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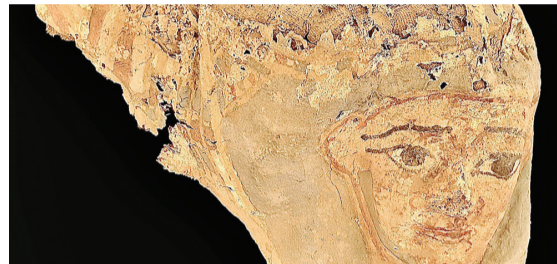
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## 10 Gaza children lose legs daily

Half a million facing 'catastrophic' hunger • Zionists kill Haniyeh's sister, 9 other relatives

### Crown Prince receives envoys, security chiefs



**KUWAIT:** In a friendly and welcoming atmosphere, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received senior officials of the Kuwaiti foreign ministry, chiefs of accredited diplomatic missions in Kuwait and senior officials of the army, police, National Guard and fire force at the Al-Sabah Family's Diwan at Bayan Palace on Tuesday. — KUNA (See Page 2)

**GAZA:** UN agencies sounded the alarm about war-torn Gaza on Tuesday, saying that 10 children a day are losing one or both legs and half a million Palestinians suffer "catastrophic" hunger. There was no let-up in the Zionist entity's bombardment of the Gaza Strip and fighting against the Palestinian group Hamas, as it maintained the siege on the territory's 2.4 million people. Two Zionist airstrikes hit two schools in Gaza City, killing at least 14 people, medics said.

Palestinian officials said another strike killed 10 members of Qatar-based Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh's family, including his sister. The civil defense agency in Gaza said the strike hit the family's house in the northern Al-Shati refugee camp, leaving some bodies trapped under the rubble. Civil defense agency spokesman Mahmud Basal told AFP: "There are 10 martyrs and several wounded as a result of the strike, including Zahr Haniyeh, sister of Hamas political bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh."

Hassan Kaskin, a neighbor, said the Haniyeh family house was hit without advance warning before dawn on Tuesday. Footage obtained by Reuters showed the multi-floor building reduced to rubble. "They were 10 individuals, three of them were scattered outside the house and seven under the rubble - with no prior warning, with people around them, and there are injuries among the neighbors," Kaskin told Reuters.

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#### NEWS IN BRIEF

##### US-Palestinian child attacked

**WASHINGTON:** US President Joe Biden said Monday he was "deeply disturbed" by reports that a woman allegedly attempted to drown a Palestinian-American child at a pool in Texas. The woman has been charged with capital murder following the May incident which gained national attention over the weekend. The 42-year-old, identified as Elizabeth Wolf, approached a mother who was wearing a hijab at a suburban apartment pool near Dallas. She then asked whether the mother's six-year-old son and three-year-old daughter belonged to her and also made racist statements. The woman grabbed the boy, who was able to wrangle free, then grabbed the girl, whom she pushed underwater. — AFP

##### Alcohol kills 2.6m annually

**GENEVA:** Alcohol kills nearly three million people annually, the World Health Organization said on Tuesday. The UN health agency's latest report on alcohol and health said alcohol causes nearly one in 20 deaths globally each year, through drink driving, alcohol-induced violence and abuse, and a multitude of diseases and disorders. The report said 2.6 million deaths were attributed to alcohol consumption in 2019, accounting for 4.7 percent of all deaths worldwide that year. Nearly three-quarters of those deaths were in men, it said. — AFP

##### Finland to offer first bird flu vaccine

**HELSINKI:** Finland plans to offer preemptive bird flu vaccination as soon as next week to some workers with exposure to animals, health authorities said on Tuesday, making it the first country in the world to do so. The Nordic country has bought vaccines for 10,000 people, each consisting of two injections, as part of a joint EU procurement of up to 40 million doses for 15 nations. — Reuters

### Bader Al-Kharafi elected Zain Group Vice Chairman

**KUWAIT:** Zain Group on Tuesday held an ordinary general assembly at its headquarters with a quorum of 76 percent, whereby the assembly's proceedings witnessed the addition of a new item, related to electing a member of the board of directors to complete the term of the board member who had submitted his resignation previously.

The ordinary general assembly agreed to include this new item on the agenda and accordingly, Zain

Chairman Osamah Al-Furaih opened the floor for voting on this item, along with the main item previously included on the assembly's agenda. The main item was to elect an additional member of the board of directors, as a second independent director, in order to fulfill regulatory requirements.

The ordinary general assembly elected Oztel Holdings SBC Limited as a complementary member of the board of directors, which in turn named Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi as its representative on the board. After the assembly, Zain Group's board of directors met and elected Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi as Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors. The ordinary general assembly also elected Dr Saad Ahmed Al-Nahedh as an independent member of the board of directors and Fahd Abdel Al-Rahman Al-Mukhaizeem as an alternate board member. (See Page 8)



Zain Group Vice Chairman Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi

### Kuwait stresses efforts to boost ties with India

**NEW DELHI:** Kuwaiti Ambassador to India Meshal Al-Shemali called on Tuesday for intensifying efforts to deepen existing relations between India and Kuwait and diversify them into new fields. In a statement to KUNA after meeting Indian Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar in New Delhi, the ambassador said during their talks, bilateral issues of mutual interest and ways to enhance cooperation mechanisms between the two countries in economic, political, cultural and social fields came up for discussion.

The ambassador also congratulated Jaishankar on

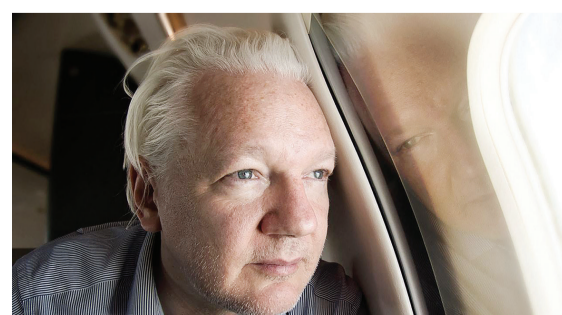
his reappointment to the post of minister of external affairs following the parliamentary elections and subsequent formation of the new government. He stressed that the days to come will witness visits by officials of the two countries at different levels, which will include political consultations and joint ministerial meetings covering various sectors.

Shemali also stressed the importance of strengthening trade relations, which have witnessed significant development recently, as total bilateral trade with Kuwait during the past fiscal year amounted to \$10.47 billion, marking an annual growth of 34.7 percent. Kuwait is the ninth largest oil supplier to India, meeting 3 percent of India's total energy needs.

Shemali quoted the Indian minister as extending his sincere thanks to the leadership and government of Kuwait for their efforts and interest in supporting Indians after the tragic fire accident in Mangaf that killed 49 people, mostly from the Indian community residing in Kuwait. — KUNA



**NEW DELHI:** Kuwaiti Ambassador to India Meshal Al-Shemali meets Indian Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar. — KUNA



This handout image posted on June 25, 2024 shows WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange looking out of the window as his plane approaches Bangkok. — AFP

### Assange to be 'free man' after US plea deal

**BANGKOK:** WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is to be a "free man", his wife said Tuesday, once a judge signs off on a plea deal with US authorities to bring his years-long legal drama to a close. Assange was released Monday from a high-security British prison where he had been held for five years while he fought extradition to the United States, which sought

to prosecute him for revealing military secrets.

He flew out of London to travel to the Northern Mariana Islands, a US territory in the Pacific where he will plead guilty to a single count of conspiracy to obtain and disseminate national defense information, according to a court document. A charter plane carrying the 52-year-old landed in Bangkok around 12:30 pm (0530 GMT) on Tuesday for a scheduled refueling stop.

From there it was scheduled to fly to Saipan, capital of the US territory where Assange is due in court on Wednesday morning. He is expected to be sentenced to five years and two months in prison, with credit for the same amount of time he spent behind bars in Britain. Assange's wife Stella said he

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# Crown Prince receives top officials, envoys



**KUWAIT:** In a friendly and welcoming atmosphere, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received senior officials of the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry, chiefs of accredited diplomatic missions in Kuwait and senior officials of the Army, Police, National Guard and Fire Service Directorate in Al-Sabah Family's Diwan at Bayan Palace on Tuesday. — KUNA photos

## 5 recruitment offices closed

**KUWAIT:** The Trade Control Department of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry closed five offices on Tuesday for the recruitment of domestic workers in Hawally governorate after a field tour revealed numerous violations of the ministry's regulations. The Ministry said in a press release that the main reasons for the closure were failure to use electronic payment methods (K-net) as required by the Ministry. These offices also violated the specific price regulations as issued by the Ministry. This action comes within the framework of the Ministry's efforts to promote transparency and justice in the labor market.

Non-compliance with decisions related to electronic payment and price violations is a flagrant violation of consumers' rights and harms the reputation of this sector," the officials said, stressing the need for all domestic labor recruitment offices to comply with regulations and laws and urging them to review and update their operating practices to avoid penalties. The Ministry said it will continue to carry out intensive campaigns in all governorates to ensure that all offices comply with the laws and provide high-quality services to citizens and residents alike. — KUNA

## Kuwait collected 85,000 bags of blood in 2023



**KUWAIT:** Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi announced on Monday that in 2023, Kuwait collected 85,000 bags of blood and 8,000 units of platelets. Minister Al-Awadhi made the statement during the ceremony held by the Ministry to mark World Blood Donor Day. Al-Awadhi confirmed that the Ministry of Health uses the



**People attend a ceremony to mark the World Blood Donor Day. — KUNA photos**

latest scientific methods to ensure the safety and purity of the collected blood. It stated that 55 percent of the donors were Kuwaiti citizens, while the remaining 45 percent came from 75 different nationalities. The Central Blood Bank of Kuwait is the first Arab bank ever to win the recognition of the

American Association of Blood Banks (AABB), Al-Awadhi said. Doctor Reem Al-Radhwan, Chief of the Ministry's Blood Transfusion Service, said that Kuwait participates annually in the World Health Organization (WHO) event for blood donors held in June. This year, the event is entitled "20 Years of Giving, for Blood Donors." — KUNA



## Local

# Why do teenagers attempt risky behaviors? Psychologist weighs in

## How parents handle anger, issues significantly influence a child

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Illegal driving, substance abuse, risky sexual behaviors, and other daring acts have become prevalent among teenagers, leaving parents deeply concerned and on edge. Is this simply a phase of normal adolescent development? Seeking answers to these questions, Kuwait Times conducted an interview with Psychologist, Abdullah Ben Hasan, to delve into the motives driving these behaviors and to offer guidance to parents navigating these challenging issues.

"Adolescence is often marked by a quest for identity and self-discovery. Teenagers encounter challenges when their sense of identity revolves around concepts like strength, acceptance from peers, social support, and validation from society. If these aspirations are channeled negatively towards achieving self-fulfillment through risky behaviors, teenagers are likely to embrace such behaviors, particularly in environments where rebellion is seen as a symbol of strength and dominance," Ben Hasan said, adding that risky behav-

iors may also stem from a desire of escaping deeply negative experiences from childhood that continue to affect them. Teenagers who see their peers being rewarded and praised for risky behaviors can further reinforce the belief that such actions lead to accomplishment or provide relief from unhappy realities and pressures.

"The cycle starts with feeling inner emptiness, anger, or weakness. Then adopting a coping mechanism for these feelings, which is not effective but rather destructive. Over time, this behavior becomes ingrained, leaving them unaware of alternative ways to achieve accomplishment, dominance, or emotional fulfillment. The key lies in teaching individuals how to effectively handle



Abdullah Ben Hasan

the initial negative feelings, whether severe psychological pressure, emptiness, or a sense of low self-esteem and the desire for achievement and self-realization. They should be taught to handle these feelings positively and effectively to break the cycle of negative behavior," he explained.

Moreover, Ben Hasan highlighted how parents play a role in guiding teenagers towards safer behaviors and avoiding risks. "It starts from the first day of a child's presence in their environment. How strong is the psychological culture within their family in meeting emotional and psychological needs? How will they handle the developmental stages their child goes through, including learning from observed behaviors, trial and error, and beliefs adopted from their upbringing?"

Families need to be prepared and sufficiently aware to deal with these issues. When entering this phase, teenagers should understand the true meaning of self-realization, strength, social support, and emotional fulfillment. This involves instilling core beliefs and teaching effective, positive ways to confront feelings of pain and weakness.



We often think children are only influenced by our direct upbringing, but in reality, they are influenced by our relationships with each other, such as the mother-father relationship and sibling interactions. How parents handle anger or how mothers confront their painful emotions during distressing events will significantly influence a child. They learn more from what we do implicitly than from what we directly tell them."



GAZA: A horse-drawn cart loaded with belongings is prepared for evacuating people in the yard of the Asma school run by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), in the Shati camp for Palestinian refugees, west of Gaza City. — AFP



GAZA: Humanitarian aid packages are dropped on the Gaza Strip near Rafah on June 25, 2024. — AFP

## Kuwait condemns Zionist attacks on hospitals and UN agencies

VIENNA: Kuwait strongly condemned the ongoing attacks targeting facilities, places of worship, hospitals, and buildings affiliated with the United Nations (UN), including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Palestine. This came in a statement by Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN and other international organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen, during a meeting of the UN Advisory Committee and the UNRWA.

Ambassador Al-Hayen reaffirmed Kuwait's steadfast and principled commitment to supporting the Palestinian cause, expressing Kuwait's aspiration to enhance its partnership with the UNRWA on all fronts. Ambassador Al-Hayen also emphasized Kuwait's support for the noble and significant role that UNRWA played in providing vital humanitarian aid to the people who were affected in occupied Palestine, as well as in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.



Permanent Representative to the UN and other international organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen

The Kuwaiti ambassador pointed out that this commitment was clearly reflected through Kuwait's support for various initiatives in this regard, the latest being the political initiative launched in collaboration with Jordan and Slovenia, aimed at strengthening countries' commitment to UNRWA. Ambassador Al-Hayen confirmed that Kuwait would spare no efforts in supporting UN agencies, especially the UNRWA, having contributed more than \$300 million over the past decade, with the latest

contribution being approximately \$30 million to support the agency's relief efforts.

He added that Kuwait urged the international community to increase financial and political support for UNRWA, particularly in the current circumstances, to help the agency fulfill its mandated role. In his speech, Ambassador Al-Hayen addressed the continued brutal and blatant aggression by the Zionist occupation in Gaza and Rafah, which can only be described as a violation of all international and humanitarian laws. He stated that this ongoing aggression has resulted in more than 37,000 martyrs, targeted more than 88 percent of schools, with the latest being Al-Sardi School on June 6, 2024, and destroyed nearly 435 health facilities and more than 260 places of worship.

Ambassador Al-Hayen expressed his deepest condolences to the families of humanitarian workers who lost their lives while performing their duties with honesty and integrity due to the ongoing bombardment, which claimed the lives of 200 workers, 193 of whom were UNRWA employees. Ambassador Al-Hayen also thanked UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini for his representation of the tragic humanitarian situation in Gaza and its impact on Palestinian refugees, expressing sincere appreciation for his tireless efforts. — KUNA

## Kuwait, UAE eye closer security cooperation

KUWAIT: Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister, and Defense Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah held talks on Tuesday with UAE Ambassador Dr Matar Al-Neyadi, focusing on efforts to strengthen security cooperation between the two Gulf Arab neighbors. The Kuwaiti minister praised the "depth" of relations with Abu Dhabi, saying such ties are "brotherly and historic." The UAE diplomat, alongside a delegation accompanying him, was appreciative of the Kuwaiti hospitality, saying the matters discussed aimed to propel bilateral cooperation to greater levels, according to an interior ministry statement. — KUNA



## KGOC rationalizing energy consumption

KUWAIT: Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGOC) confirmed on Tuesday that it will continue to implement a series of technical measures to reduce electricity consumption at its work sites, including its head office and joint operations. The company stated in a press release that these measures come in line with the state's directives to rationalize electricity consumption, reduce electrical loads, and maintain the sustainability of state resources.

The company's employees, as part of their professional and national responsibility, have taken several steps to reduce energy consumption, such as turning off lighting, air conditioning units, computers, and other equipment after the end of official working hours. KGOC explained that in the areas of joint operations, there are several rationing procedures in administrative offices, field areas, and operations, as well as adjusting official working hours at external locations to comply with state procedures during peak periods.

Kuwait Gulf Oil Company pointed out its permanent commitment to reducing energy consump-



Workers are seen at one of the Kuwait Gulf Oil Company's platforms. - KUNA

tion and preserving the environment and public resources. It expressed hopes that these measures will contribute to achieving the desired goals and be part of its continuous efforts to preserve the state's resources and rationalize electricity consumption in the oil sector in particular, praising the

efforts of its employees. Kuwaiti Gulf Oil Company is a subsidiary of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation. It was established in 2002 and is responsible for the exploration, development, and production of oil in the onshore area of the region divided between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. — KUNA

## Amir sends condolence message to Jordan over tragic accident

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a condolence cable Tuesday to the King of Jordan, Abdullah II, over the deaths and injuries of several soldiers following an accident involving military trucks as part of a relief and humanitarian aid convoy en route to the Gaza Strip. His Highness the Amir expressed his sincere sorrow and deep sympathy to the families of the victims and wished for a fast recovery for the injured.

