals were also contested in swimming and wheelchair fencing on Wednesday.

Greco was born with cerebral palsy, which mostly affects the right side of her body. It was her first Paralympic Games medal, winning her race in 3 minutes, 50.815 seconds. "It feels amazing," Greco said. "I still can't believe it. I keep looking down and seeing (the gold medal). It's not really sunk in yet."

Wang Xiaomei of China was second and bronze went to Denise Schindler of Germany.

Greco took up cycling just over three years ago after competing in



Paige Greco of Australia on her way to the gold medal for the cycling track women's C1-3 3,000-meter individual pursuit at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games Wednesday. Reuters

track and field for seven years.

Australian teammate William Martin also won gold in the first swimming final of the Paralympics, taking the 400-meter freestyle in the S9 class in 4:10.25 seconds. Ugo Didier of France took silver and Alex Tuckfield of Australia won bronze.

In the first wheelchair fencing final, Li Hao of China won gold in the men's individual saber. He defeated Artem Manko of Ukraine 15-12 in the final.

Away from the competition, organizers confirmed Wednesday that two more athletes have tested positive for COVID-19 in the Paralympic Village. That brings to three the total of positive tests by athletes in the village over the last two days.

Organizers have confirmed nine positive tests in the village over the last three days. The additional six, who are not athletes, are described as "Games-related personnel."

Organizing committee spokesman Masa Takaya said the athletes were "from different sports

and different countries." But he gave few details and said the athletes have been placed in isolation.

He was asked if there was a COVID-19 cluster in the village.

"Whether or not there is a cluster should be based on the advice from specialists," he said.

FASTFACT

Away from the competition, organizers confirmed Wednesday that two more athletes have tested positive for COVID-19 in the Paralympic Village.

Japan is expanding its coronavirus state of emergency for a second week in a row, adding several more prefectures as a surge in infections fueled by the delta variant strains the country's healthcare system.

The Japanese capital has been under the emergency since July 12, but new daily cases have increased more than tenfold since

then to about 5,000 in Tokyo and 25,000 nationwide. Hospital beds are quickly filling and many people must now recover at home, including some who require supplemental oxygen.

Japan has weathered the pandemic better than many other countries, with around 15,600 deaths nationwide since the start, but its vaccination efforts lag behind other wealthy nations. About 40 percent of the population has been fully vaccinated, mainly elderly people. Dr. Shigeru Omi, a medical adviser for the government, criticized International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach for returning to Tokyo to attend Tuesday's opening of the Paralympics.

"Right now, the government is requesting people to telework and (Bach) is coming back just for that," Omi said, responding to a question from an opposition lawmaker in parliament.

"When the government is making those requests to the people, why is the Olympic leader, President

Bach, coming all the way to Tokyo. Anyone with normal, common sense should be able to think that he has already come once and even visited Ginza."

International Paralympic Committee spokesman Craig Spence confirmed the IPC is in contact with two Paralympic athletes from Afghanistan who have left the country. He declined to speculate whether they might eventually reach Tokyo for the Paralympics.

"There's a lot of speculation going on where these Afghan athletes are," Spence said. "I'm not going to tell you where they are because this isn't about sport, this is about human rights and keeping people safe."

He added they were in a "safe place."

Several reports say the two athletes — Hossain Rosouli and Zalka Khudadadi — may have arrived in Australia.

AP Tokyo

Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

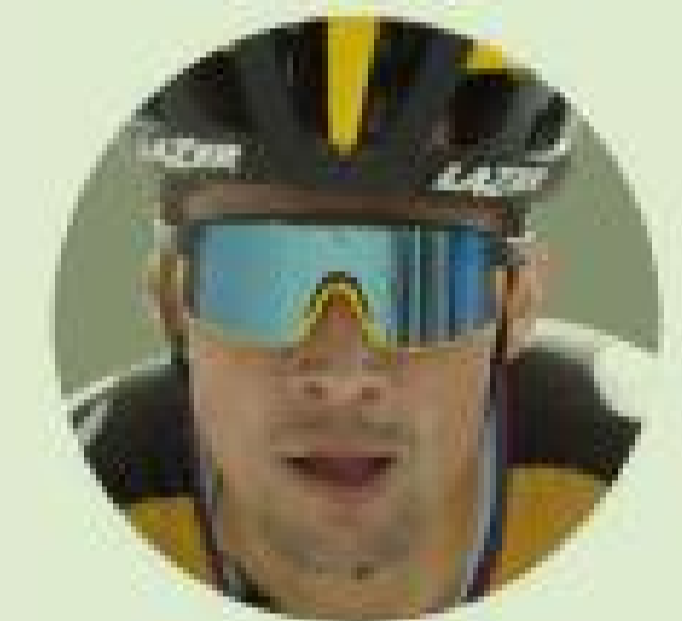
Spanish Vuelta

Roglic wins stage, Eiking keeps lead

Primož Roglic prevailed on the steep final climb Wednesday to earn his second stage victory in this year's Spanish Vuelta, cutting into the overall lead of Odd Christian Eiking.

