

## **Frankly Speaking: What will it take to normalize ties between Saudi Arabia and Israel?**

DUBAI: Israel has to meet the conditions set out in the Arab Peace Initiative proposed by Riyadh in 2002 for any dreams of normalization of ties with Saudi Arabia to materialize, Yossi Mekelberg, associate fellow for the Middle East and North Africa Program at Chatham House, has said.

Appearing in the latest episode of “Frankly Speaking,” the weekly Arab News current affairs show, Mekelberg said that the Arab Peace Initiative is “as relevant today as it was 21 years ago” as a means of ending the conflict and achieving normalization.

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## **Fire at Egypt’s Endowments Ministry started in computer server room**

CAIRO: The Egyptian Public Prosecution Office has revealed more details about the fire that broke out on Saturday at the Ministry of Religious Endowments in Cairo.

Following an investigation, which included questioning security personnel in the building, the representative for legal affairs and the ministry’s general manager for infrastructure, the prosecutors concluded that the blaze was caused by an electrical short circuit in an air-conditioning unit in the computer server room on the first floor.

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## **How Feb. 6 earthquake compounded the misery of northwest Syria’s children**

LONDON: Rescued from under rubble six months ago, Hiba, who has not yet turned six, lost her entire family and part of her foot in Syria’s deadly earthquakes in February. In need of constant care, she now lives with distant relatives in an overcrowded displacement camp.

Hiba, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, is one of thousands of children orphaned by two temblors that struck southern Turkiye and northern Syria on Feb. 6, which upended the lives of at least 2.5 million

children in Syria alone, according to UNICEF.

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## **Increase in cigarette prices in Egypt pushes smokers to find alternatives**

CAIRO: Recent successive increases in the price of cigarettes in Egypt, both domestic and foreign, have prompted many citizens to abandon the brands they once smoked, opting instead to search for cheaper ones or switch to smoking hookahs in cafes or at home.

Among those affected is Ahmed Fathi, a journalist, who told Arab News: "Hookah is much cheaper than cigarettes now, first because it does not make me smoke much, only once or twice a week, and the price I pay for both times is close to the price of one pack of cigarettes."

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## **Bahrain calls on its citizens to leave Lebanon for their 'safety'**

LONDON: Bahrain has urged its citizens to adhere to an advisory issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, cautioning them against traveling to Lebanon for their safety, the ministry said in a statement on Saturday.

The ministry called on all Bahraini citizens not to travel to Lebanon "in order to protect them from exposure to any dangers, calling for them to leave the Lebanese territory for their safety," the statement said.

Citizens are required to contact the Bahrain Embassy in Damascus for assistance in case of emergencies.