Also, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a similar cable of condolences to the King of Jordan, Abdullah II, over the victims of humanitarian aid trucks' accident. Kuwait expressed its deepest condolences to Jordan. The Foreign Ministry of Kuwait offered its deepest condolences to the Jordanian leadership and people over this tragic accident, wishing solace to the families of the victims and swift recovery to those injured. The statement also reflected strong appreciation for Jordan's efforts in providing aid to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, an effort that came in cooperation with other countries and international organizations.

### Gaza aid restrictions

Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron and King Abdullah II of Jordan have called on Zionists to lift all land-based "restrictions" on the delivery of aid to war-torn Gaza, the presidency said. UN agencies have repeatedly warned of severe shortages of vital supplies in Gaza, exacerbated by restrictions on access by land and the closure of the key Rafah crossing with Egypt since Zionist forces seized the Palestinian side in early May.

Over lunch at the Elysee Palace, Macron and Abdullah II reiterated the need for an "immediate and lasting ceasefire in Gaza" and called for the release of all hostages - including two French nationals. The leaders also "expressed their deep concern about the situation in the West Bank and strongly condemned the violence committed by settlers", the Elysee Palace said in a statement. They agreed to continue to work together on a "lasting and credible solution" to the war based on the "two-state solution" and welcomed reforms undertaken by the Palestinian government and called for them to be continued.

Referring to the intensification of tensions on the Lebanese border, Macron and Abdullah II warned against a "conflagration that would be catastrophic for the region", and reiterated their calls to all parties for "responsibility and restraint". An unprecedented October 7 attack on southern Zionist entity triggered the Gaza war. Zionist retaliatory offensive has killed at least 37,626 people, mostly civilians, the health ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza said. — Agencies

## Union promotes, supports women empowerment

KUWAIT: Kuwait Union of Women's Associations started the celebration of the 30th anniversary of establishing the Union, which was a step further in empowering Kuwaiti women. In a press statement, the Union's President Sheikh Fadia Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah said that the celebrations that started on Tuesday and lasts until the end of December, will include many events, programs and seminars targeting women and families.

Sheikha Fadia Al-Sabah explained that Kuwaiti women's work, which started with the launch of the union in 1994, is entering a new phase to keep pace with changes and meet women's needs. She pointed to the Union's keenness to continue its role in developing future plans for women that take into account their needs and emerging challenges after a comprehensive study and to start implementing them to support and empower women. Sheikha Fadia Al-Sabah commended the union's role and its initiator Sheikh Al-Fahad Al-Salem Al-Sabah along with her fellow founders, which had a positive impact on women, families and children's issues, wishing them further progress. — KUNA



Sheikha Fadia Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah



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# National Library of Kuwait a reliable source for research

## An initiative for intellectual excellence



National Library of Kuwait



### In my view

## Kuwait's extreme heat: A practical solution needed



Dr Khalid A Al-Saleh

Local@kuwaittimes.com

Summer in Kuwait gets on people's nerves. The temperatures are above what human beings can bear, particularly after what civilization has done - in exposing humans to various radiations. Among practical solutions to this extreme heat in Kuwait is a proposal to boost agriculture and bring in sea water through separate bays.

We basically need a solution to this issue. The idea of planting enough trees is a welcome development. This will balance the ecosystem because temperatures drop in such areas. Human beings are basically the students of nature, from which they learn. People learn in different ways. They learned how to bury dead people; they learned how to lighten fire; they learned how to extract energy from the movement of water; and they learned how to direct water flow to dry land. So, learning from nature is not something new.

Whoever says that the cost of building a lifesaving project is high must offer a better alternative. We need to find a way to reduce the suffering of people in Kuwait during the long months of summer. Financing the construction of lifesaving projects and their maintenance are not impossible. There should be partnerships with various sectors, bearing in mind the benefits of having a good and sustainable environment. I hope the government seeks the help of specialists in this regard. People should be free to sit and walk around the green yards, go shopping, and have their children play without facing the hazards of the scorching summer heat. Summer in Kuwait needs practical solutions.

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

**KUWAIT:** The idea for the National Library of Kuwait dates back to 1913, when Kuwait's first public library was founded. A decade later, a group of Kuwait's elites and intellectuals called for the establishment of a national library to house a vast collection of valuable books, manuscripts, and periodicals, growing into the intellectual vault a century later.

According to the KUNA Library, the founding fathers Abdulhameed Al-Sane and Sultan Al-Kulaib held a meeting during the reign of the late Amir Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with the attendance of a number of Kuwaiti intellectuals to discuss the project. They added that they designated Ibn Amer Diwaniya as the library's headquarters, appointing Abdulhameed Al-Sane to oversee its establishment, assisted by Rajab Al-Refai (treasurer) and Abdullah Al-Omran (librarian).

A number of bibliophiles, enthralled by the notion of a privately owned library open to the public, donated a number of valuable books and agreed to supply the library with a diverse and riveting collection of magazine and newspaper issues. Speaking to KUNA, the library's general director, Dr Sultan Al-Dehani, said: "The library went through a series of relocations and name changes in an attempt to adapt and remain standing."

Moved by its literary and cultural significance, intellectuals kept the library alive with generous donations, giving it a home and enriching its collection with valuable donations. Nassar Bulabga, information services and cyber library department head, said: "We

have five departments in the library. They include the Children Department, Special Needs Department, and General Group, among others." "We have over 500,000 books, including books, journals, databases, and inscriptions. The library is proud to present itself as a reliable source for research," he clarified, stating that the library always adds yearly editions and sources as well as participates in local and international book exhibitions.

The library organizes events within the National Council for Culture and Literature through an annual schedule, including events for all ages. "We also provide workshops for those interested in any literary activity. We also have publications, including guides that help researchers navigate through the library," he added.

Shouq Hamadi, rector at the National Library of Kuwait, said: "We have thousands of books distributed in the designated halls. Kuwaitna Hall hosts books that solely talk about Kuwait, and a private hall houses books that were donated by important Kuwaiti authors." We also have a special section for rare books, numbering around 500 books from different categories, she explained, stating that they also have an online library that people and researchers can access, including a large database done in collaboration with different international institutes.

The vision is to preserve Kuwait's history, illuminate its present, and safeguard national memory. Due to the success of the library and its large turnout, in 1937, the government decided to rename it the Library of Public Information. For the next 40 years, the Library of Public Information

carried the cultural and intellectual torches of Kuwait, receiving and preserving valuable books on all subjects ranging from Arabic literature to the sciences and history.

In 1979, the responsibility of the Library of Public Information was passed over to the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters, and the library was renamed the Central Library of the State. By this time, the library had grown to encompass over 50,000 books as well as over 6,000 periodicals—both Arabic and foreign languages—in addition to a large number of rare manuscripts.

In 1994, by Amiri Decree, the library was renamed and established as the National Library of Kuwait, with the following main objectives:

- To compile, organize, document, and preserve Kuwaiti heritage and national intellectual production and property.
- To develop and collect all literature and information concerning Kuwait, its history, the history of the Gulf, and the Arabian Peninsula in both Arabic and foreign languages.
- To maintain and protect the rights of authors, inventors, and owners of artistic works, as well as intellectual property rights.
- To act as the national center for integration within the Unified National Index.
- To upgrade the performance.
- To coordinate and cooperate with national libraries, research centers, public and special libraries, and concerned unions for the promotion and common development of library studies and for the enrichment of library collections and technical systems.

## NCCAL to hold 16th edition of summer cultural festival

**KUWAIT:** Assistant secretary general of the culture sector at the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters, Aisha Al-Mahmoud, announced the launch of the 16th edition of the summer cultural festival on the first of July under the auspices of the Minister of Information and Culture, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi. Al-Mahmoud said in a press statement on Tuesday

that the festival period will be extended for the first time for two consecutive months to cover the summer vacation period, taking into account the diversity of cultural activities and events to satisfy all age groups and various interests.

The festival includes art and professional workshops at the cultural level for children and adults, such as language workshops (German and Korean), which are presented for the first time at the festival, and art workshops different from the previous ones. These include a jewelry-making workshop, a wood painting workshop, a theatrical lighting workshop, plastic exhibitions, and theatrical performances.

The session will witness the participation of popular bands. The festival will kick off with a concert entitled "Al-Haraibi Night" in celebration of the history of the great artist Saleh Al-Haraibi through the presentation of a set of his musical works by the artist Ahmed Al-Harai-

bi, led by maestro Dr Mohammed Al-Buajjan.

Al-Mahmoud revealed the establishment of a major event for the first time at the festival, namely the Children's Literature Forum. This will feature the most important writers of children's literature in the world who have achieved distinctive experiences in this field. There will also be discussion panels in which the most prominent writers in the Kuwaiti Arena will participate, contributing to the cultural scene in the field of children's literature.

Training workshops will be held on the sidelines of the forum to develop writing skills and keep up with world literature in this field, in addition to an exhibition of children's literature drawings. She pointed out that the festival will also include specialized lectures on the literature of smart digital libraries, modern information systems, and a lecture on the history of ancient Greece in cooperation with one of the emerging cultural initiatives. —KUNA

## KUNA hosts PAAET students

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) hosted a number of trainee students from the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training as part of the Authority's field training program before their graduation for the academic year (2023-2024). The cooperation between KUNA and PAAET is part of the partnership and integration between the various ministries and authorities in the country and joint work to advance the educational and training fields in the country, based on the social responsibility that KUNA takes upon itself within its media, awareness, and training missions.

Trainees at the agency are undergoing training activities and attending events related to their specialization (Information Systems Security Technician). The field training program will continue until the first of August and will increase the experiences and skills of the trainee students, especially since this program is one of their graduation requirements.—KUNA



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At least 5 protesters killed in Kenya

## China's lunar probe returns to Earth

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LONDON: Mounted Police officers lead the horse-drawn carriage procession of Britain's King Charles III and Japan's Emperor Naruhito on June 25, 2024. (Right) Britain's King Charles III (center), and Britain's Queen Camilla (second left) stand with Japan's Emperor Naruhito (second right) and Japan's Empress Masako (left) during a Ceremonial Welcome at Horse Guards Parade. — AFP photos

# UK lays on lavish welcome for Japanese royals

## King Charles greets royal couple as he hosts first state visit since his cancer announcement

LONDON: Japan's Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako received a guard of honor and royal welcome from King Charles III in London on Tuesday at the start of a three-day state visit to the UK. The couple, who arrived on Saturday and held informal engagements over the weekend, were formally greeted by the British monarch, Queen Camilla and others ahead of a lavish evening banquet.

It is the first state visit to the UK by a Japanese head of state since 1998 and, unusually for such a visit, comes during a general election campaign. Some typical political elements, such as a Downing Street visit, have been scrapped in line with neutrality rules but all the traditional pomp and pageantry remained.

The emperor and empress were met on Horse Guards Parade in central London by a host of dignitaries — including Prime Minister Rishi Sunak — while gun salutes were

fired and the two countries' national anthems were played. After Naruhito, 64, and Charles, 75, inspected the guard of honor, the royals travelled the short distance to Buckingham Palace in a carriage procession for lunch.

The king, hosting his first state visit since it was revealed in February that he has cancer, was set to take the emperor and empress to a special exhibition of items from the Royal Collection relating to Japan.

The trip is the emperor's second official state visit since he ascended to the Chrysanthemum Throne in 2019, following a trip to Indonesia last year. It was originally due to take place in 2020 and would have been the emperor's first overseas visit but it was delayed by the pandemic.

For Charles, it will be the third state visit he has hosted since he became king following the death of his mother Queen Elizabeth II in

September 2022. It was announced Tuesday that the UK monarch had approved an honors award for Nissan CEO Makoto Uchida — making him an Honorary Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE) — for services to UK-Japan business relations.

Speaking ahead of the trip, Naruhito said Britain's royals treated him "like family" during his time studying in England in the 1980s. Naruhito recalled that during his two years at Oxford University, he was invited to Balmoral Castle in Scotland for a few days.

"I have very fond memories of the queen driving a car and inviting me to a barbecue ... and (her husband) Prince Philip showing me around by driving a carriage himself," he told a rare press conference. The Japanese couple head to Oxford, west of London on Friday, and will fly home from near there. — AFP

## Top court rules ultra-Orthodox men must serve in Zionist army

JERUSALEM: The Zionist entity's Supreme Court ruled on Tuesday that the state must begin drafting ultra-Orthodox Jewish seminary students into the military, a decree which creates new political strains for embattled Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Netanyahu's Likud party said the Supreme Court's ruling was "perplexing," given ongoing efforts in parliament to agree on a new conscription law that would address the problem.

The prime minister's coalition government relies on two ultra-Orthodox parties that regard conscription exemptions as key to keeping their constituents in religious seminaries and out of a melting-pot army that might test their customs. Leaders of those parties said they were disappointed with the ruling but issued no immediate threat to the government.

However, the prospect of the military, backed by Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, starting to draft seminary students could widen cracks in Netanyahu's increasingly brittle coalition. — Reuters

## AUK and Private Schools Union of Kuwait Partner for Educational Excellence with Cambridge International Diplomas



Ms. Nora Alghanim, President of Private Schools Union of Kuwait, Mr. Meshal Ali, Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Ms. Amal Al-Binali, Executive Vice President, and Ms. Nehal EL-Shafei, Director of the Continuing Education Center - American University of Kuwait in a group photo with members of the Private Schools Union of Kuwait board and the team of the Continuing Education Center - AUK

KUWAIT: The American University of Kuwait (AUK) and the Private Schools Union of Kuwait (PSUK) have joined forces to enhance educational standards in Kuwait. Through AUK's Center for Continuing Education (CCE), they will offer Cambridge International's prestigious International Diploma in Teaching and Learning and Diploma in Educational Leadership to school educators.

Key representatives, including Mr. Meshal Ali, vice chair of AUK's Board of Trustees, and Ms. Nora Alghanim, president of PSUK, signed the agreement. During a ceremony for the partnership, Mr. Meshal expressed optimism about the partnership, "At AUK, we are deeply committed to nurturing a culture of educational excellence and innovation. Through this partnership with the Private Schools Union of Kuwait, we are expanding access to high-quality educational



Ms. Nora Alghanim



Mr. Meshal Ali



Ms. Nora Alghanim, President of Private Schools Union of Kuwait and Mr. Meshal Ali, Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the American University of Kuwait during the signing of the contract.

improving teacher quality across Kuwait. The collaboration aims to provide educators with internationally recognized credentials, supporting their professional development and enhancing educational standards. The Cambridge International Diplomas will equip educators with essential skills and knowledge to excel in their roles.

PSUK praised the partnership as a significant step towards improving education in private schools, demonstrating a shared commitment to high-quality education and professional growth. CCE will ensure these programs are accessible and provide tailored support for educators, with plans for further professional development opportunities.



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The American University of Kuwait received its Institutional Accreditation from the Private Universities Council (PUC), Ministry of Higher Education in the State of Kuwait, and has a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation with Dartmouth College (Hanover, N Hampshire - USA).



## International

## China's lunar probe returns to Earth

## Probe makes country first to bring back samples from the moon's far side

BEIJING: A Chinese probe carrying samples from the far side of the Moon returned to Earth on Tuesday, capping a technically complex 53-day mission heralded as a world first. The landing module of the Chang'e-6 spacecraft touched down at a predetermined site in Inner Mongolia at 2:07 pm (0607 GMT), the China National Space Administration said, hailing the mission a "complete success".

It comes bearing soil and rocks from the side of the Moon facing away from Earth, a poorly understood region that scientists say holds great research promise because its rugged features are less smoothed over by ancient lava flows than the near side.

That means the materials harvested there may help us to better understand how the Moon formed and how it has evolved over time. China's space agency said the probe was "functioning normally, signaling that the Chang'e-6 lunar exploration mission was a complete success".

President Xi Jinping said in a congratulatory message that the "outstanding contributions" of the mission command "will be remembered forever by the motherland and the people", state broadcaster CCTV reported.

Chang'e-6 blasted off from a space center on the island province of Hainan on May 3 and descended into the Moon's immense South Pole-Aitken Basin almost exactly a month later. It used a drill and robotic arm to scoop up samples, snapped some shots of the pockmarked surface and planted a Chinese flag made from basalt in the grey soil. On June 4,

the probe made the first ever successful launch from the far side in what Xinhua called "an unprecedented feat in human lunar exploration history".