Roglic went past Enric Mas in the final meters of the 133.6-kilometer (83-mile) 11th stage in southern Spain. The two-time defending champion also won the first Vuelta stage.

It was the seventh career stage win at the Vuelta for Roglic, the Slovenian rider from team Jumbo-Visma. He relinquished the leader's red jersey after crashing near the end of the 10th stage on Tuesday. He is now third, less than two minutes behind Eiking, with the three-week Grand Tour race just past the halfway point. AP



Cup qualifiers issue

Infantino calls for 'solidarity' in player release

FIFA President Gianni Infantino said on Wednesday he wanted the Premier League and La Liga as well as national federations to "show solidarity" in light of the player release dispute for the upcoming World Cup qualifiers.

On Tuesday, the English top-flight said it would stop individuals from featuring for countries on the UK government's red list, meaning a quarantine on return, for September's matches.

Liverpool's Egypt forward Mohamed Salah and Manchester City's Brazil forward Gabriel Jesus are likely to miss out.

Spain's La Liga said it would back its clubs in stopping players from leaving during the windows in September and October. AP

Tennis

Serena out of US Open with injury

Serena Williams added herself to the list of big-name withdrawals from the U.S. Open on Wednesday, pulling out of the year's last Grand Slam tournament because of a torn hamstring.

Williams hasn't competed since injuring her right leg in the first set of her first-round match at Wimbledon in late June.

The American, who turns 40 next month, announced her decision to sit out the US Open via a social media post. She joins Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal in sitting out the competition in Flushing Meadows, where play begins next Monday. The draw is Thursday. AP

FOOTBALL

Saudi footballer Osama Al-Mubarik signs pro contract with Legia Warsaw

Arab News Riyadh

Osama Al-Mubarik of Al-Fateh U-19 team has signed a two-year professional contract with Legia Warsaw of Poland as part of a scholarship program to develop football talents by the Saudi Ministry of Sports, Arabic sports daily Arriyadiyah has reported.

Al-Mubarik spent a trial period at the Polish club last June, with his impressive performances in training ultimately leading to his move.



Al-Fateh U-19 player heading to Poland on two-year deal as part of sports ministry scholarship program.

His audition was part of a program marketing young Saudi footballers to European clubs, with the aim of developing high-caliber professionals who can showcase their talents abroad.

Hisham Tashbandi, director of the Saudi scholarship program for the development of football talents, wished the player success in his new professional career in Poland, where he joins up with another young Saudi player, Abdulrahman Al-Zahrani, currently on trial with Legia Warsaw.

Follow Arab News Briefs all through the day @ArabNews

& Finally



US TikTok star Addison Rae's dreams are coming true as she makes her feature film debut in Netflix's 'He's All That,' a reboot of the 1999 romantic comedy 'She's All That.'

The Six

Emirati Women's Day

In honor of Emirati Women's Day on Aug. 28, we present six homegrown labels led by inspiring Emirati women designers.



YNM Dubai

The womenswear designer, Yasmin Al-Mulla, founded this contemporary, ready-to-wear label in 2014. She has since collaborated with major brands such as Tiffany & Co, Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior, Jimmy Choo and Christian Louboutin.



Twisted Roots

Founded by UAE-born Latifa Al-Gurg, the womenswear label has been in the headlines after winning the competition to design the uniforms for more than 30,000 staff and volunteers at Expo 2020 Dubai.



Madiyah Al-Sharqi

The daughter of Sheikh Hamad bin Mohammed Al-Sharqi, the ruler of Fujairah, Madiyah Al-Sharqi launched her eponymous label in 2012. Her outfits have been worn by US-Colombian actress Sofia Vergara and American model Paris Jackson.



Qasimi

In addition to heading the London-based menswear brand, Sheikhha Hoor Al-Qasimi is also the president and director of the Sharjah Art Foundation.



Fatema Fardan

A year after launching her own label, Fatema Fardan became the first Emirati to present her designs during New York Fashion Week in 2015.



Shamsa Alabbar

The designer's fine jewelry line is known for its beautiful contemporary-meets-traditional designs.



CLOSE UP

Josephine Skriver stars in campaign for US-Egyptian jewelry label Jacquie Aiche

Arab News Dubai

US-Egyptian jewelry label Jacquie Aiche has unveiled its latest diamond-infused collection with a campaign starring Victoria's Secret model Josephine Skriver.

The 28-year-old Danish model features in photographs wearing the Los Angeles-based brand's signature diamond-encrusted body chains, bracelets and stacked gemstone rings.

Highlights from the Jacquie Aiche x Josephine Skriver collection include a 14-carat rose gold necklace made out of freshwater pearls and featuring a pave diamond.

Skriver has long been a supporter of Jacquie Aiche and can often be seen donning the label whether she is posing on an international red carpet or going for a quick coffee run.

