Why McDonald’s, Starbucks and other American brands have long paid the price of politics in the Middle East

RIYADH: Whenever conflicts erupt in the Middle East, American consumer brands are often among the first targets of public anger. The war in Gaza has been no different, with McDonald’s and Starbucks branches in Lebanon attacked and consumer boycotts announced throughout the region.

These attacks and boycotts echo similar scenes from the time of the Second Intifada in the early 2000s and the Iraq War era, which prompted a ban on Coca-Cola that remained in place in many Arab countries for decades, giving its rival Pepsi a market advantage enjoyed to this day.

Lebanon accuses Israel of ‘scorched earth policy’ over shelling

BEIRUT: Lebanese firefighters on Thursday were struggling to contain a series of night fires believed to have been started by Israeli phosphorus shells fired into forests and orchards near the country’s southern border.

Residents of the border town of Aita Al-Shaab urged UN peacekeeping forces, Lebanese troops and Civil Defense personnel to join in efforts to extinguish fires that have ravaged nearby farming land.

Eyewitnesses said the fires detonated land mines and cluster bombs left behind by Israeli bombardments.

Sudan’s paramilitary RSF claims capture of second city

CAIRO: The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces that have been battling Sudan’s army for control of the country said they had seized Nyala, its second largest city, on Thursday.

The seizure of the capital of South Darfur state in the west of the country could mark a turning point in Sudan’s six-month war, and comes as the two sides are due to restart negotiations in Jeddah.

The army did not respond to a request for comment, and a network blackout made it difficult to immediately verify the claim.

One killed in Lebanon’s biggest Palestinian camp: state media

BEIRUT: The brother of a wanted Islamist was killed inside Lebanon’s largest Palestinian refugee camp on Thursday, state media said.
A young man who was “the target of an assassination operation inside the Ain Al-Helweh camp died after sustaining serious wounds,” Lebanon’s National News Agency said.
“He is the brother of a wanted Islamist who does not belong to any faction in the camp,” the news agency added.

Hamas armed wing says ‘almost 50’ Israeli hostages killed in raids

GAZA STRIP: Hamas’s armed wing said Thursday that “almost 50” Israeli hostages held in the Gaza Strip since the October 7 attacks have been killed in Israeli bombing raids on the Palestinian territory.
“(Ezzedine) Al-Qassam Brigades estimates that the number of Zionist prisoners who were killed in the Gaza Strip as a result of Zionist strikes and massacres has reached almost 50,” the group said in a statement issued on its Telegram channel.