**National pride, misinformation**

China's burgeoning space exploits are a point of pride for the government, and state media outlets launched rolling coverage of the imminent landing on Tuesday morning. Live images of the landing site showed workers approaching the landing capsule as several helicopters sat nearby on a broad patch of flat grassland.

One worker planted a Chinese flag next to the capsule, enthusiastically unfurling it into the wind. Xinhua reported Monday that local farmers and animal herders had been evacuated from the area ahead of the touchdown.

"We hope that our country's space exploration will continue to advance and that our nation will become stronger," Uljii, a local herdsman, told Xinhua. But the mission has also sparked a torrent of online misinformation, with some users of the Weibo social media platform seizing on the unfurling of the Chinese flag to push the false claim that Washington faked the Apollo Moon landings, AFP Fact Check found.

**'Space dream'**

Plans for China's "space dream" have shifted into high gear under Xi. Beijing has poured huge resources into its space program over the past decade, targeting ambitious undertakings in an effort to catch up to traditional space powers the United States and Russia.



INNER MONGOLIA: Officials prepare to recover the landing module of the Chang'e-6 moon probe after it landed in Inner Mongolia, in northern China on June 25, 2024. — AFP

It has built a space station, landed robotic rovers on Mars and the Moon, and become only the third country to send astronauts into orbit. But the United States

has warned that China's space program masks military objectives and an effort to establish dominance in space. China aims to send a crewed mission to the Moon by

2030 and plans to eventually build a base on the lunar surface. The United States also plans to put astronauts back on the Moon by 2026 with its Artemis 3 mission. — AFP

## Philippines seeking US clarification on anti-vax propaganda operation

MANILA: The Philippines is still seeking clarification from the Pentagon about a secret US propaganda operation that aimed to cast doubt among Filipinos about Chinese vaccines at the height of the COVID pandemic, a foreign ministry official said on Tuesday. A Reuters investigation on June 14 detailed how the Pentagon ran a clandestine influence campaign in 2020 and 2021 to denigrate the Sinovac vaccine and other pandemic aid from China across the developing world.

The effort was intended to counter what Washington then saw as China's growing geopolitical sway around the globe, including in Southeast Asia. It began under former President Donald Trump and ended months after President Joseph Biden took office. "We have not received an official and formal response yet on any confirmation, denial or anything. We are waiting on that. We continue to monitor and ask for information," Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary Jose Victor Chan-Gonzaga told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which is investigating the US information campaign.

As soon as the Reuters article came out, Chan-Gonzaga said the foreign ministry had contacted the US embassy in Manila through "our regular consultations mechanism" but had been referred to the US Defense Department. Contacted for further comment on Tuesday, the US embassy also referred Reuters to the US Defense Department.

A senior Defense Department official cited by Reuters in the June 14 report acknowledged that the US military had engaged in secret propaganda to disparage China's vaccine in the developing world, but declined to provide details. Senator Imee Marcos, who chairs the Foreign Relations Committee, described the US military campaign as "evil, wicked, dangerous, unethical." — Reuters

## India's lawmakers take oath without duo behind bars

NEW DELHI: India's newly elected lawmakers took the oath of office Tuesday, but without two vocal government critics unable to take their seats because they are jailed on national security charges. One is the Sikh separatist Amritpal Singh, a firebrand preacher arrested last year after a month-long police manhunt in Punjab state.

The other is Sheikh Abdul Rashid, a former state legislator in Indian-administered Kashmir, known popularly as Engineer Rashid. Rashid, arrested on charges of "terror funding" and money laundering in 2019, is awaiting his latest bail hearing on July 1, his lawyer Ubaid Shams told AFP.

The family of Singh, an advocate of the banned Khalistan movement for an independent Sikh homeland - the struggle for which sparked deadly violence in the 1980s and 1990s - said they had no news on whether he could take the oath. "We don't know whether he will come out of jail or not", his father Tarsem Singh told AFP. "We are at our village, and haven't heard anything from the government," he said from his home in rural Punjab. "We don't know what the authorities are thinking about his release."

Rashid's name was called out in parliament on Monday when lawmakers began taking their oaths, with Hindu-nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi the first to take the stand. Modi, 73, on Monday appealed to an emboldened opposition for "consensus" following an election setback that forced him into a coalition government for the first time in a decade.

**Opposition challenge**

The parliamentary session, which will run until July 3, will also see the likely formal appointment of Rahul Gandhi as leader of the opposition - a post vacant since 2014. Modi's first two terms in office followed landslide wins for his right-wing Bharatiya



NEW DELHI: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (center) addresses the media before the opening of the first parliamentary session at the Parliament in New Delhi on June 24, 2024. — AFP

Janata Party (BJP), allowing his government to drive laws through parliament with only cursory debate.

However, the BJP won only 240 seats in this year's poll, its worst showing in a decade, and 32 seats below a majority. That forced it to rely on coalition allies to build a 293-seat majority in the 543-seat lower house. But Modi has kept a firm grip on power, with all key cabinet posts held by the BJP.

Veteran BJP lawmaker Om Birla, the speaker in the previous parliament, has also been nominated for the post again. While Birla is expected to easily win the vote on Wednesday, the opposition Congress party

also nominated a lawmaker for the post, Kodikunni Suresh. Observers say the defiant challenge - unusual in previous Indian parliaments - is an indication of the reinvigorated parliament.

Congress, the key party in a disparate anti-Modi alliance, nearly doubled its parliamentary numbers, its best result since Modi was swept to power a decade ago. Gandhi, 54, is the scion of a dynasty that dominated Indian politics for decades and is the son, grandson and great-grandson of former prime ministers, beginning with independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru. — AFP

## 10 Gaza children lose legs daily...

**Continued from Page 1**

Haniyeh lost three sons and four grandchildren in a strike in April, when the Zionist military accused them of "terrorist activities". At the time, the Hamas chief said about 60 of his relatives had died in the Gaza war. The strike came three days after Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the "intense phase" of the war was winding down, but that the war would continue. He also said some forces would be redeployed for "defensive purposes" to the northern border with Lebanon, where fears of a major war against Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah have grown after months of cross-border fire.

The Zionist offensive in Gaza has killed at least 37,658 people, mostly women and children. An AFP correspondent witnessed a strike that killed five people, including two children, near Gaza City's Al-Shifa hospital, leaving the corpses scattered in a pool of blood.

Philippe Lazzarini, head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, in a briefing in Geneva warned of the war's dire impact on children in Gaza. "Basically we have every day 10 children who are losing one leg or two legs on average," Lazzarini told reporters. Citing figures from the UN children's agency UNICEF, he said that figure "does not even include the arms and the hands,

and we have many more" of these.

"Ten per day, that means around 2,000 children after the more than 260 days of this brutal war," Lazzarini said. He said amputation often takes place "in quite horrible conditions", sometimes without anesthesia. Save the Children said on Monday that up to 21,000 children are estimated to be missing in the chaos of the war.

The UN's Rome-based World Food Program, meanwhile, said a new report "paints a stark picture of ongoing hunger". The latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) partnership said its March warning of imminent famine in the north of the Palestinian territory had not materialized. "However, the situation in Gaza remains catastrophic and there is a high and sustained risk of famine across the whole Gaza Strip," the report said, warning against complacency.

It said around 495,000 people - around 22 percent of the territory's population, according to the UN - are still facing "catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity". Another 745,000 people are classified as in a food security emergency.

Meanwhile, in a politically volatile ruling that could upend Netanyahu's right-wing coalition, the Zionist entity's top court said the government "must act" to draft ultra-Orthodox Jewish men to military service. Students of Jewish seminaries have historically been granted sweeping exemptions from the otherwise mandatory service, but calls within the Zionist entity for more ultra-Orthodox men to join army ranks have swelled during the war, which has seen mass mobilization. — Agencies

## Assange to be 'free man' after...

**Continued from Page 1**

would be a "free man" after the judge signed off on the deal, thanking supporters who have campaigned for his release for years.

"I'm just elated. Frankly, it's just incredible," she told BBC radio. "We weren't really sure until the last 24 hours that it was actually happening." She urged supporters to monitor her husband's flight on plane-tracking websites and to follow the "AssangeJet" hashtag, saying in a post on social media platform X "we need all eyes on his flight in case something goes wrong".

The court in the Northern Mariana Islands was chosen because of Assange's unwillingness to go to the continental United States and because of the territory's proximity to his native Australia, a court filing said. Under the deal, Assange is due to return to Australia, where the government said his case had "dragged on for too long" and there was "nothing to be gained by his continued incarceration". WikiLeaks posted a video on X showing Assange looking out of the window as the private jet landed in Bangkok, then stepping off the plane onto the tarmac.

Assange was wanted by Washington for releasing hundreds of thousands of secret US documents from 2010 as head of the whistleblowing website WikiLeaks. Since then he has become a hero to free speech campaigners and a villain to those who thought he endangered US security and intelligence sources. US authorities wanted to put Assange on trial for divulging military secrets about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

He was indicted by a US federal grand jury in 2019 on 18 counts stemming from WikiLeaks' publication of a trove of national security documents. The United

Nations hailed Assange's release, saying the case had raised "a series of human rights concerns". "We welcome the release of Julian Assange from detention in the UK," UN rights office spokeswoman Liz Throssell told AFP in an email.

Assange's mother Christine Assange said in a statement carried by Australian media that she was "grateful that my son's ordeal is finally coming to an end". But former US vice president Mike Pence slammed the plea deal on X as a "miscarriage of justice" that "dishonors the service and sacrifice of the men and women of our Armed Forces".

The announcement of the deal came two weeks before Assange was scheduled to appear in court in Britain to appeal against a ruling that approved his extradition to the United States. Assange had been detained in the high-security Belmarsh prison in London since April 2019. He was arrested after spending seven years in Ecuador's London embassy to avoid extradition to Sweden, where he faced accusations of sexual assault that were eventually dropped.

The material he released through WikiLeaks included video showing civilians being killed by fire from a US helicopter gunship in Iraq in 2007. The victims included a photographer and a driver from Reuters. The United States accused Assange under the 1917 Espionage Act. Supporters have warned this means he could be sentenced to 175 years in prison.

The British government approved his extradition in June 2022 but, in a recent twist, two British judges said in May that he could appeal against the transfer. The plea deal was not entirely unexpected. US President Joe Biden had been under growing pressure to drop the long-running case against Assange. The Australian government made an official request to that effect in February and Biden said he would consider it, raising hopes among Assange supporters that his ordeal might end. — AFP



## International

# At least 5 protesters killed in Kenya

## Police open fire on demonstrators trying to storm parliament after finance bill passes

**NAIROBI:** Police opened fire on demonstrators trying to storm Kenya's legislature on Tuesday, with at least five protesters killed, dozens wounded and sections of the parliament building set ablaze as lawmakers inside passed legislation to raise taxes. In chaotic scenes, protesters overwhelmed police and chased them away in an attempt to storm the parliament compound. Flames could be seen coming from inside.

Police opened fire after tear gas and water cannon failed to disperse the crowds. A Reuters journalist counted the bodies of at least five protesters outside parliament. A paramedic, Vivian Achista, said at least 10 had been shot dead. Another paramedic, Richard Ngumo, said more than 50 people had been wounded by gunfire. He was lifting two injured protesters into an ambulance outside parliament. "We want to shut down parliament and every MP should go down and resign," protester Davis Tafari, who was trying to enter parliament, told Reuters. "We will have a new government."

Police eventually managed to drive the protesters from the building amid clouds of tear gas and the sound of gunfire. The lawmakers were evacuated through underground tunnels, local media reported. Internet services across the country also experienced severe disruptions during the police crackdown, internet monitor Netblocks said.

Protests and clashes also took place in several other cities and towns across the country, with many calling for President William Ruto to quit office as well as voicing their opposition to the tax rises. Parliament approved the finance bill, moving it through to a third reading by lawmakers. The next step is for the legislation to be sent to the president for signing. He can send it back to parliament if he has any objections.

Ruto won an election almost two years ago on a platform of championing Kenya's working poor but has been caught between the competing demands of lenders such as the International Monetary Fund, which is urging the government to cut deficits to obtain more funding, and a hard-pressed



**NAIROBI:** A tear gas canister explodes as protesters try to help injured people outside the Kenya Parliament during a nationwide strike to protest against tax hikes and the Finance Bill 2024 in downtown Nairobi, on June 25, 2024. — AFP

population. Kenyans have been struggling to cope with several economic shocks caused by the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, two consecutive years of droughts and depreciation of the currency.

The finance bill aims to raise an additional \$2.7 billion in taxes as part of an effort to lighten the heavy debt load, with interest payments alone consuming 37 percent of annual revenue.

Opposition leader Raila Odinga called for the Finance Bill to be immediately and unconditionally withdrawn to make way for dialogue. "I am disturbed

at the murders, arrests, detentions and surveillance being perpetrated by police on boys and girls who are only seeking to be heard over taxation policies that are stealing both their present and future," he said in a statement.

The government has already made some concessions, promising to scrap proposed new taxes on bread, cooking oil, car ownership and financial transactions. But that has not been enough to satisfy protesters. Tuesday's protests began in a festival-like atmosphere but as crowds swelled, police fired tear gas in Nairobi's Central Business District and the poor

neighborhood of Kibera. Protesters ducked for cover and threw stones at police lines.

People clambered over police vehicles stalled in the downtown streets. Police also fired tear gas in Eldoret, Ruto's hometown in western Kenya, where crowds of protesters filled the streets and many businesses were closed for fear of violence. Clashes also broke out in the coastal city of Mombasa and demonstrations took place in Kisumu, on Lake Victoria, and Garissa in eastern Kenya, where police blocked the main road to Somalia's port of Kismayu.

In Nairobi, people chanted "Ruto must go" and crowds sang in Swahili: "All can be possible without Ruto". Music played from loudspeakers and protesters waved Kenyan flags and blew whistles in the few hours before the violence escalated. Police did not respond to Reuters requests for comment.

### Organic movement

Thousands had taken to the streets of Nairobi and several other cities during two days of protests last week as an online, youth-led movement gathered momentum. Protests in Kenya have typically been called for by political leaders who have been amenable to negotiated settlements and power-sharing arrangements, but the young Kenyans taking part in the current demonstrations have no official leader and have been growing increasingly bold in their demands.

While protesters initially focused on the finance bill, their demands have broadened to demand Ruto's resignation. The opposition declined to participate in the vote in parliament, shouting "reject, reject" when the house went through the items one by one. The bill will then be subjected to a third and final vote by acclamation on the floor of the house.

The finance ministry says amendments would blow a 200 billion Kenyan shilling (\$1.56 billion) hole in the 2024/25 budget and compel the government to make spending cuts or raise taxes elsewhere. "They are budgeting for corruption," said protester Hussein Ali, 18. "We won't relent. It's the government that is going to back off. Not us." — Reuters

## ICC issues arrest warrants for Russian army chief, ex-minister

**THE HAGUE:** The International Criminal Court on Tuesday said it had issued arrest warrants for Russia's top army chief and ex-defense minister over strikes on Ukrainian infrastructure that constituted alleged war crimes. The ICC warrants are the latest in a series of actions by the court over the Ukraine war, including an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The warrants, issued on Monday but made public on Tuesday, concerned the Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, and former defense minister Sergei Shoigu. The pair are accused of the war crimes of directing attacks at civilian targets and causing excessive incidental harm to civilians, as well as the crime against humanity of "inhumane acts" in Ukraine, the ICC said in a statement.

ICC judges said there were "reasonable grounds to believe that the two suspects bear responsibility for missile strikes carried out by the Russian armed forces against the Ukrainian electric infrastructure from at least 10 October 2022 until at least 9 March 2023."

The court said these strikes were "directed against civilian objects" and even when targets could be considered military, civilian damage "would have been clearly excessive to the anticipated military advantage". Ukraine hailed the "important" decision, with President Volodymyr Zelensky saying Kyiv hoped to see the pair "behind bars". "This decision is a clear indication that justice for Russian crimes against Ukrainians is inevitable," Zelensky said on social media.

Russia dismissed the warrants as "insignificant". The country's security council said: "It's all hot air since the ICC's jurisdiction does not cover Russia" and the decision was taken "as part of the West's hybrid war against our country."

The ICC, based in The Hague, does not have its own police force to enforce arrest warrants. It relies on the justice systems of its 124 members to carry them out. In theory, anyone under a warrant is prevented from travelling to an ICC member state for fear of arrest.

Putin himself has travelled abroad, notably to Kyrgyzstan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — none of whom are ICC members. However, he did skip a meeting of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) group in South Africa, which would have been expected to carry out the warrant.

