

WORLD
world**Air strikes kill five as Southern Syria assault looms**

AFP | Beirut

Air strikes on rebel towns in southern Syria killed five civilians and knocked a hospital temporarily out of service yesterday, a monitor said, in fresh signs of a looming government assault.

Russian-backed regime forces have for weeks been preparing an offensive to retake Syria's south, a strategic zone that borders both Jordan and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

32 Fula civilians killed in Mali attack, say officials

AFP | Bamako

At least 32 civilians were killed and ten are missing following an attack in central Mali, believed to have been carried out by traditional hunters, local officials said yesterday.

Armed Dozo hunters, linked to the Dogon ethnic group, were suspected of ambushing the isolated village of Koumaga in the Mopti region on Saturday, killing dozens of Fulani herders, including children.

Malian authorities were not immediately available for comment.

Gazan dies of wounds from Israel border clash

Gaza City

A Palestinian man shot by Israeli forces two days ago during clashes on the Gaza border died of his wounds early yesterday, the health ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory said.

"Osama Khalil Abu Khatir, 29-years-old, died of wounds to his stomach after being shot by the Israeli enemy east of Khan Yunis the day before yesterday," ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qudra said.

Fighting moves closer to centre of Yemen's main port

Reuters | Aden

Yemen's Houthis deployed additional forces in the main port city of Hodeidah yesterday as a Saudi-led military coalition moved closer to the city centre in the largest offensive of the war, raising U.N. fears of a humanitarian catastrophe.

The alliance led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates launched its assault on the heavily defended Red Sea city on June 12.

Joy as Saudi lifts driving ban

Women in Riyadh, other cities begin zip around streets with some blasting music from behind wheel

Television presenter Sabika al-Dosari called it "a historic moment for every Saudi woman"

AFP | Riyadh

Saudi women celebrated taking the wheel for the first time in decades yesterday as the kingdom overturned the world's only ban on female motorists, a historic reform expected to usher in a new era of social mobility.

The much-trumpeted move is part of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's plan to modernise the conservative petrostate -- but it has been dented by the jailing of female activists who long opposed the driving ban.

Women in Riyadh and other cities began zipping around streets bathed in amber light soon after the ban was lifted at

midnight, with some blasting music from behind the wheel.

"I feel free like a bird," said talk show host and writer Samar Almogren as she cruised across the capital.

Television presenter Sabika al-Dosari called it "a historic moment for every Saudi woman" before driving a sedan across the border to the kingdom of Bahrain.

The lifting of the ban, long a glaring symbol of repression, is expected to be transforma-



A newly-licensed Saudi driver, behind the wheel near her home in the Saudi capital of Riyadh yesterday

"I'm happy and relieved that... girls in Saudi will live a bit freer than their mothers"

ACTIVIST HALA AL-DOSARI

tive for many women, freeing them from dependence on private chauffeurs or male relatives. Euphoria and disbelief mixed as women across the kingdom flooded social media with videos of their maiden car rides, while some policemen among the large number out on the streets distributed roses to the first-time drivers.

"This is a great achieve-

ment," billionaire Saudi Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal said as his daughter Reem drove a family SUV, with his granddaughters applauding from the back seat.

"Now women have their freedom," he added in a video posted on Twitter.

Some women ebulliently declared online they were driving themselves to work or their mothers for coffee or ice

cream, a mundane experience elsewhere in the world but a dazzling novelty in the desert kingdom.

"The jubilation, confidence and pride expressed by Saudi women driving for the first time in their country, without fear of arrest, brought tears to my eyes," tweeted activist Hala al-Dosari, while lauding the jailed campaigners.

"I'm happy and relieved that... girls in Saudi will live a bit freer than their mothers."

But many women are keeping away, testing reactions in a society torn between tradition and social change -- and bracing for a possible backlash from hardliners who have long preached that allowing female motorists would promote promiscuity and sin.

Authorities appeared to project that the reform had religious sanction, with the kingdom's top clerical council yesterday reiterating that the lifting of the ban was in line with Islamic values.

Erdogan claims victory in poll**Turkish voters had for the first time cast ballots for both president and parliament**

Istanbul

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday declared victory in a tightly-contested presidential election, extending his 15-year grip on power in the face of a revitalised opposition.

Turkish voters had for the first time cast ballots for both president and parliament in the snap polls, with Erdogan looking for a first round knockout and an overall majority for his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). The stakes in this election are particularly high as



Recep Tayyip Erdogan holds his ballot at a polling station yesterday

the new president is the first to enjoy enhanced powers under a new constitution agreed in an April 2017 referendum strongly backed by Erdogan.

Erdogan was on course to defeat his nearest rival Muharrem Ince with more than half the vote without needing a second round, initial results showed.

"The unofficial results of the elections have become clear. According to these... I have been entrusted by the nation with the task and duties of the presidency," Erdogan said at his Istanbul residence.

He added that the alliance led by the AKP had won the majority in parliament.

Prince William lands in Jordan for ME tour

AFP | Amman

Prince William arrived in Jordan yesterday at the start of a Middle East tour that will see him become the first British royal to pay official visits to both Israel and the Palestinian territories.

He was greeted at Amman's Marka military airport by Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah, who is hosting William for the two-day visit in Jordan.

The 36-year-old Duke of Cambridge's Royal Air Force plane touched down at the small airport in eastern Amman, where he was given a red-carpet welcome by the heir to the Jordanian throne.

Royal guards carrying rifles fitted with bayonets and wearing traditional red-and-white chequered keffiyeh scarves



Prince William (L) is greeted at airport by Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah yesterday

stood to attention as the prince, in a dark suit, descended from the plane. Amman's Mayor Youssef al-Shawarbeh and foreign diplomats were also present at the airport to greet William. The second in line to the British throne will spend two days in Jordan.

Legendary Aston Martin driven by James Bond is found**1964 Aston Martin could now be worth up to £10million**

DailyMail | Florida

A legendary Aston Martin driven by James Bond in Goldfinger could have been found more than twenty years after it was stolen from a Florida airport.

The 1964 DB5 - which was equipped with machine guns and tyre-bursting blades for Sean Connery's 007 - could have been found in the Middle East, according to a tip given to in-



It is not known where specifically in the Middle East the car is believed to be stored



1964 Aston Martin was stolen in 1997 from an airport hangar in Florida

investigators.

It was stolen in 1997 while its owner, who bought it in 1986 for \$250,000, had it in an airport hangar in Boca Raton.

Now Art Recovery International, which was hired by an insurance company to find the DB5, could be on the verge of retrieving the car, The Sunday Telegraph reports.

Christopher Marinello, Art Recovery's chief executive, said: "I have been given a specific tip, but we are working on it."

"We want to reach out to [the] collector car community and [a] vast array of mechanics to let them know we are very serious about recovering it."

It is not known where specifically in the Middle East the car is believed to be stored.

A six-figure cash reward is being offered for information that leads to its safe return.