

Is Cristiano Ronaldo engaged?

Georgina Rodriguez added weight to growing rumours of an engagement to Cristiano Ronaldo by revealing a sparking ring in her wedding finger as she cheered the footballer to victory in Moscow yesterday afternoon. **P19**

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Ronnie strikes again



Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

Saudi King hopes for Afghan truce to be extended

Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's King Salman expressed his hope that Afghanistan extends the truce that was announced at the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

King Salman added in a statement, published by the Saudi Press Agency, that he followed closely the ceasefire that was agreed between the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban and hoped that such a blessed step would be built upon by all parties to reach a lasting peace in the country.

The Saudi king added, in his statement, that Afghan people have suffered extensively from long wars.

Courts to hear minors over video calls

The new system expected to contribute to reducing the psychological effects on children while delivering their statements.

Manama

A videoconference system will be launched at the Family and Child Prosecution to pave the way for direct or recorded transmission of children's statements at courts, the Public Prosecution announced.

The move aims to consolidate the child protection procedures, provide suitable social and psychological environment for children in accordance with their needs and their circumstances and enable minors to testify within a more relaxed and reassuring atmosphere, the Public Prosecution added.

Chief Prosecutor Dr Ali Al Shuwaikh said that the use of the videoconferencing technology aims to achieve the best interests for children, in general,

The use of the videoconferencing technology aims to achieve the best interests for children, in general, whether victims, witnesses or suspects, while affording all legal guarantees.

DR AL SHUWAIKH

whether victims, witnesses or suspects, while affording all legal

guarantees, including enabling defence lawyers to make instant questions.

He pointed out that the new system will contribute to reducing the psychological effects on children who deliver their statements, especially while facing perpetrators.

Dr Al Shuwaikh also said that a court had been equipped by modern technology, and had already implemented the videoconferencing technique to hear children's statements.

He stressed constant keenness to develop the justice, as well as

to protect witnesses, and cope with technological development to ease procedures, increase their efficiency and achieve the legal requirements stipulated by the Criminal Procedures Law.

According to the Code of Criminal Procedures, the court, in order to fast-track, may resort to modern audio-visual technology to hear the statements of witnesses or those with information about the case, whether through direct transmission or recorded statement during the session whenever the witness could not attend for any reasons.

Gaza's new normal

Israeli warplanes strike 25 Hamas positions in Gaza

Israeli planes initially targeted three Hamas military positions overnight in Gaza in response to kites and balloons carrying incendiary and explosive devices.

The latest spike in tensions follows weeks of deadly protests and clashes along the Gaza-Israel border as well as the worst military escalation last month since a 2014 war.



An explosion is seen in northern Gaza City after an airstrike by Israeli forces yesterday.

Gaza

Israeli warplanes pounded Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip early yesterday in a new flare-up of hostilities that saw dozens of rockets and mortar shells fired from the Palestinian enclave, the army said.

The strikes targeting Hamas' military wing, the Ezzedine Al Qassam Brigades, were more intense than in previous sorties to convey the message "we will not allow this situation to continue," Israeli military spokesman Jonathan Conricus told reporters.

The latest spike in tensions follows

weeks of deadly protests and clashes along the Gaza-Israel border as well as the worst military escalation last month since a 2014 war.

It comes as US President Donald Trump's special envoy Jason Greenblatt and adviser Jared Kushner visit the region to discuss issues including the Pal-

estinian-Israeli peace process.

Israeli planes initially targeted three Hamas military positions overnight in Gaza in response to kites and balloons carrying incendiary and explosive devices launched into Israel from the Palestinian territory, the army said.

"They may look like toys but I can assure they are not toys, they are weapons intended to kill and to inflict damage," Conricus said.

He said that so far Israel had sought to warn off those launching the airborne devices but that could change.

"Hamas and other militants, but mainly Hamas" hit back after the first air raids with more than 45 rockets and mortar rounds fired from Gaza toward Israel, seven of which were intercepted by the Iron Dome missile defense system, he added.

Three more landed inside the Jewish state, he said, but did not account for the remainder.

In response, Israeli planes carried out more raids against 25 "terror objectives" including an underground training compound, according to the army.

GIRL POWER

Women rising to high political offices across Mideast

Cairo

The appointment of two more female ministers this month to the new Egyptian Cabinet means women now fill eight out of 34 positions, the highest number in the modern history of Egypt.

Hala Zayed is the new health minister while Yasmine Fouad takes over as environment minister. Both women replaced men and join culture minister Inas Abdel-Dayem, tourism minister Rania Al-Mashat, Nabila Makram (immigration minister) Ghada Wali (social solidarity minister), Hala El-Saeed (planning minister) and Sahar Nasr (minister of investment and international cooperation).

The appointments by Egypt's new Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly have been welcomed as forward thinking by social

and political commentators.

Four out of 15 new deputy ministers are also women and women now hold 15 percent of the seats in Parliament.

The rise of women to high political office in the Arab world is by no means restricted to Egypt.

Jordan also has a record number of women ministers after Prime Minister-designate Omar Razzaz appointed seven women to the 29-member Cabinet sworn in last week.

In the UAE, women hold nine out of 31 ministerial positions, and one of them, Minister for Youth Shamma Al Mazrui, is also the world's youngest minister, appointed in 2016 when she was only 22.

This makes the UAE Cabinet nearly 30 per cent female, which is higher than India, al-



Rania Al Mashat takes an oath before Egyptian President Abdel Fatah Al Sisi

most equal to the UK and far ahead of the US, where Donald Trump has just four women in his Cabinet.

The general election in Morocco in October 2016 produced 81 women members of Parliament, accounting for 21 percent

of the total 395 seats. The Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD), which won the most votes, also ended up with the highest number of women MPs, 18.

Though elections in Saudi Arabia were open to women

9 out of 31 ministers are women in the UAE.

only in 2015, it ranks 100th out of 193rd in the world league table of women in national governing bodies, slightly above the US at 102nd place.

A policy briefing from the Brookings Institution think-tank in Washington says that one of the best ways for a country to ease economic pressure and boost productivity is to increase female participation in the workplace and in political life.

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