"As I have repeatedly emphasized, no individual, anywhere in the world, should feel they can act with impunity," said ICC chief prosecutor Karim Khan, who pressed the charges. "And no person, anywhere in the world, should feel they are deserving of less protection than others." Moscow lashed out at the warrant against Putin, calling it "void" and issuing its own warrant against the ICC's president in response. Putin replaced Shoigu as defense minister last month in a major shake-up to Russia's military leadership more than two years into its Ukraine offensive.—AFP



**Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu (right) and Army Chief of Staff Valery Gerasimov vote in Russia's presidential election in this handout photo released by the Russian Defense Ministry on March 15, 2024. — AFP**



**SHIZUOKA:** Single mother Shiho Tanaka, who is head of a group supporting single mothers, speaks during an interview with AFP.

## Gender gap fuels disputes as Japan gets joint custody

**TOKYO:** Masaki Kubota's delight at reuniting with his two sons gave way to heartbreak when the younger, two years old, stared at him uncomprehendingly as if to say: "Who are you?" It was their first encounter since his wife left with the boys a year earlier — the kind of painful separation that Japan's new parental custody rules aim to prevent. The country enacted laws last month allowing joint custody after divorce, replacing a decades-old system where it was granted to only one side, and almost always to the mother. But the change has proved polarizing in a country where campaigners say sole custody acts as a bulwark against forms of domestic abuse courts may fail to recognize.

Rights groups argue that mothers who have escaped economic or psychological violence — exacerbated by financial inequalities — risk being dragged back into abusive relationships under joint custody. Pressure had long been building on lawmakers, including from the United Nations, which recommended in 2019 that Japan should allow joint custody "when it is in the child's best interests". A French father's high-profile hunger strike during the Tokyo Olympics also drew global attention to the issue. Kubota, who is not yet divorced from his estranged wife, hopes the new provision will allow them to share "important" decision-making for their children. "It's painful — I'm sorry I cannot be part of their lives and watch them grow," the 43-year-old told AFP.

He says his wife, who left him in 2022, felt she had been disproportionately saddled with domestic duties, but he argues that he contributed where he could. Having sought access to his sons through the courts, Kubota sewed train and cartoon patches onto his jacket to make them smile at their reunion. But he was devastated by his son's reaction. "I felt like I was being erased from his memory," he said.

### 'Like a slave'

Under the new rules, due to take effect by 2026, sole custody can be maintained in court-identified cases of domestic violence and child abuse. Divorcing couples decide the terms of their custody under the new rules, which have critics on both sides.

Some pro-joint custody campaigners say they want clearer frameworks and for Japan to stop tolerating alleged child abductions. On the other hand, those against it say that in Japan, whose gender wage gap of 21 percent is the worst in the G7 — almost double that of France — spousal abuse of less tangible forms is more widespread than commonly thought. "Being denied money for a living" was the second-biggest divorce trigger for Japanese women in 2023, followed by "mental abuse", judicial data show.

Single mother Shiho Tanaka, 50, said her former



**TOKYO:** People hold a banner saying "Protect children from joint custody after divorce" during a rally outside the National Diet Building in Tokyo against the Japanese government's plan to allow joint custody after divorce on March 29, 2024. — AFP photos

husband talked her into quitting her full-time job, then "used his financial power to treat me like a slave". "It was an escape," she said of her decision to leave with her two toddlers, denying it constituted an abduction.

Unless Japan's deep gender imbalances are rectified, "we're nowhere near ready to even discuss joint custody," said Tanaka, now head of a group supporting single mothers. "Mothers and children who have escaped violence might be dragged back to that abusive relationship under joint custody, because power dynamics don't easily change, even after divorce."

Another 50-year-old divorcee, who took flight



**TOKYO:** Masaki Kubota, whose wife vanished with his two sons a year ago, speaks during an interview with AFP.

with her newborn baby in 2010, said she surrendered her career after two traumatizing miscarriages, only to find herself "suddenly poor" with no income of her own. Her husband kept tabs on her receipts, gave her a meagre living allowance and banned her from using air conditioning — even for the baby — in Japan's humid summer, she told AFP under anonymity. "The free will I had always had, along with my ability to make my own choices, was no longer respected," she said. "I felt like I had become a very weak person."

Driving the inequality in part, critics say, is a long-standing tax policy disincentivizing dependent spouses, usually wives, from full-time work. Japanese husbands spend notoriously few hours on household tasks — just 47 minutes versus 247 minutes for wives on a weekday — preventing women from re-entering the workforce. "The majority of women work non-regular jobs," especially after marriage and children, said Yuki Senda, a sociology professor at Musashi University. "It's extremely difficult for them to be financially independent." Experts caution that in other countries, joint custody can be contingent on social work interventions — the antithesis of Japan's often hands-off approach. Measures to enforce child support payments such as through penalties are scarce in Japan, and most divorces are finalized without court involvement.

"Japan's welfare infrastructure is very feeble," which can exacerbate domestic violence, Senda said. Left-behind father Kubota argues that if parents like him "keep being denied chances to see their children", they lose a sense of duty, such as to pay enough child support. "Parents feel less responsible when stripped of their authority as parents." — AFP

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26, 2024

# Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi elected Zain Group's Vice Chairman

Zain holds ordinary general assembly with 76% quorum • Dr Saad Al-Nahedh elected independent member



Photo taken during Zain Group's Ordinary General Assembly meeting.



Zain Kuwait HQ building.

**KUWAIT:** Zain Group on Tuesday held an Ordinary General Assembly at its headquarters with a quorum of 76 percent, whereby the assembly's proceedings witnessed the addition of a new item, related to electing a member of the Board of Directors to complete the term of the board member who had submitted his resignation previously.

The Ordinary General Assembly agreed to include this new item on the agenda and accordingly, Zain Chairman Osamah Al-Furaih, opened the floor for voting on this item, along with the main item previously included on the assembly's agenda. The main item was to elect an additional member of the Board of Directors, as a second independent director, in order to fulfill regulatory requirements.

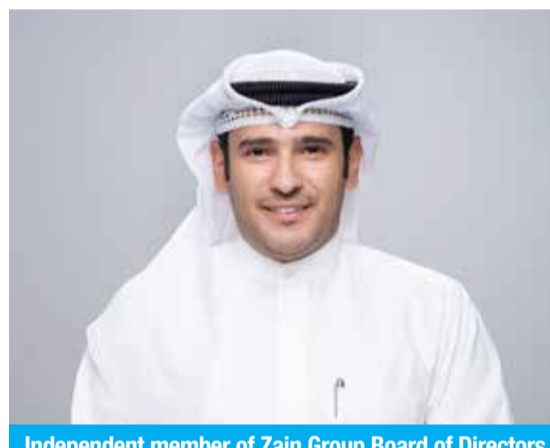
The Ordinary General Assembly elected Oztel Holdings SBC Limited as a complementary member of the Board of Directors, which in turn named Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi as its representative on the Board of Directors. The Ordinary General Assembly also elected Dr Saad Ahmed Al-Nahedh as



Zain Group Vice Chairman Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi

an independent member of the Board of Directors, and Fahd Abdel Al-Rahman Al-Mukhaizeem as an alternate board member.

After the Assembly, Zain Group's Board of Di-



Independent member of Zain Group Board of Directors Dr Saad Ahmed Al-Nahedh

rectors met, and the Board elected Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi as Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors. On May 22, 2024, the Group held an Extraordinary General Assembly that witnessed the

Assembly's approval of the Board of Directors' recommendation to approve the amendment of Article 15 of the Company's Articles of Association in accordance with the requirements of Article 2-2 of Module Fifteen "Corporate Governance".

Article 15 now stipulates: "The Company shall be managed by a Board of Directors consisting of ten members. Each shareholder, whether a natural person or a legal entity, may appoint representatives to the board in proportion to the shares that they own. The General Assembly shall elect the remaining members by secret ballot. The number of Board members appointed in said manner shall be deducted from the aggregate number of Board members that are elected. Shareholders having representatives on the Board of Directors may not participate with other shareholders in electing the remaining members of the Board of Directors, except in relation to those shares that exceed the percentage used for the appointment of their representatives to the Board of Directors.

## Japan's Mitsui builds ammonia plant in UAE



The logo of Japanese trading company Mitsui & Co is seen in Tokyo. — Reuters

**TOKYO:** Mitsui & Co has begun building an ammonia plant in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with partners including an Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) unit, it said on Tuesday. The Japanese trading house is increasing its efforts to build global supply chains of greener fuels such as hydrogen and ammonia to help tackle climate change. Mitsui's partners are TAZIL, which is owned by ADNOC, Fertigllobe, and South Korea's GS Energy.

The plant, located in Al-Ruwais in the UAE, aims to start producing 1 million metric tons per year of ammonia from 2027, with lower carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions compared to conventional ammonia, Mitsui said in a statement without elaborating. Facilities will be installed in the plant to capture and store CO<sub>2</sub> emitted during the manufacturing process, with plans to begin production of clean ammonia by 2030, Mitsui said. The company did not disclose the total project cost.

Mitsui will offtake a certain volume of the clean ammonia produced at the plant to supply Japan and other Asian markets, providing it for uses including fuel, chemical and fertilizer feedstock, it said. Separately, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) said it has signed a loan agreement with Mitsui to finance the project. The loan is co-financed with Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corp, providing \$27 million loan in total. In the UAE, Mitsui and ADNOC have been jointly developing and managing a liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant since the 1970s.

Ammonia, primarily produced from hydrogen derived from natural gas and nitrogen extracted from the air, does not emit CO<sub>2</sub> when burned. It is principally used as a raw material for fertilizer and chemicals, but it can also serve as a low-carbon fuel in power generation and marine bunker operations. — Reuters

## EU accuses Microsoft of abusing dominant position with Teams

**BRUSSELS:** Microsoft violated EU antitrust rules by bundling its Teams communications app with its popular Office suite, Brussels said on Tuesday, as the US tech giant vowed to do what it takes to address competition concerns.

The charge sheet comes after the European Commission, the EU's influential antitrust regulator, launched a probe last year triggered by a 2020 complaint from Slack. The commission informed Microsoft of its "preliminary view" that it had "breached EU antitrust rules" by bundling Teams with its cloud-based Office 365 and Microsoft 365 suites, which

## Skyscraper owner files for insolvency in Frankfurt

**FRANKFURT:** The owner of a prominent skyscraper in Germany's banking capital of Frankfurt has filed for insolvency, as the country reels from its biggest property crisis in a generation. The tower, described on its website as an "essential part of the Frankfurt skyline", is home to part of Germany's central bank and to Deka, one of its biggest asset managers.

Geschaftshaus am Gendarmenmarkt, which owns the 186-metre, 45-floor Trianon building, filed for insolvency in a Frankfurt court on Monday and an insolvency manager has been appointed, a filing published on Tuesday showed. For years, low interest rates, cheap energy and a strong economy sustained a boom across the German property sector, which broadly contributes 730 billion euro (\$782 billion) a year to the nation's economy, or roughly a fifth of Germany's output.

That boom ended when rampant inflation forced the European Central Bank to swiftly raise borrowing costs. Real-estate financing dried up, deals fizzled, projects stalled, major developers went bust, and some banks teetered. The industry has called on Berlin to intervene. The court-appointed manager, law firm PLUTA, said that the reason for the insolvency was "liquidity difficulties" and that it was already in talks with banks. Like the United States and other countries, offices in Germany and its financial capital of Frankfurt are suffering from lower occupancy rates, in part due to working from home. "Office space available from summer 2024," the Trianon's website says.

The Bundesbank has been a tenant since 2015

include Word, Excel and Powerpoint programs.

Even before the charges, Microsoft tried to assuage the EU's concerns by untying Teams in Europe before expanding the policy to around the world in April. The EU also had worries that Microsoft may have limited interoperability between Teams' competitors and its own offerings, although the company in September 2023 introduced "improvements" to make it easier for rivals. But the commission said Microsoft's changes did not go far enough.

"The commission preliminarily finds that these changes are insufficient to address its concerns and that more changes to Microsoft's conduct are necessary to restore competition," it said in a statement.

The EU's competition commissioner, Margrethe Vestager, said "Microsoft now has the opportunity to reply to our concerns". The company will be able to offer commitments to avoid a large fine and president Brad Smith has indicated Microsoft would be willing to take further steps.

"Having unbundled Teams and taken initial interoperability steps, we appreciate the additional clarity provided today and will work to find solutions to address the commission's remaining concerns," Smith said in a statement. Slack had lodged its complaint as its market share diminished, and it has since been bought by the company Salesforce.

There is no deadline for the formal inquiry to wrap up. Should the outcome of the probe go against Microsoft, it could face a heavy fine or other ordered remedies. Microsoft has come under greater European scrutiny in recent months.

EU regulators are looking into Microsoft's partnership with ChatGPT developer OpenAI to determine whether it is a disguised merger.

The commission also received a separate complaint in late 2022 from Amazon-backed cloud trade group CISPE against Microsoft over its cloud licensing practices. The two sides are currently seeking to resolve the issue through talks. — AFP

## Airbus shares sink after annual profit warning

**PARIS:** Shares in Airbus tumbled Tuesday after the European aerospace giant reduced its annual financial targets due to lower deliveries and a charge related to its space unit. Airbus, the sixth biggest company on the Paris CAC 40 stock market index, was down around 11 percent to 132.28 euros (\$142) per share in late morning deals, its biggest drop in more than two years.

Airbus dragged down the shares of other groups involved in the aviation sector, including Safran, Thales and Dassault Aviation. The European giant, which leads the airplane manufacturing sector along with US rival Boeing, said late Monday it now intends to deliver around 770 commercial aircraft in 2024, down from the 800 it forecast previously.

It delivered 735 commercial aircraft last year. Deliveries are key for Airbus's finances as it gets paid when aircraft are transferred to customers. It also announced it would book a charge of 900 million euros (\$965 million) for its satellite business.

The setbacks prompted Airbus to reduce its forecast for its 2024 operating profit to 5.5 billion euros, down from its previous guidance of between 6.5 billion and 7.0 billion euros.

Deutsche Bank analysts described it as a "stunning profit warning" and no longer recommended buying company shares. "The dust needs to settle before we can turn positive again," they said in a note. Chloe Lemaire, analyst at Jefferies investment firm, said Airbus "is facing more challenges than expected". Airbus will release half-year results on July 30. — AFP



The Trianon building, whose owners have filed for insolvency, is pictured in Frankfurt, Germany, June 25, 2024. — Reuters

with room for 1,000 employees. Deka, a tenant for decades, will be vacating the building for new headquarters in August.

Both said they would not be impacted by the insolvency. Reuters was unable to contact Geschaftshaus. The building manager did not immediately respond to a request for comment. — Reuters



## Business

# China premier calls to 'oppose decoupling' at economic forum

## Economic tensions simmer between Beijing and the West

**DALIAN, China:** China's premier called Tuesday for countries to "oppose decoupling", as economic tensions simmer between Beijing and the West, and the European Union prepares to impose new tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles.

Friction between the West and the world's second-largest economy has intensified in recent years, particularly as Beijing and Washington compete for supremacy in advanced technology and new "green" industries. "We should broadly open our minds, work closely together, abandon camp formations, (and) oppose decoupling," said Li Qiang, China's second-ranking leader, who has been tasked by President Xi Jinping with managing economic affairs.

Li's comments came during a speech at the opening of a World Economic Forum conference known as the "Summer Davos", held this year in the northeastern Chinese city of Dalian.

Worries about a disengagement between China and major economies in the West have rumbled for years as they clash over a range of issues including trade and technology. Last month, the United States hiked tariffs on \$18 billion worth of imports from the country, targeting strategic sectors like electric vehicles, batteries, steel and critical minerals, a move Beijing warned would "severely affect relations between the two superpowers."

China is also facing heightened scrutiny from the European Union, which is preparing to impose tariffs of up to 38 percent on its EVs by July 4, citing concerns over unfair competition caused by heavy state subsidies. The duties will be provisional until November, when they are set to come into full effect.

The EU says Beijing's "unfair subsidization" of the EV industry threatens European manufacturers, echoing allegations by Washington that China is seeking to "flood" the US market with heavily subsidized EVs, solar panels and other items. Li dismissed those claims. Chinese EVs, lithium batteries and solar panels "first of all ensure domestic demand, while also enriching supply in the international market, easing inflationary pressure on the world and making a positive contribution by China to the global response to climate change," he said.

"The rapid rise of China's new industries is rooted in our own unique comparative advantages."

He urged the "stability and smooth operation" of supply chains and "liberalization and facilitation of trade and investment." European leaders including Commission head Ursula von der Leyen have insisted the bloc does not intend to decouple from China, seeking instead to "de-risk" its economy. But Beijing has insisted the pending tariffs are "purely protec-



**DALIAN, China:** (Left to right) World Economic Forum (WEF) founder and executive chairman Klaus Schwab, China's Premier Li Qiang, Vietnam's Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh and Poland's President Andrzej Duda attend the opening ceremony of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting of the New Champions (AMNC24) in Dalian, on June 25, 2024. — AFP

tionist", arguing the success of its EV industry is the result of innovation and supply chain efficiency rather than government support. Chinese and EU trade chiefs held talks on the planned tariffs earlier this

month and have agreed to more consultations.

