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NATION | P2

**Abu Dhabi unifies  
public transport  
bus fares**



THE VIEWS | P7

**How Hollywood  
corrupts the  
image of Arabs**



BUSINESS | P5

**Q Holding on track  
to become major  
real estate entity**

ENTERTAINMENT | P15

**JENNIFER  
LOPEZ ON  
HER SUDDEN  
BURST OF  
INSPIRATION**



## PRESIDENT HONOURS MOHAMMAD BIN RASHID AND MANSOUR WITH ORDER OF ZAYED

President His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan yesterday awarded His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and

Ruler of Dubai, and Shaikh Mansour Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Vice-President, Deputy Prime Minister of the UAE, and Chairman of the Presidential Court, the Order of Zayed in appreciation of their pivotal

role in the successful organisation of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) recently hosted by the UAE.  
**SEE ALSO P4**

NATION

**Dubai Cares  
launches 'Gaza  
In Our Hearts'  
Ramadan  
campaign | P3**

MIDDLE EAST

**Hamas claims  
rocket attack  
on north Israel  
from south  
Lebanon | P8**

GN FOCUS

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at curated  
solutions in  
home security  
for smart homes**

# Security boost for UK MPs over war in Gaza

£31M EARMARKED TO COUNTER THREAT TO LAWMAKERS

LONDON

The UK government announced a multi-million-pound package yesterday to boost the security of elected lawmakers who say they face increasing threats amid tensions over the Israel-Hamas war.

The £31 million (\$39 million) in extra funding over the next year follows British MPs being targeted with intense criticism and abuse over their stances on the Middle East conflict.

It also comes during a febrile, pre-election atmosphere, with a nationwide vote due later this year and expected to result in a change of government from Conservative to Labour.

**Dedicated police contact**

Under the new provisions, lawmakers will have access to a dedicated police contact to discuss security while those most at risk could seek bodyguards, the interior ministry said.

The money will also expand cybersecurity advice to MPs and increase police patrols in areas witnessing heightened community tensions, it added.

"None of us should have to accept that enduring hate crimes, harassment, or threats is part of the job," interior minister James Cleverly said in a statement.

British MPs have expressed growing concerns about their safety following a surge in anti-Semitic and Islamophobic incidents since the conflict in Gaza broke out on October 7.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said they had been "verbally



Reuters

An activist tapes a Vote Uncommitted sign on the speaker's podium at a poll gathering in Michigan.

## MICHIGAN'S 100,000 'UNCOMMITTED' VOTES SHOW ISRAEL IMPACT ON BIDEN

Joe Biden's campaign and top Democratic officials vowed to double down on efforts to win over voters as the US president aims to solve conflicts in the Middle East, after Michigan registered a stronger-than-anticipated protest vote over his support of Israel.

About 13.2 per cent of Michigan Democrats cast a ballot for "uncommitted" in the primary, following a weeks-long push by activists, an Edison Research tally showed yesterday.

With about 85 per cent of all votes counted, the uncommitted vote was already over 100,000 votes, far higher than expectations.

—Reuters

threatened and physically, violently targeted", with "legitimate protests hijacked by extremists".

**'Stay away'**

Conservative MP Mike Freer, who represents a large Jewish area, is not seeking reelection because of a spate of threats and an arson attack on his office. Earlier this month, fellow Tory Tobias Ellwood said 80 pro-Palestinian protesters had gathered outside his home, with police warning

his family to "stay away" to avoid antagonising the crowd.

Last week, Commons speaker Lindsay Hoyle cited threats to lawmakers as a reason for his controversial handling of a debate about calls for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign said the issue of lawmakers' security was "serious" but should not be used to "shield MPs from democratic accountability". —AFP

**SEE ALSO P8, P9**

## UAE youth to gain from Aani payment platform

New system targets over 450,000 SMEs using cash to switch over to digital

DUBAI

BY MANOJ NAIR

Business Editor

Easy payments and money transfers is the name of the game for Gen Z and millennials – and the SME sector in the UAE needs to quickly catch up. Aani, the instant payments platform operated by Al Etihad Payments, wants to bridge the gap by enabling more than 450,000 local SMEs to get online for payments and transfers.

With just the recipient's mobile number or Emirates ID, Aani

makes money transfers up to Dh50,000 easy and instant. For SMEs, Aani has features including single QR-code-payments, bill-splitting, request-to-pay and other features on an easy-to-use platform.

**Payment solutions**

Jan Pilbauer, CEO of Al Etihad Payments, said only one-fifth of the SMEs in the UAE currently offer even card payment solutions. In a major move to onboard more end-users and merchants, Aani features are now available on the PayBy platform on Botim voice app – owned by Dubai-based Astra Tech.

The ultimate goal for Aani and other similar payment solutions is to switch residents' low value cash transactions online.

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WORLD

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SPORT

**Ian Poulter  
'feels bad'  
for McIlroy  
over LIV Golf  
U-turn | P10**