Indeed, the part-Egyptian jewelry designer has managed to swiftly emerge as a celebrity-loved label, with stars such as Kylie Jenner, Emily Ratajkowski and Shanina Shaikh favoring the brand's handmade pieces.

Aiche, who was born to an Egyptian father and an indigenous American mother, launched her eponymous label from her garage in 2008. She has since amassed an impressive celebrity client list that includes Rihanna, Selena Gomez, Katy Perry and Hailey Bieber. Stylists head to her Beverly

Hills showroom to adorn their clients in her signature delicate earrings, finger bracelets and chokers ahead of red carpet events. The jeweler is also the inspiration behind Chrissy Teigen's bespoke engagement ring from John Legend.

Her pieces are often spotted in fashion magazines, including on US actress and humanitarian Angelina Jolie, who wore Jacquie Aiche in a series of portraits in her Los Angeles home photographed by Craig McDean for her British Vogue cover story in February.

The jewelry designer's store in Los Angeles holds jewelry items made from delicate raw quartz,



Above: Skriver stars in Jacquie Aiche's latest campaign. Supplied

Left: Josephine Skriver is a Danish model well known for her work with Victoria's Secret. File/Getty Images

tourmaline, moonstone and countless other special stones. Her pieces often feature Arab influences like hammered gold, amulets and the evil eye talisman, as well as natural elements such as turquoise, fossils and precious gemstones, which are a nod to her American ancestors.

The designer has previously teamed up with superstars and models including US singer Usher, Emily Ratajkowski and Alessandra Ambrosio for campaigns.



Charlie Watts. AFP

OBITUARY

Arab fans pay tribute to Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts

Arab News Dubai

Charlie Watts, the drummer of the legendary British rock band the Rolling Stones, died on Tuesday at the age of 80. His Arab fans took to Twitter to express their sadness.

"Some of the masterpieces of the Rolling Stones where Charlie Watts's performances were at its top. Magnificence. He was a talented human being," tweeted one fan in Arabic, attaching images of the band's "Emotional Rescue," "Miss You," "Tumbling Dice" and "Under my Thumb."

Another user tweeted: "I love him so much. May his soul rest in peace." Watts announced earlier this month that he would miss the resumption of the Rolling Stones' tour of the US next month after undergoing a medical procedure.

ESCAPE

Afghan star recounts harrowing escape from Kabul

Reuters/Arab News Dubai

Afghan singer Aryana Sayeed, who has used her international fame to amplify calls for women's rights, wore an all-enveloping veil to escape her homeland as the Taliban took Kabul.

In an interview with Reuters this week, Sayeed said she received a call on Aug. 14 warning her that the Taliban were closing in on the capital.

Sayeed and her fiancé Hasib Sayed, fearful of being recognized by Taliban fighters, tried to flee the country on Aug. 15, but the flight never took off.

The next day, Sayeed again went to the airport, wearing a veil that revealed only her eyes and traveling with Hasib's young cousin as if on a family outing.

Hasib, in a separate car, was the first to reach the US military-controlled airport.

INTERVIEW

Misk Art Institute documents Arab artists through 'Art Library' initiative

Rebecca Anne Proctor Dubai

Over the past century, talented Arab artists have captured the world around them, particularly as major historical events have shaped the region. They have portrayed the daily life and people in their nations and cities even during moments of great change. However, not much has been written and documented about the Arab artists that have covered the last century through their art.

The Misk Art Institute, an affiliate of the Prince Mohammed bin Salman Foundation, or Misk, aims to change this with "The Art



Abdulrahman Alsoliman, *Memory of First Neighbourhood (Al-Kut) II*, 2014, Acrylic on canvas, 90 x 151 cm. Private collection. (Supplied)

Library," an initiative to write and publish a series of art books about Saudi and Arab artists in both Arabic and English.

Published by renowned house Rizzoli Libri, the first series of two books came out in June, dedicated

respectively to postwar contemporary Saudi painter Abdulrahman Alsoliman, currently based in Dammam, and Adam Henain, Egypt's renowned modernist who passed away in May 2020, and who was known for his pioneering

sculptures in bronze, wood, clay, and granite. The elegant volumes, each around 150 pages, offer an informal yet concise and richly detailed introduction to some of the most prominent figures of Arab art. Each book is illustrated with easy-to-follow text — perfect for those without previous knowledge or for connoisseurs in the field wishing to gain more knowledge of 20th century Middle Eastern art history.

"I'd long been keen on publishing a book on artists from our region — a series that would shed light on their work and contributions to the canon of Arab art history, but also highlight those

who were or still are otherwise missing in terms of documentation and literature," series editor Mona Khazindar told Arab News.

"I approached Misk Art Institute because it is an organization that is dedicated to the development of Saudi and Arab art and furthering that conversation," Khazindar, who was the first female (and first Saudi) director general of the World Arab Institute in Paris from March 2011 to March 2014, added. "As editor, I am delighted to work closely with the institute on selecting artists and respective writers and looking at the conception of exhibitions to support the book launches."