But China's EVs could soon also be targeted by Canadian authorities who are weighing their own additional tariffs. — AFP

## Ghana cocoa farmers turn to smuggling as currency falls

**SUHUM, Ghana:** Ghanaian cocoa farmer Isaac Antwi says he has to smuggle his beans to Ivory Coast to sell them at a decent profit even as international prices for the commodity recently surged. He is not the only farmer to have turned to illicit trade in the world's number two cocoa producer as the country's currency, the cedi, has fallen sharply and production costs have soared. "With the cedi losing value every day, selling in Ghana just doesn't cut it," said Antwi, who lives in Suhum, in the Eastern Region, 74 km from the capital, Accra. "The prices are better across the border, and the stronger currency means I can feed my family and pay off my debts."

Ghana is emerging from one of its worst economic crises in years after securing a \$3 billion credit from the International Monetary Fund and restructuring most of its debt. But the depreciation of the cedi, which has lost over 20 percent of its value against the dollar this year, has severely impacted the profitability of cocoa farming even as international prices topped \$10,000 per tonne in March before receding in recent months.

Production costs have jumped, with fertilizers and other materials needed to farm becoming increas-



**ATRONI, Ghana:** Cocoa beans are pictured next to a warehouse in this village near Sunyani in this April 11, 2019 photo. — Reuters

ingly expensive. Poor road networks have also inflated transportation costs, further squeezing farmers' margins. Cocoa farmers are obliged to sell their produce to the state-run Ghana Cocoa Board or COCOBOD, which fixes prices to help protect farmers from market volatility.

In April, the government increased the cocoa price paid to farmers to \$2,188 (33,120 cedi) per ton, a 58.26 percent hike. But this has not been enough to offset the rising costs and the lure of higher prices in Ivory Coast and Togo. "If the government increased the

cocoa price to match our neighbors, the smuggling would stop," said another Suhum farmer, Serwaa Adjei. "We need to survive."

### Smallholder farmers

Ghana's cocoa sector, which accounts for about 10 percent of the nation's GDP, is heavily reliant on smallholder farmers. These growers, however, have found themselves in an increasingly precarious situation. Dennis Nyameke, a veteran farmer from the Western Region, explained the economics behind smuggling. "A bag of cocoa sells for at least \$137 in Ghana, but when we smuggle it to Ivory Coast, we can get close to \$152," he said. "With four children to care for, I can't afford to ignore that difference."

Despite efforts by the state-run COCOBOD to tackle these challenges, farmers say they are still struggling. Fiifi Bofo, head of public affairs at COCOBOD, acknowledged the impact of smuggling, illegal mining and adverse weather conditions on cocoa production. Illegal mining for gold, known locally as Galamsey, is rife in rural Ghana, impacting water supplies and keeping farmers from land. "Illegal mining activities are cutting off farmers from their farms and polluting water bodies needed to irrigate cocoa farms," Bofo told AFP.

He said climate change had also impacted cocoa yields. "We are doing a lot to improve the situation of the farmers. We are motivating cocoa farmers by paying them more for their produce," he said. "But the economic pressures are immense, and we are fighting a tough battle." — AFP

## India's JPMorgan entry to suck \$11bn from 3 countries

**MUMBAI:** India's imminent inclusion in the world's most widely followed emerging market bond index, JPMorgan's GBI-EM, is expected to draw a combined \$11 billion away from South Africa, Poland and Thailand's local markets, the bank's analysts have estimated.

The Wall Street lender said India's entry, which starts on Friday and will take 10 months to complete, was likely to pull \$4.7 billion from South Africa, \$3.3 billion from Poland and \$3.2 billion from Thailand. It will also pull \$2.9 billion and \$2.5 billion from the Czech Republic and Chile respectively, it added.

"For EM-dedicated investors, we view India's index inclusion as a zero-sum game and expect outflows from other EM local bond markets to accommodate," JPMorgan's strategists led by Michael Harrison said in a note. On a broader level, the Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) area is estimated to see the largest regional hit to index weight. EMEA EM's aggregate weight is expected to drop to 26.2 percent by March when India's inclusion is complete compared to around 32 percent at the start of this month and 40 percent in 2021, before Russia's 2022 exclusion from the index following its invasion of Ukraine.

International investors have bought more than \$10 billion of Indian government bonds in the nine months since India's inclusion was announced in September, taking their ownership to a record high. — Reuters



**BUENA FE, Ecuador:** Farmer Julia Avellan (left) and agricultural technician Vinicio Angulo check cocoa trees at a farm in Buena Fe Canton, Los Rios province, Ecuador. — AFP

## Hot cocoa prices in Ecuador bring profits, danger to producers

**BUENA FE, Ecuador:** Julia Avellan had been tempted to quit the cocoa business before prices unexpectedly exploded on the international market this year, bringing historic profits to Ecuador's farmers. But the "golden" cocoa bean has not escaped the attention of criminals in the small South American nation, wracked by gang violence in recent years.

Avellan, 41, walks through her lush plantation in the central Los Rios province, stopping to slice open a reddish cocoa pod, extracting the slimy bean that will be fermented, dried and roasted on its way to becoming chocolate. Cocoa prices skyrocketed in March after a poor harvest in West Africa, reaching \$10,000 per ton in New York. Prices have since dropped back but are still three times higher than last year. Countries whose governments do not regulate cocoa prices - such as Ecuador - have seen some of the best profits. Avellan said she has sold a quintal (100 pounds, 45 kilograms) of cocoa beans for \$420, compared to around \$60 before the boom which barely covered her investments and "made you feel like quitting as a cocoa farmer."

"Thanks to these prices, we are going to be more sustainable for our family. We will be able to take care of our plants with even more dedication, because now

it truly is the golden seed," she told AFP. But the bounty has also ushered in danger in a country brought to its knees by organized crime, forcing everyone from shrimp farmers to banana growers to fork out millions in extra security. "These prices are historic, we have never had them," said Ivan Ontaneda, president of the national association of cocoa exporters (Anecacao). He said exporters had already spent around \$20 million on security last year, and fears are high that cocaine will end up in their shipments.

Los Rios is one of the most violent provinces in Ecuador with a murder rate of 111 per 100,000 inhabitants. The figure is even higher than in neighboring Guayas state, whose port capital Guayaquil is the main hub for cocaine trafficking to the United States and Europe. "My colleagues have been kidnapped. Not even eight days ago, a young man was kidnapped. They have stolen cars (trucks loaded with cocoa) from companies," said Avellan. The threat of crime leads to an "increase in costs" in the cocoa chain, Marco Landivar, manager of a processing plant for the exporter Eco-kakao, told AFP. "The cargo has to go with private security, all movements to port have double custody," he adds.

After the Ivory Coast and Ghana, Ecuador is the world's third-largest cocoa grower, producing some 420,000 tons a year. In recent months, unfavorable weather conditions and devastating diseases in aging plantations have battered crops in West Africa, tipping the scale in favor of the Latin American country. In Ecuador, small farmers produce 80 percent of the country's cocoa beans, while the rest are grown by larger plantations. — AFP

## EU leaders want more green industry in Europe

**BRUSSELS:** European Union leaders will call this week for a greater focus on manufacturing green technologies in Europe, as competition to produce electric cars and wind turbines heats up with China and the United States, a draft statement showed. EU countries' leaders meet in Brussels on Thursday for a two-day summit, where they plan to decide who should take the bloc's top jobs for the next five years, and give guidance on policy goals.

A draft of that guidance, seen by Reuters on Tuesday, reflected a growing wish among European policymakers to support European industries to manufacture the technologies needed to meet climate goals. "We will create a more supportive environment for scaling up Europe's manufacturing capacity for net-zero technologies and products," the draft said, adding that Europe's green transition should focus on keeping industries competitive.

Other green topics were less prominent in the draft, which did not specify whether leaders intend to strengthen EU climate policies in the next five years, or invest more in adapting to worsening climate change risks from floods and heatwaves. One of the next European Commission tasks is to propose a legally binding target for the EU to cut emissions by 2040. This was not mentioned in the draft.

Two EU diplomats said some governments have sought to reduce the documents' focus on Europe's green agenda, which has faced opposition in recent months from right-wing and far-right politicians.

Gains for those parties in this month's European Parliament election are set to make it harder for the EU to pass ambitious climate policies in the next five years, lawmakers and officials have said.

Months of protests by farmers have added to EU policymakers' wariness about targeting the sector with new rules to encourage more environmentally-friendly practices. "The European Union will promote a competitive, sustainable and resilient agricultural sector that continues to ensure food security, and champion vibrant rural communities," the draft said, adding that the bloc would continue to protect nature. The document said EU countries will need to invest more in shifting sectors off fossil fuels and onto electricity, as well as in power grids and energy storage. — Reuters



**A man walks into the JPMorgan headquarters at Canary Wharf in London. — Reuters**

## Covestro unveils cost cuts amid UAE firm takeover talks

**FRANKFURT:** German chemical maker Covestro unveiled Tuesday a 400-million-euro (\$430-million) cost-cutting plan, a day after announcing progress in talks about a mammoth takeover by Emirati national energy firm ADNOC.

The annual savings are to be achieved globally by the end of 2028, by cutting material and personnel costs, and 190 million euros of the total would be in Germany, the group said. But the Leverkusen-based company also said it had agreed with staff representatives not to make any compulsory redundancies at its German sites until the end of 2032.

"The last few years have been challenging for the chemical industry and for Covestro," said CEO Markus Steilemann, adding that the cost-cutting program would help secure the group's "leading position in the global market".

Covestro has about 17,500 employees worldwide. The chemical industry in Europe's biggest economy has been in crisis in recent years, with the energy-intensive sector hit hard by surging costs after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. On Monday, Covestro announced it had entered "concrete negotiations" with ADNOC after receiving a takeover offer worth nearly 12 billion euros.

It was a step forward in long-running talks between the two sides, and sent the German company's shares surging. The UAE firm is headed by Sultan Al Jaber, who was president of last year's COP28 climate talks in Dubai. Covestro - a former division of chemical giant Bayer - has expertise in areas such as chemical recycling that are key for the future of the industry, and which ADNOC is interested in. — AFP



## Business

# Foxconn rejects married women from India iPhone jobs: Report

## Apple insists it upholds 'highest supply chain standards in industry'

**SRIPERUMBUDUR, India:** The two women standing near the entrance to the iPhone factory in southern India were upset. Parvathi and Janaki, sisters in their 20s, had come to the plant, run by major Apple supplier Foxconn, for interviews in March 2023 after seeing job ads on WhatsApp. But they had been turned away at the main gate by a security officer who stopped them and asked: "Are you married?"

"We didn't get the jobs as we both are married," Parvathi later said in an interview at her village shanty. "Even the auto-rickshaw driver who took us from the bus stand to the Foxconn facility told us they wouldn't take married women," she added. "We thought we would still give it a shot."

A Reuters investigation has found that Foxconn has systematically excluded married women from jobs at its main India iPhone assembly plant, on the grounds they have more family responsibilities than their unmarried counterparts. S Paul, a former human-resources executive at Foxconn India, said the company's executives verbally convey the recruitment rules to its Indian hiring agencies, which Foxconn tasks with scouting for candidates, bringing them in for interviews and employing them.

### 'Cultural issues'

Foxconn typically doesn't hire married women because of "cultural issues" and societal pressures, said Paul, who said he left the company in August 2023 for a better-paying role at a consulting firm. The company's view was that there were "many issues post-marriage," Paul added. Among them: Women "have babies after marriage."

"Risk factors increase when you hire married women," he said. Paul's account was corroborated by 17 employees from more than a dozen Foxconn hiring agencies in India, and four current and former Foxconn human-resources executives. Twelve of these sources spoke on condition of anonymity. The agents and the Foxconn HR sources cited family duties, pregnancy and higher absenteeism as reasons why Foxconn did not hire married women at the plant, located at Sriperumbudur, near the city of Chennai. Many of these people also said jewelry worn by married Hindu women could interfere with production.

The ban isn't absolute. Three former Foxconn HR executives told Reuters that the Taiwan-headquartered manufacturer relaxes the practice of not

hiring married women during high-production periods when it sometimes faces labor shortages. In some cases, hiring agencies help female candidates conceal their marital status to secure jobs, Reuters found. In response to questions from Reuters, Apple and Foxconn acknowledged lapses in hiring practices in 2022 and said they had worked to address the issues. All the discriminatory practices documented by Reuters at the Sriperumbudur plant, however, took place in 2023 and 2024. The companies didn't address those instances. They also didn't specify whether any of the lapses in 2022 related to the hiring of married women.

While Indian law doesn't bar companies from discriminating in hiring based on marital status, Apple's and Foxconn's policies prohibit such practice in their supply chains. Apple told Reuters it upholds the "highest supply chain standards in the industry," and noted that Foxconn employs some married women in India.

"When concerns about hiring practices were first raised in 2022 we immediately took action and worked with our supplier to conduct monthly audits to identify issues and ensure that our high standards are upheld," Apple said in a statement. "All of our suppliers in India hire married women, including Foxconn." In a statement, Foxconn said it "vigorously refutes allegations of employment discrimination based on marital status, gender, religion or any other form."

Between January 2023 and May 2024, Reuters made more than 20 trips to Sriperumbudur and spoke to dozens of jobseekers about the hiring process. Reporters also reviewed a candidate information pamphlet, dozens of job ads and records of WhatsApp discussions in which four of Foxconn's third-party recruiters stated to prospective candidates that only unmarried women were eligible for assembly jobs. The ads make no mention of the hiring of men.

Foxconn, the world's largest contract electronics manufacturer, outsources its hiring of assembly-line workers to third-party vendors, who must be registered with the Tamil Nadu state government as official Foxconn service providers. The hiring agents scout for and screen the candidates, who ultimately are interviewed and selected by Foxconn. These same vendors directly employ the workers and manage the payroll, getting paid about \$10 to \$15 a



CHENNAI: Job aspirants talk with a hiring agent outside the Foxconn factory, where workers assemble iPhones for Apple, in Sriperumbudur, near Chennai. — Reuters

month per employee, three hiring agents said.

Apple and Foxconn each require their suppliers to adhere to their respective codes of conduct. Assembly lines entirely or predominantly staffed by women have emerged in some industries in India. That's in line with Modi's efforts to boost female labor-force participation - which official data shows is around 37 percent, compared with almost 80 percent for men.

### Married 'not allowed'

In addition to the sisters, Parvathi and Janaki, Reuters spoke to five other women who said they were rejected by Foxconn's hiring vendors on the grounds that they were married. Priya Darshini received the news in a WhatsApp group chat, which a recruiter from SS Enterprises, one of the hiring agencies, had created to scout for candidates.

Darshini posed questions to the group in August

2023, according to a transcript reviewed by Reuters: "I have a baby. Are there child care facilities? Could I bring my baby? Age is 2. Salary?"

The recruiter, T. Balu, sent a curt reply: Married "not allowed." Asked about his response, Balu told Reuters that Foxconn does not hire married women, who wear ornaments, because it wants to ensure a metal-free zone. Darshini, who is in her late 20s, told Reuters she is seeking help from friends and family to find a job that would allow her to care for her child.

Paul, the former HR executive, said Foxconn management advises its hiring vendors not to mention marital and age criteria in their job ads. But in some instances, vendors did not heed that advice.

"Job vacancy for Only Female ... iPhone Manufacturing ... Age: 19 to 30 Unmarried," said an ad posted by a recruiter at Proodle, a hiring agency for Foxconn, in a publicly accessible WhatsApp group in February 2024. — Reuters



Lufthansa planes stand parked as Frankfurt airport is closed to passengers with planned departures due to a strike organized by Verdi union, in Frankfurt, Germany. — Reuters

## Lufthansa ups fares as environmental costs increase

**FRANKFURT:** Lufthansa will add an environmental charge to its fares, the airline said on Tuesday, joining at least one European rival in doing so as the industry battles to cover the cost of meeting new EU rules on reducing emissions. Airlines have warned for years that regulations requiring them to use more expensive sustainable jet fuel could drive up costs. Ticket prices have already surged in recent years in the post-COVID travel boom, raising fears that further increases could start deterring travelers from flying.

Fares will go up between 1 euro and 72 euros (\$1.07-\$77.24), depending on the type of ticket, on all flights departing from European Union countries, Britain, Norway and Switzerland, the German airline group said in a statement. It said the charge would "cover part of the steadily rising additional costs due to regulatory environmental requirements" such as sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) made from bio-based materials - regarded as crucial to making flying less polluting.

