

[Daesh continues to lose influence and effectiveness in Iraq, says US general](#)

CHICAGO: A US military official said on Wednesday that the war to defeat Daesh in Iraq and Syria continues to advance, citing as proof of progress a significant year-on-year reduction in terrorist activities.

[Syrian president's comments reignite debate over Turkiye, Syria rapprochement process](#)

ANKARA: Remarks by Syria's President Bashar Assad during an interview with Sky News Arabia recently have sparked discussions on whether this has damaged improving relations between Damascus and Ankara.

In the interview, Assad rejected any meeting with his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and suggested that Erdogan's motive for seeking talks was aimed at legitimizing Turkiye's presence in Syria. "Why should I and Erdogan meet? To have soft drinks?" Assad quipped.

[Yemeni criminal investigator gunned down in Taiz](#)

AL-MUKALLA: Armed men on a motorbike shot and killed a Yemeni security officer investigating the murder of a UN employee in the southern city of Taiz on Tuesday, dealing a blow to the efforts of local security services to restore order and peace to the chaotic city.

Adnan Al-Muhya, an intelligence and criminal investigation officer, was walking through the Al-Jehmlah area of Taiz when assailants on a motorcycle opened fire on him and fled, leaving him bleeding to death, Lt. Col. Usama Al-Sharabi, a spokesperson for Taiz police, told Arab News.

US sanctions Lebanese environmental group accused of being an arm of Hezbollah

WASHINGTON: The United States imposed sanctions Wednesday on a Lebanese environmental organization accused of being an arm of the militant group Hezbollah.

The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control designated Green Without Borders and its leader, Zouher Nahli, for allegedly providing support and cover to Hezbollah in southern Lebanon along the "Blue Line" between Lebanon and Israel "while operating under the guise of environmental activism."

Egyptians smoke 100bn cigarettes annually, says Eastern Company's CEO

CAIRO: The managing director and CEO of Egypt's biggest cigarette manufacturer has estimated that 18 percent of the country's population are smokers.

Hany Aman, of Eastern Company, said that Egypt's population smokes 100 billion cigarettes each year, pointing out that his company produces 70 billion per year, with its share of the Egyptian market ranging from 70 to 75 percent. The company also sells other tobacco products.

Aman said that demand for cigarettes increases each June as there is a widespread belief that there will be a tax increase in the new fiscal year.