The EU has adopted rules requiring flights departing from member states' airports to carry progressively increasing amounts of SAF. Air France-KLM AIREPA introduced a similar charge in January 2022, the group confirmed to Reuters, adding a surcharge of up to 12 euros for business fares and four euros for economy fares at the time. "We have a SAF contribution in place, applicable to all flights (not only on departure from Europe) to transparently reflect the additional cost of incorporating sustainable aviation fuel," an Air France-KLM spokesperson said in an emailed statement.

Lufthansa CEO Carsten Spohr warned last year the EU targets would be hard to achieve and hinted that higher costs would be passed on to customers. The price hike, which the airline called an "Environmental Cost Surcharge", will cover part of these costs for 2025, the company said. Lufthansa shares hit an intraday low after the news and were down 0.4 percent at 1105 GMT.

A spokesperson said the move was not tied to Lufthansa's high labor costs after strikes this year, which led the airline to issue a profit warning ahead of first quarter results. He added the additional costs weren't expected to go up further for now.

EasyJet, Ryanair and IAG were not immediately available to comment on whether they would introduce similar measures. IAG shares were down 1.4 percent at 1105 GMT, while budget carrier Ryanair's extended gains after the news to trade up 1.4 percent. — Reuters

## Stellantis could axe UK production unless govt acts on EVs

**LONDON:** Stellantis could halt its UK production unless the government does more to boost demand for electric vehicles (EVs) to help it comply with regulations requiring automakers to sell more EVs, the company's top UK executive said on Tuesday. Speaking at a news conference held by industry group the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) in London, Maria Grazia Davino told reporters that a decision on the future of the company's UK production would likely come in "less than a year". Grazia Davino's remarks come a little over a week before Britons go to the polls to elect a new government.

Unlike the European Union, where automakers can meet CO2 emissions reduction targets by selling a mixture of hybrids and EVs, Britain is demanding from this year that automakers sell a minimum percentage of fully electric cars or face fines of 15,000 pounds (\$19,033) per non-compliant vehicle sold. "In the UK there will be consequences (of the mandates) for sure," Grazia Davino said. "Stellantis UK does not stop, but Stellantis production in the UK could stop."

This year, the UK government has ruled that 22 percent of all new cars sold must be EVs. According to SMMT data, fully electric cars only made up 16.1 percent of sales through to May. There are still UK tax incentives in place for corporate fleets to buy EVs, but there are no subsidies for con-

## Nigerian farmers desert farms after attacks; prices jump

**ABUJA/MAIDUGURI:** Hassan Ya'u, a 42-year-old maize and sesame seed farmer in Nigeria's northern Katsina state, was tending to his crops early this month when dozens of armed men on motorcycles rode towards his plot and started shooting at close range. Ya'u and fellow farmer Musa Nasidi managed to escape, but at least 50 people - many of them farmers working their fields at the time - were killed in the attack in the latest in a series of deadly raids on farming areas. An unknown number of people were abducted in the assault, which was carried out in broad daylight.

Ya'u and Nasidi said the gunmen had attacked their Kankara farming community because farmers had not paid a levy imposed by the armed gang. Such raids are forcing many farmers to leave their fields, contributing to higher food prices and soaring inflation as Nigeria faces the worst cost of living crisis in a generation.

"They set ablaze my produce and took away foodstuff worth about 4 million naira (\$2,739.73)," said Ya'u, who has sought refuge in Daura town, nearly 200 km (124 miles) from Kankara. "I don't have access to my farm because bandits have taken control of the area. Everything has been ru-



Signage saying 'Electrifying Britain' is seen on the outside of the Stellantis owned Vauxhall car factory in Ellesmere Port, Britain. — Reuters

sumers to buy EVs that are more expensive than fossil-fuel equivalents.

Rather than pay fines, Stellantis - home to brands including Peugeot, Fiat, Vauxhall and Jeep - may import fewer fossil-fuel models into the UK to curtail sales and hit the 22 percent target, Grazia Davino said. "The fact is that demand is not there," she said.

Like other automakers, Stellantis wants Britain to provide tax incentives for consumers and to

boost charging infrastructure, and for the company's UK EV production to count towards its targets, even though some of it is exported. Stellantis currently makes electric vans at its Ellesmere Port plant in northwest England, and has previously said it would start making electric vans at its Luton plant in southern England in 2025. "Let me be clear, I want to keep the production in the UK," Grazia Davino said. — Reuters

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## Cash-strapped Sri Lanka to sign debt deals with lenders

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka has finalized long-delayed debt deals with its bilateral lenders including China to meet a key condition of an IMF bailout, the government said Tuesday. A treasury delegation is on its way to France to sign agreements with creditors on Wednesday, government spokesman Bandula Gunawardana said.

Sri Lanka defaulted on its foreign debt in April 2022 after running out of foreign exchange, and the unprecedented economic crisis forced the then president Gotabaya Rajapaksa to step down.

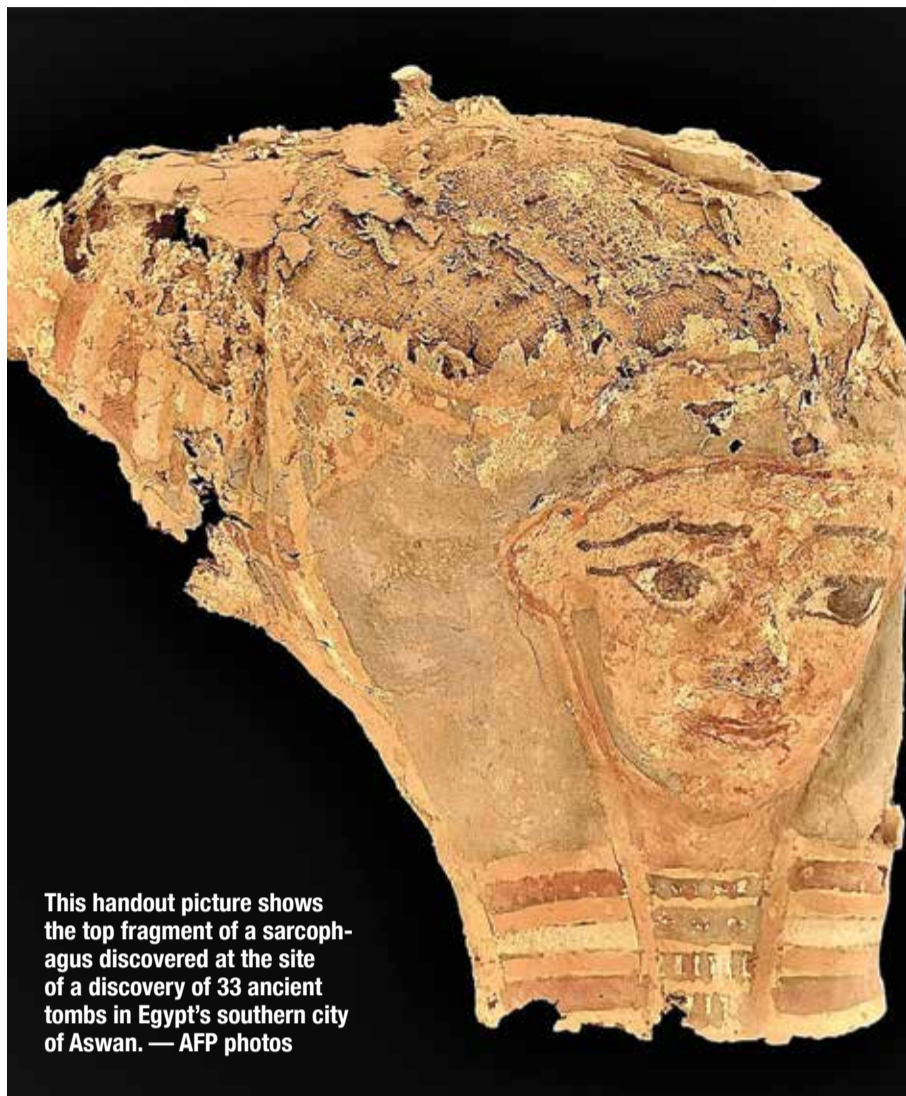
The government had expected a debt deal with all its creditors before the end of 2022, but negotiations dragged. Bilateral creditors account for 28.5 percent of Sri Lanka's current outstanding foreign debt of \$37 billion, according to treasury data at the end of March.

China is the largest single bilateral lender, accounting for \$4.66 billion out of a total of \$10.58 billion borrowed from other countries. Japan is second, with \$2.35 billion, and India is third with \$1.36 billion.

Sri Lanka's commercial borrowings include \$12.55 billion raised through International Sovereign Bonds (ISB), and another \$2.18 billion from the China Development Bank. — AFP



WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26, 2024



This handout picture shows the top fragment of a sarcophagus discovered at the site of a discovery of 33 ancient tombs in Egypt's southern city of Aswan. — AFP photos



This handout picture shows the bottom fragment of a sarcophagus discovered at the site of a discovery of 33 ancient tombs in Egypt's southern city of Aswan.



This handout picture shows the site of a discovery of 33 ancient tombs in Egypt's southern city of Aswan.

## EGYPT TOMB FIND MAY SHED LIGHT ON ANCIENT DISEASES

**A** new discovery of 33 ancient tombs in Egypt's southern city of Aswan could reveal "new information on diseases" prevalent at the time, the tourism and antiquities ministry said Monday. The tombs date back to the Ancient Egyptian Late Period and the Greco-Roman Periods, which collectively lasted from the seventh century BC until around

the fourth century AD. The burials were found by a joint Egyptian-Italian archaeological mission.

Ayman Ashmawy, who heads the Supreme Council of Antiquities' Egyptian Antiquities Division, said studies of the mummies "indicate that 30 to 40 percent of those buried died in their youth, as newborns or as adolescents". Patrizia

Piacentini, professor of Egyptology and archaeology at the University of Milan, headed the Italian side of the mission.

She said preliminary studies on the remains showed that "some suffered from infectious diseases, while others had bone disorders". The remains of several adult women showed signs of pelvic bone trauma. Other mummies indicated

"anaemia, malnutrition, chest diseases, tuberculosis and signs of osteoporosis", Piacentini said in a ministry statement.

Since 2018, the mission has been excavating the area around the Aga Khan Mausoleum where Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah is buried, on the west bank of the Nile River just across from Aswan city center. Among the remains found

were "an adult, perhaps a woman, and a child who may have died at the age of one or two", said Abdelmoneim Said, General Director of Aswan and Nubia Antiquities. "The two bodies were still attached to each other inside a stone coffin," he added. —AFP

### Bleaching affects 50% of Malaysia marine park reefs

**M**ore than 50 percent of the coral reefs in Malaysia's marine parks have been affected by mass bleaching caused by rising sea temperatures, the fisheries department said. The assessment was made after a study conducted between April and June, it said in a statement Sunday. Severe or prolonged heat stress leads to corals dying off, though there is a possibility for recovery if temperatures drop and other stressors such as overfishing and pollution are reduced.

The department urged tour operators to control the number of tourists involved in recreation activities to reduce pressure on reefs. "If bleaching is greater than 80 percent, further management interventions may include temporary access restrictions to protect affected reefs," it said. It added that it was setting up a coral bleaching response committee with researchers, NGOs and representatives from the states of Sabah and Sarawak on Borneo Island.

The Southeast Asian country has many popular diving spots and a rich and vibrant marine life, with waters around 42 islands gazetted as marine parks. Coral around the world is struggling with mass bleaching events that scientists warn are expanding and deepening. Record ocean temperatures have caused parts of reefs in 62 countries and territories to turn ghostly white as they expel the algae that live inside them.

Coral lives in a symbiotic relationship with the microscopic zooxanthellae algae, which produce food and give the reef its color. Without the algae, the reef turns white, and if temperatures don't fall, the coral will die. The consequences of coral bleaching are far-reaching, affecting not only the health of oceans but also the livelihoods of people, food security and local economies. —AFP



Cindy Lauper performs during the 85th annual Hollywood Christmas Parade on Hollywood Boulevard in Hollywood, on November 27, 2016. — AFP

### Pop-punk icon Lauper recounts life 'fight' ahead of farewell tour

**S**he was an icon as much for her outspoken punk attitude as her era-defining hits like "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun". Now 71, Cyndi Lauper is heading out on a farewell tour. The New York-born artist says she wants to celebrate with her fans one last time while she is still fighting fit. The tour takes her across North America from October before heading to Europe in February.

Lauper has sold more than 50 million albums thanks to hits like "Time After Time" and "True Colors" and has remained active, winning a Tony Award in 2013 for the soundtrack to Broadway musical "Kinky Boots". She spoke to AFP about her rebellious spirit, growing up Italian-American and her many years campaigning for gay rights.

**Question: You were expelled from two schools when you were young. Where did that rebellion come from?**

**Answer:** "It wasn't me. It was them! I took issue with a priest who said my mother was going to hell. But what kind of person tells an eight-year-old their mother is going to hell? "And the second time, I said something to a nun and they threw me out. I wanted to go home because in that school... well, certain people shouldn't be taking care of kids."

**Q: Do the hits still feel fresh when you play live?**

**A:** "Each time is a little different but what people really come for is to click into the past. They want to hear what they remember. If you can add a little something-something, that's good."

"Between the rhythm and the sound, sometimes you can lose yourself. That's the best part of performing because I'm of the opinion people sing to escape, to feel better, to fly."

"When I was kid, the lady a couple of yards down, every Sunday she would make a sauce, clean the whole house and sit down in the afternoon and play the accordion and she would always play "Volare". As a teenager, I was like 'Kill me now! How many times do I need to be reminded I'm Italian?!' "But now I realize what she was really playing: "My heart has wings". When singers sing at their best, I believe they're flying inside."

**Q: What memory do you cherish most from your career?**

**A:** "I had to fight for what I wanted because it wasn't just handed to me. I didn't take opportunities because I wanted things a certain way. I had to keep in mind why I started doing this -- to feel free, not to be a little bird in a cage."

"The award that meant the most to me was probably Ms. magazine (woman of the year award) in 1984. The magazine was started by Gloria Steinem, who was a great leader in civil rights. She was very influential to me growing up. "Of course, the Tony was a big deal, and the Grammys. Not that I won a ton of Grammys, probably because I never counted to 10 before I spoke. Maybe that would have been a good idea." —AFP

### Sienna Miller: I was 'obsessed' with Costner's 'Dances with Wolves'

**S**ienna Miller was such a huge fan of Kevin Costner's films when growing up that she named her pet rabbits after animals in "Dances With Wolves". Now she is starring alongside Costner in his ambitious film series "Horizon: An American Saga" -- a four-part project that he mortgaged his home to fund. The first two instalments -- each some three hours long -- hit cinemas this summer, with the first released on June 28. Miller, 42, said she remained star-struck. "I'm a child of the 90s. I can still barely look at Kevin, because he was such a huge part of my childhood," she told AFP.

Costner's Oscar-winning "Dances with Wolves" from 1990 was "the first time I really had my heart broken by a film -- I was obsessed with it," Miller said. She had two pet rabbits named Two Socks and Cisco after the wolf and horse in the film. "Horizon" follows multiple characters and storylines on the violent frontier of the 19th century as European settlers took over Native American land, with Miller playing a woman whose family is attacked and faces a brutal struggle to survive. "I like to think I would be an OK frontier woman. I'm more outdoorsy than you might assume," she said. "But I don't think it would have been fun. I know Kevin says he wished he lived back then. I think it was a very difficult time to have been alive."

Miller was pregnant for the filming of the second instalment, which made the conditions even tougher. "We were really out in nature. That was hard, because you're in corsets and it's boiling

and there are scorpions and rattlesnakes. "I found earth, that red earth, in my hair for like a month. Up my nose, ears, every orifice. Well, not every orifice," she added with a laugh. Only Costner knew she was pregnant during the second shoot. "I was feeling pretty sick. That corset was not my friend!"

#### 'Horrific genocide'

Miller welcomed the chance to learn more about the history of the period. "This country with an indigenous people who were exterminated violently, brutally, in a horrific genocide -- that isn't talked about nearly enough," she said. "It's a bloody history and a gory history and a devastating history. But it happened. And I think to be able to look at it and not get too political, but just to show the truth of it, that's refreshing." Speaking at the Cannes Film Festival, where "Horizon" got its world premiere last month, Costner told AFP he began working on the script way back in 1988 but could never find a studio to back it.

"But I loved it and so I decided I would write four, which is very American of me -- insane," he said. Reviews so far have been decidedly mixed, however, with IndieWire calling it "the dullest vanity project of the century" while The Telegraph gushed over its "sheer, magisterial sweep". Costner says he has no concerns about bankrupting himself. "What's the fear? If they take it away from me, I still have my movie. I still have my integrity. I still listened to my heart," he said. —AFP



(From left) British-US actress Sienna Miller and US actor Kevin Costner arrive for the screening of the film "Horizon: An American Saga" at the 77th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France, on May 19, 2024. — AFP





A member of the public uses binoculars during a guided tour to see beavers by a pond near Doune.

# SCOTTISH FARMERS DAMN WILD BEAVER REINTRODUCTION POLICY

**A**s night falls in central Scotland, beavers appear in a pond under the fascinated gaze of a group of nature enthusiasts. Beavers are “ecosystem engineers”, whose activities can alleviate flooding, improve water quality and boost wildlife. But the visitors’ delight is not shared by everyone in the region, where the industrious tree-felling mammals have caused much gnashing of teeth among farmers and gardeners. Beavers, which had disappeared from Scotland for around 400 years due to hunting, were reintroduced in the wild in 2009.

home to endangered red squirrels as well as beavers, which can reach one meter (3.2 feet) in length and weigh up to 19 kilograms (42 pounds). The dam-building semi-aquatic wetland dwellers were relocated there after causing serious damage to agricultural land nearby. Argaty’s owner Lynn Bower raves about them, not least because the farm track no longer floods during the winter months. “It used to flood to a depth of about four feet (1.2 meters) and we had to rebuild it every winter,” she told AFP. “Because one of the beaver families is above that, they built dams, which holds the water back and it doesn’t flood. “They have increased the area of wetland magnificently and the benefit to the other wildlife from very small things like dragonflies and frogs, right up to bats and all those sorts of things, is staggeringly quick and rather wonderful.”

**Natural engineers**

There were almost 1,000 beavers in Scotland in 2020-21, according to NatureScot, the public body responsible for Scotland’s natural heritage. Their numbers have grown because they have no natural predators in the region. NatureScot touts beavers’ role in boosting biodiversity and helping flood protection by cutting trees, digging burrows and channels, and building dams. But, as in the case of many wildlife reintroductions, the picture is complex and not everyone is as enthusiastic. “They’re wonderful engineers but there’s no place for them in Scotland,” said Douglas Neill, a farmer, as he watched trucks reconstruct an embankment protecting his land from flooding from the River Tay. The embankment collapsed in October last year because of burrows dug by the beavers, turning his potato field into a lake, he explained. Bams that can hold up to 3,000 tons of vegetables lie empty, he added. “The greens want beavers but do they think about what we are going to eat?” he asked, estimating the damage to his property at more than £2.0 million (\$2.5

million). “If we want to keep producing our own food, the solution is eradication,” he said. NatureScot says managing different interests is the key. It offers professional support to people experiencing damage caused by beavers, with measures such as fencing vulnerable areas, protecting individual trees, “more novel techniques” or, as a last resort, lethal control of excess numbers.

**‘Beaver huggers’**

In neighboring Perthshire, in the southern Highlands, a woman points out the dozens of trees lying felled in the

woods above her house. Beavers diverted water flowing into a ditch with their dams and build huge lodges on a pond which are now home to four families. “When we first realized we had beavers, we thought it was fantastic. They are so sweet. We didn’t realize then,” she said, declining to give her name because the issue is so contentious. She does not want to see “beaver huggers” on her land, given the damage

to trees, and is at her wits end. “We’ve lost so many trees... Beavers can easily destroy a tree in a night,” she added. Martin Kennedy, president of the National Farmers’ Union in Scotland, wants “complete exclusion areas” to protect farm production. NatureScot says it understands farmers’ difficulties and is monitoring the beaver population to “identify how people, and ecosystems, can most benefit from the presence” of the animals. Culling beavers is an option but only as a last resort under strict conditions, it says. A total of 52 licenses were granted in 2022 and a few dozen animals were



Two beavers walk by the bank of a pond.



A beaver eats a potato by the bank of a pond near Doune, Perthshire, Scotland. — AFP photos

Ten years later, to the dismay of some farmers and landowners, the herbivorous rodents were designated a protected species. Wildlife visits to see the animals in their natural habitat are now popular and bring in revenue. “We saw a lot of them today. I feel very privileged,” said Catriona Morrison, Gaelic policy manager for Historic Environment Scotland, after a “safari” at Argaty farm, north of Stirling. Argaty is

woods above her house. Beavers diverted water flowing into a ditch with their dams and build huge lodges on a pond which are now home to four families. “When we first realized we had beavers, we thought it was fantastic. They are so sweet. We didn’t realize then,” she said, declining to give her name because the issue is so contentious.

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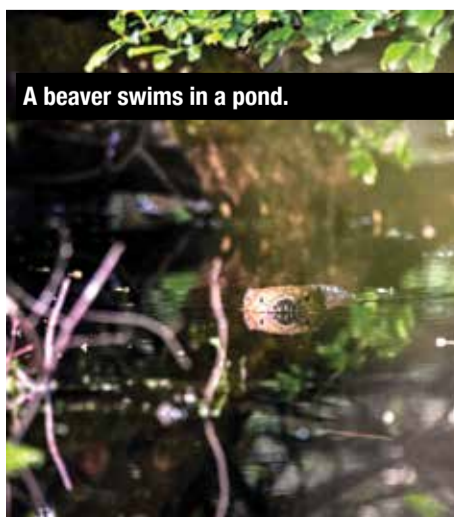
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Members of the public take part in a guided tour to see beavers by a pond near Doune.



Members of the public take part in a guided tour to see beavers by a pond near Doune.



A beaver swims in a pond.



Members of the public take part in a guided tour to see Scottish beavers go about their business at a pond.





**CHANEL AT FASHION WEEK WITHOUT SACKED DESIGNER VIARD**

**A**wkward! Chanel was set to hold its haute couture show on Tuesday just three weeks after the very abrupt departure of creative director Virginie Viard after almost 30 years with the brand. Viard worked alongside the legendary Karl Lagerfeld for years before taking over at the helm after his death in 2019. She oversaw record sales of nearly \$20 billion last year. But a crisis had been brewing for months, with skeptical pouts on the front row and murmurs that her shows were growing repetitive.

The situation exploded in May when a mid-season "cruise" show in Marseille failed to impress fans -- not helped by the unseasonably cold weather on the Cote d'Azur. "What the

hell is going on? Bad cuts and fabrics? The shoes?!" protested one internet user. Another called it "lazy". A month later, Viard's departure was announced in less than elegant form -- revealed to the specialist press in the middle of the night. It was later revealed that Viard would not even be present for her last couture show, which would instead be handled by her team. Paris-based designer Lutz Huelle told AFP he sympathized with her situation.

"Regardless of what anyone thinks about her work of the last five years, she found herself in the far-from-simple situation of having to, from one day to the next, replace one of the biggest and best-loved designers at the biggest brand in the world -- a literally im-

possible task," he said. "I can't imagine Karl working with someone for all these years without that person doing a great job," he added.

**Discreet presence**

Viard's takeover was seen as a temporary appointment at the time, although she was only the third creative director in Chanel's 114-year history after Lagerfeld and its founder Gabrielle

"Coco" Chanel. Always dressed simply, in a T-shirt and black trousers, she was a far more discreet presence than "The Kaiser", known for his provocative statements. Her shows were much less spectacular than Lagerfeld's extravaganzas and commentators were often highly critical of her cuts and taste.

That never put off buyers, who still flocked to Chanel stores -- sales were up 14.6 percent to \$19.7 billion last year. Ready-to-wear sales increased 23 percent during Viard's five-year tenure. "It underscored the fact the brand is much stronger than the

individual designer," wrote Business of Fashion. The fashion world now turns to its favorite pastime -- speculation over who will succeed. Among the names circulating are Hedi Slimane (Celine), known for his rocker aesthetic, raising the possibility of a move into menswear for the first time.

Other possibilities are French designers Marine Serre or Simon Porte Jacquemus, who have both found great success with their own brands. Pierpaolo Piccioli, who left Valentino four months ago, and Britain's Sarah Burton, who designed Princess Catherine's wedding dress, are also seen as possible candidates. —AFP



Models present a creation by Chanel during the Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2024 show as part of the Paris Fashion Week at Palais Garnier (Opera national de Paris) opera house in Paris on June 25, 2024. — AFP photos



## Sports

# Afghanistan into semi-finals after Bangladesh thriller, Australia out

## Afghanistan face South Africa in the first semi-final

**ARNOS VALE:** Afghanistan advanced to their first-ever senior world tournament semi-final with a nerve-jangling eight-run victory over Bangladesh at the T20 World Cup on Monday that eliminated mighty Australia.

Amid excruciating tension at the Arnos Vale Stadium in St Vincent, Afghan captain Rashid Khan and seamer Naveen ul Haq were the heroes as Afghanistan battled through three rain stoppages to secure a famous victory under the DLS scoring method that was sealed after lam local time.

Defending a modest total of 115-5 on a bowler-friendly surface, Rashid finished with figures of 4-23 while Naveen took 4-26 as Bangladesh were dismissed for 105, chasing a revised target of 114 off 19 overs. An unbeaten 54 from Bangladesh opener Litton Das (49 balls, five fours, one six) threatened to deny Afghanistan's fairytale win and earn Australia the last semi-final spot.

But pacer Naveen claimed the last two wickets – Taskin Ahmed and Mustafizur Rahman – off consecutive deliveries to trigger delirious Afghan celebrations and leave a disconsolate Das stranded at the non-striker's end. "We have worked so hard over the past few years and we were dreaming of this day. It's a surreal experience," said a relieved but delighted "Man of the Match" Naveen.

"We always knew they were going to be coming hard at us to try to get the target in 12.1 overs but we stuck to the task and kept getting wickets."

### 'Make the country proud'

With India defeating Australia earlier in the day and advancing to the second semi-final against England in Guyana on Thursday, this result assured the Afghans of second spot in the group and eliminated

the Aussies and Bangladeshis. Afghanistan will now face South Africa in the first semi-final in Trinidad on Wednesday. Earlier, leg-spinner Rishad Hossain claimed three for 26 to lead the impressive Bangladeshi bowling effort. Despite another good opening stand – 59 off 10.4 overs – the Afghans failed to capitalise on that platform with topscorer Rahmanullah Gurbaz's laborious 43 off 55 balls typifying the struggle to get the ball away.

Ibrahim Zadran and Azmatullah Omarzai managed to get into double-figures but the rate of scoring remained pedestrian throughout. Seamer Taskin, one of two changes to the Bangladesh team which lost heavily to semi-final qualifiers India in their last match two days ago, produced a superb four-over spell, conceding just 12 runs for the wicket of former captain Mohammad Nabi.

"I think through the whole tournament we've been bowling pretty well," said a disappointed Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto. "As a batting group though we have a lot of improvement to make. We didn't make good decisions and going forward we need to think about our batting."

It was left to Rashid (19 not out) to belt three sixes – there was only one more in the entire innings – in the final two overs to help dribble the score over the 100-run mark. "The belief came when we beat New Zealand (at the group stage)," said the Afghan captain in explaining his team's journey to this unprecedented achievement.

"We thought 130-135 would be a good total on this wicket, but still, we knew if we stuck to our plans we would have a good chance to defend the total. We just gave 100 percent effort, to make the country and the people back home proud of us." — AFP



**ARNOS VALE:** Afghanistan's Fazalhaq Farooqi celebrates the dismissal of Bangladesh's Tanzid Hasan Tamim during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup 2024 Super Eight cricket match between Afghanistan and Bangladesh at Arnos Vale Stadium in Arnos Vale, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. — AFP

## India beat Australia to reach T20 semis

**GROS ISLET:** Rohit Sharma led from the front with a blistering 92 as India beat Australia by 24 runs in St. Lucia on Monday to secure a T20 World Cup semi-final against reigning champions England and leave their opponents on the verge of exiting the tournament. The India captain's dashing innings—he faced just 41 balls, including seven fours and eight sixes—was the cornerstone of a total of 205-5 made after he lost the toss. India, with Arshdeep Singh (3-37) and Kuldeep Yadav (2-24) in the wickets, then held Australia to 181-7 in reply.

"That's what I have to do at the top of the order, see what the bowlers are trying to do and play accordingly," said Rohit, the player of the match. "Bowlers are smart, so you have to open up all sides of the field." "That was what was going through my mind," added Rohit, who struck Mitchell Starc for four sixes in a third over costing 29 runs before being bowled by the left-arm quick when eyeing the first hundred of this tournament.

India have not won a major ICC competition since lifting the 2013 Champions Trophy, with 37-year-old opener Rohit urging his side to maintain the aggressive approach that has served them well when they face England in Guyana on Thursday.

### 'Play freely'

"We want to play the same way... play freely," said Rohit, who appeared completely unflustered after opening partner and fellow star batsman Virat Kohli fell for a duck. "It'll be nice (to play England). Nothing changes for us, we want to focus on what we can do as a team, and take the game on."

Australia arrived at this tournament bidding to become the first side to hold all three major ICC men's trophies—World Test Championship,



**GROS ISLET:** Australia's Glenn Maxwell (L) misses a shot during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup 2024 Super Eight cricket match between Australia and India at Daren Sammy National Cricket Stadium in Gros Islet, Saint Lucia. — AFP

One-Day International World Cup and T20 World Cup—at the same time.

But this loss meant their fate was no longer in their own hands. Afghanistan, who produced a stunning upset in beating Australia by 21 runs last time out, will qualify for the semi-finals if they defeat Bangladesh later Monday.

"It's so disappointing," said Australia captain Mitchell Marsh. "We know we still have a chance to make the semis but today, India got the better of us." "They got off to a flyer, Rohit Sharma is very hard to stop when he's in that mode. He deserves all the credit for that," added Marsh, before jok-

ingly saying: "Come on Bangladesh!"

Travis Head, whose superb century crushed Indian dreams of a 50-over World Cup final win on home soil last year, kept Australia in the hunt with a well-made 76 off 43 balls after they lost fellow opener David Warner early in the chase.

His second-wicket stand of 81 with Marsh looked to be turning the tide before the skipper was brilliantly caught one-handed on the boundary by a leaping Axar Patel off spinner Kuldeep for 37. And when Head holed out off a superbly-disguised slower ball from paceman Jasprit Bumrah, Australia were all but beaten at 150-5 in the 17th over. — AFP

## Afghanistan hail Lara inspiration in T20 WCup heroics

**ARNOS VALE:** Afghanistan captain Rashid Khan hailed the inspiration of cricket legend Brian Lara for helping them secure a place in the T20 World Cup for the first time. Afghanistan reached the last four for the first time courtesy of a knife-edge, eight-run victory over Bangladesh on Monday, a win that also saw mighty Australia eliminated.

"I think we have proved one person right was Brian Lara, the only person who mentioned Afghanistan will be in the semis," said Rashid. "I think we told him that when we met him in the welcome party. When you get that kind of great, great statement from a legend, as a team, I think it gives you lots of energy."

Afghanistan will face undefeated South Africa in the first semi-final in Trinidad on Wednesday. India will tackle defending champions England in the second semi-final in Guyana on Thursday. Defending a modest total of 115-5 against Bangladesh in their final second round Super Eights match on a bowler-friendly surface, Rashid finished with figures of 4-23.

Naveen-ul-Haq took 4-26 as Bangladesh were dismissed for just 105, chasing a revised target of 114 off 19 overs. On a night of fluctuating emotions there were also three rain delays which saw various mathematical equations come into play.

Had Bangladesh scored their runs in 12.1 overs, they would have won the match and claimed the remaining semi-final spot. There was tension after Bangladesh fell behind the asking rate at the end of the 11th over when Afghanistan all-rounder Gulbadin Naib went down with cramps just as the threat of more rain appeared.

Rashid insisted the incident was not a device to keep his side ahead of the run rate should the match be halted permanently. "He had some cramp, I don't know what happened to him and I don't know what's going on in social media but that doesn't matter," said the captain. — AFP

## Springboks' Kolisi recalled for Ireland series

**JOHANNESBURG:** Double Rugby World Cup-winning captain Siya Kolisi has been recalled by South Africa for a highly anticipated two-Test home against Ireland in July, South African Rugby announced on Tuesday.

The loose forward led the Springboks to glory in the 2019 and 2023 World Cup finals and was among 39 players named by coach Rassie Erasmus. South Africa are ranked first in the world and Ireland second ahead of sold-out internationals in Pretoria on July 6 and Durban seven days later.

The Boks will also play Portugal on July 20 in Bloemfontein before the start of the Rugby Championship in August. Erasmus has yet to decide whether Racing 92's Kolisi will continue to skipper the record four-time World Cup winners.

The coach has said he prefers whoever captains the Springboks to be based in South Africa, but has not ruled out "exceptional leader" Kolisi continuing in the role. Kolisi, and a number of other stars, missed a 41-13 warm-up win over Wales in London last Saturday for various reasons.

Some, like the loose forward, were not released by their clubs as the Twickenham Test fell outside the international window. Bulls players were also not available as they were playing in the United Rugby Championship final against Glasgow Warriors, which they surprisingly lost despite home advantage. — AFP

## Padres forge ahead against Nationals

**SAN DIEGO:** About the only thing that went right for the San Diego Padres Monday came on the field. There, they erased a three-run deficit in the bottom of the 10th inning with four runs to stop the visiting Washington Nationals 7-6 and extend their lead for the National League's third wildcard spot to 1 1/2 games on Washington, the Arizona Diamondbacks and the New York Mets.

San Diego will try to clinch a series win Tuesday night when it takes on the Nationals again in the second contest of the three-game set.

It will do so without Fernando Tatis Jr. in the lineup for a while. The team's right fielder hit the injured list Monday with a stress reaction in his right leg that, combined with an elbow contusion, had shelved him since the fifth inning on Friday night.

"He could still play—because he's been playing with it," Padres manager Mike Shildt said. "But it's something that's not going to get better unless we rest it."

The team's upcoming schedule influenced the decision. San Diego has four off-days between Thursday and the All-Star break, plus four more surrounding the game. The hope is that will give Tatis ample time to recover while missing the fewest number of games.

The Padres got other bad news on the injury front when Tuesday night's

scheduled starter, Yu Darvish, had a setback after making a rehab start Wednesday night at High-A Fort Wayne. Darvish hit the injured list nearly a month ago with a left groin strain but now has elbow inflammation.

So San Diego recalled right-hander Adam Mazur from Triple-A El Paso to take Darvish's place. Mazur (0-2, 7.27 ERA) pitched in Thursday night's 7-6 win over the Milwaukee Brewers, lasting 4 2/3 innings and permitting three runs off five hits and three walks with three strikeouts, then sent back to El Paso. This will be his first start against Washington.

Meanwhile, the Nationals will send former Padre MacKenzie Gore (6-6, 3.49) to the hill. The left-hander took a 5-2 loss Thursday against Arizona, yielding 10 hits and four runs in five innings while walking two and striking out seven.

Gore is 1-0 with a 3.72 ERA in two career starts against San Diego, winning last year on the road and taking a no-decision at home.

On the season, he's struck out 98 batters in 80 innings but is allowing a whopping .377 average on balls put in play.

Despite Monday night's bitter outcome, Washington is in contention near its halfway point of the season, something most didn't expect. Gore and infielder CJ Abrams, both acquired from the Padres in the Juan



**SAN DIEGO:** Washington Nationals catcher Keibert Ruiz (20) hits a RBI double against the San Diego Padres during the tenth inning at Petco Park. — Reuters

Soto trade in August 2022, said team chemistry has enabled it to enjoy some success.

"We have a really good group of guys and we want to win for each other," Gore said. "It's still early. We have a lot of games left but it's been fun being part of this group and watching these guys get better."

"This is our team now," Abrams said. "We're doing our thing."

Abrams' thing has been a hit in June. He went 3-for-5 Monday, upping his average to .275, and stole two bases to give him 13 for the year. He leads the team in homers (12), runs (47), slugging (.502) and on-base plus slugging (.827). — Reuters



Sports

# Brazil frustrated by Costa Rica, Colombia beat Paraguay at Copa

## Brazil chase 10<sup>th</sup> Copa America crown

LOS ANGELES: A lacklustre Brazil launched their Copa America campaign with a dour 0-0 draw against Costa Rica on Monday as James Rodriguez inspired Colombia to a 2-1 win over Paraguay. Brazil, chasing a 10th Copa America crown, dominated possession and territory in the Group D game at the SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles but struggled to break down a resolute Costa Rica. The Brazilians thought they had taken the lead in the 30th minute after Marquinhos tapped in at the back post after a flick on by Rodrygo following a free-kick by Raphinha. But after an agonizing VAR delay, the goal was chalked off for a fractional offside decision as Costa Rica escaped.

That was as good as it got for Brazil, who labored to break down Costa Rica's defense for the remainder of the game, registering just three shots on target despite enjoying 73.5 percent possession. Costa Rica were content to sit back, defending in numbers and rarely venturing forward with any purpose.

The Costa Ricans failed to have a single shot on goal for the entire game. Brazil coach Dorival Junior paid tribute to Costa Rica's defensive organization. "They were very well organized from start to finish," he said. "They were dedicated in everything they did." Colombia finished the day top of Group D after collecting all three points in their deserved win over Paraguay at Houston's NRG Stadium.

### Rodriguez sparkles

Rodriguez, whose club career has languished in the decade since he rose to prominence with a dazzling performance at the 2014 World Cup, created both of Colombia's goals. The 32-year-old midfielder, who has

played just a handful of minutes for Brazilian club Sao Paulo in the two months leading into the Copa America, set up the opening goal for Colombia in the 32nd minute. After finding space on the left, Rodriguez flighted a pinpoint cross to the far post to pick out Daniel Munoz, who beat Paraguay goalkeeper Rodrigo Morinigo with a firm downward header to make it 1-0. Ten minutes later Colombia doubled their lead and again it was a goal engineered by the trusty left boot of Rodriguez.

This time the goal arrived from the opposite flank, with Rodriguez swinging in a wicked free-kick that was glanced in by Crystal Palace midfielder Jefferson Lerma. That made it 2-0 at half time to leave Colombia firmly on course to extend their unbeaten streak to 24 games. Colombia continued to carve out the better chances in the second half, but Paraguay set up a nervy finish after Brighton's Julio Enciso pulled one back in the 69th minute. Ramon Sosa crossed from the left and Enciso punished slack marking in the Colombia area to hook an angled first-time volley into the bottom corner past Camilo Vargas.

Colombia however controlled play after the Paraguay goal and looked the more threatening team. The Colombians thought they had earned a penalty in the 84th minute when another teasing Rodriguez cross into the box ended with defender Yerry Mina appearing to be hauled down by Gustavo Velazquez. Argentinian referee Dario Herrera pointed to the spot but subsequently overturned the decision after a VAR review. Colombia play Costa Rica in their second group game on Friday, before wrapping up their first-round campaign against Brazil on July 2. — AFP



INGLEWOOD: Brazil's midfielder #05 Bruno Guimaraes fights for the ball with Costa Rica's midfielder #10 Brandon Aguilera during the Conmebol 2024 Copa America tournament group D football match between Brazil and Costa Rica at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California. — AFP

## Koeman backs struggling Depay to shine at Euros

BERLIN: Netherlands manager Ronald Koeman has backed misfiring forward Memphis Depay to silence his Euro 2024 critics in Tuesday's clash with Austria. Depay has come under fire after failing to score in the Netherlands' first two games of the tournament. Following his lacklustre performance in the 0-0 draw with France, there were calls for Wout Weghorst to start against Austria. Weghorst came off the bench to score the winner in the Netherlands' opening game against Poland.

But Koeman vowed to keep faith with a player he believes is an essential part of the Netherlands' bid to win the Euros for the first time since 1988. "Memphis has a lot of value to the team. He is playing very well. This team utterly needs him. They have to give the ball to him," Koeman told reporters on Monday.

"Of course he will be in the initial line-up. Memphis is able to play. He has had a lot of injuries to face. Of course he has to play better, that is clear for all of us." The volatile Depay, who left Atletico Madrid at the end of last season, has not helped his cause with a series of inflammatory gestures.

The former Barcelona attacker infuriated his doubters by wearing a headband with the slogan 'who cares' written on it during the win over Poland. The 30-year-old also released a song before the tournament called "Thanks for your opinion" in a thinly-veiled response to his critics.

Despite those outbursts, Koeman is adamant ex-Manchester United forward Depay is a positive presence in the Dutch squad. "I have good vibes because he is a very good player. He criticizes himself according to how he performs," he said. "You want to help and support the players. Memphis does not have a lack of confidence. He is sure he can find the net." The Netherlands have finished first in their groups at each of the past two major tournaments.

After beating Poland and drawing with France, Koeman's team have their sights set on securing top spot in Group D against Austria in Berlin on Tuesday. They will finish in first place if they better France's result against Poland. "Of course we want to be number one in our group. That is what we want to achieve. We have to play fast and pass well because we have got to win," Koeman said. Austria will likely go through with a point as one of the best third-placed teams but could also finish first with a win, if France fail to beat Poland. — AFP

## Stimac consulted astrologer to pick players

NEW DELHI: India's football federation has accused Igor Stimac of using an astrologer to pick players after sacking him as coach following their World Cup qualifying failure. The former West Ham and Croatian international defender had a turbulent relationship with the All India Football Federation (AIFF) during his five years in charge.

Defeat to Qatar earlier this month ended India's dreams of reaching the third round of Asian qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup and his contract was terminated last week. The 56-year-old Stimac, in his final press conference, said he had heart surgery because of stress and battled "lies" and people with "private interests" during his tenure.

The AIFF responded late Monday, saying Stimac

had damaged the national association with "negative statements". "Mr Stimac's communication—apparently made with the sole intent of maligning the AIFF and showing its personnel in poor light—is not befitting of a professional who has served the organization for over five years," it said in a statement.

"This conduct has only reinforced the AIFF's belief that the right decision was made, with just cause, to terminate his contract." Stimac, who played a World Cup semi-final for Croatia in 1998, became India coach in 2019 and they briefly broke into the top 100 of FIFA's world rankings for only the second time in nearly three decades.

His tenure was though marked by controversy. A media report in 2023 said he used an astrologer to pick his India teams, a claim at the time Stimac called a "disgrace". But the AIFF's statement said it had been "shocked to note his dependence on an astrologer to determine player's call-ups (and) team selections", before stepping in to stop it. Stimac took India to the Asian Cup at the start of this year, where they lost all three games. India, who were once called "a sleeping giant" of the sport by former FIFA president Sepp Blatter, are ranked 124th in the world. — AFP

## Birthday boy Messi returns as Argentina all set to face Chile

EAST RUTHERFORD: The day after he turns 37, Lionel Messi will return to the scene of one of the most disappointing moments in his stellar career when Argentina face Chile at MetLife Stadium in Group A of the Copa America on Tuesday.

Eight years ago, Messi was part of the Argentina team which lost the Copa America final on penalties to Chile at the New Jersey venue—with the striker missing his team's first effort in the shoot-out. It was the third straight final that Argentina and Messi had lost—after their 2014 World Cup loss to Germany in Brazil and their 2015 Copa final where Chile had triumphed on home soil.

The narrative at the time was focused on how Messi, who was shining on the club stage and collecting trophies in individual accolades with Barcelona, was unable to win with Argentina. There were endless debates comparing how Diego Maradona had brought glory to his homeland, while also starring in Europe, and had earned a level of adoration from the Argentine public that Messi could never quite match.

Such was the pressure, such was the bitterness of that defeat, that Messi quit the national team before he had even got on the team bus to leave the Meadowlands. "I think that's it. The national team is over for me," Messi told Argentinian television.

"It is for the good of everyone, for me and for all...I've tried a lot and we can't win a title. I'm unable to get it, it hurts me more than anyone," the striker added. If Messi had any doubts about how loved he was by the Argentine public, his decision to quit, quickly exposed him to the true feelings of his compatriots.

When he flew back to Buenos Aires with the team, he was greeted by fans holding up signs declaring 'Don't go Leo' and the country's president at that time, Mauricio Macri, joined in the campaign calling him a "gift from God" and the "greatest thing Argentina have".

Maradona himself joined in the campaign and fans poured out to the street urging him to rethink, which he quickly did, beginning the journey which led to their World Cup triumph in 2022.

That win not only ended the debates about Messi for good but, according to former Barcelona and Argentina coach Gerardo 'Tata' Martino, now Messi's coach again at Inter Miami, changed the man himself. "He had a very heavy weight on his shoulders, and taking it off has transformed him on a day-to-day basis," Martino said recently. And now, New Jersey again, Chile again, once more a Copa America campaign and this time the chance to complete a total turnaround with a third straight major tournament title for Argentina. — AFP



KOLKATA: (FILES) India's captain Sunil Chhetri (2L) speaks with coach Igor Stimac (2R) during a practice session ahead of their preliminary joint qualification round 2 match for the FIFA World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup against Kuwait. — AFP

# Classifieds

### Clinics & Hospitals

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381

Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

### Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300

### Change of Name

**I, Radhe Krishna**, holder of Indian Passport No. M3065406, having permanent address B-907, 1st Floor, Block - B, Gate No. 4, Green Field Colony, Sector-43, Faridabad, Haryana - 121010, India, residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name Radhe and surname Krishna. (#5627, 25/06/2024)

India, residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name Taher and surname Raj. (#5626, 24/06/2024)

**I, Ashraf Kamal**, holder of passport No. U0691584 do hereby change my name to Ashraf Kamal for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Ashraf Kamal and i also understand to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#5625 23/06/2024)

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

For labor-related inquiries and complaints: Call MSAL hotline 128



## Florida Panthers beat Edmonton Oilers 2-1 to win Stanley Cup

Goals from Verhaeghe, Reinhart sealed 4-3 series victory for Panthers



SUNRISE: The Florida Panthers celebrate winning the Stanley Cup against the Edmonton Oilers in game seven of the 2024 Stanley Cup Final at Amerant Bank Arena. — Reuters

MIAMI: The Florida Panthers defeated the Edmonton Oilers 2-1 to win ice hockey's Stanley Cup for the first time on Monday as Canada's 31-year title drought continued.

Goals from Carter Verhaeghe and Sam Reinhart sealed a 4-3 series victory for the Panthers against an Oilers outfit who had rallied from 3-0 down to force a decisive game seven. "I've been chasing that for a long time," Florida coach Paul Maurice said afterwards.

"It was perfect Florida Panther fashion - nothing's easy. Nothing's easy for us." Edmonton had been bidding to become the first team from Canada since

the Montreal Canadiens in 1993 to win the National Hockey League's championship.

The Oilers were also attempting to become only the second team in NHL history to overturn a 3-0 deficit to win the Stanley Cup. But the Panthers - beaten by Las Vegas in last year's Stanley Cup Final - were in no mood to let victory slip away for a second straight year.

Roared on by their home fans at the Amerant Bank Arena in Sunrise, the Panthers surged into the lead after only 4min 27sec of the opening period. Right wing Evan Rodrigues smashed a shot from wide on the left and Verhaeghe was on hand in the goalmouth

to tip in past Oilers goaltender Stuart Skinner.

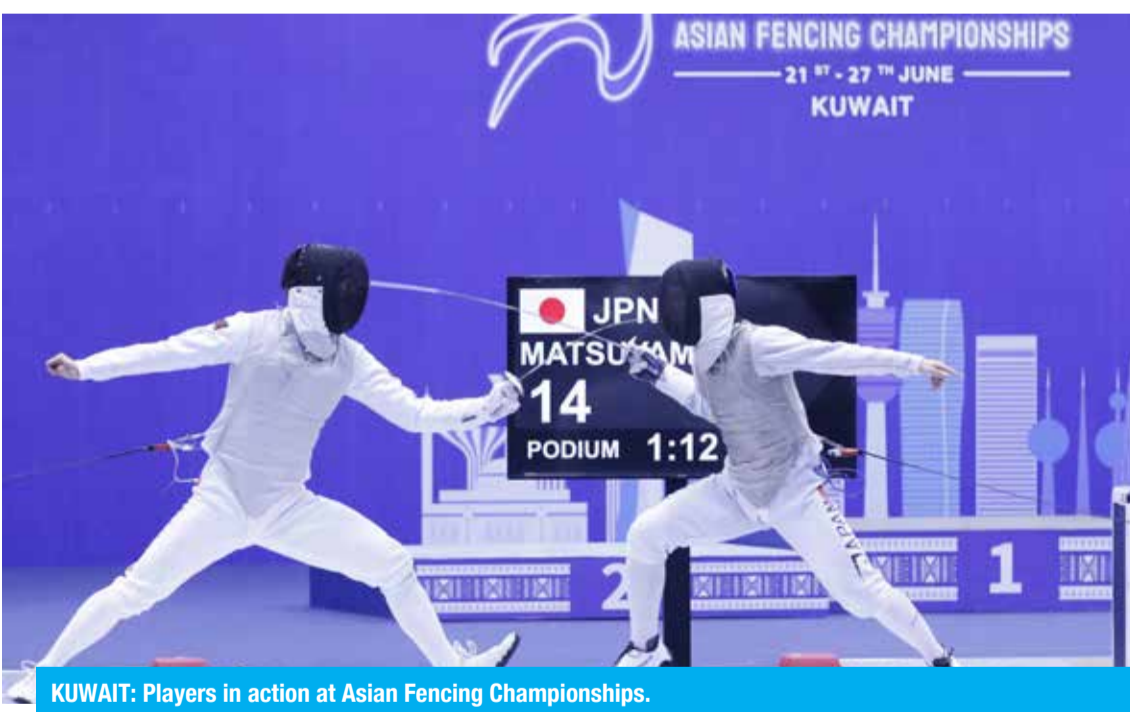
Edmonton however silenced the home fans soon afterwards with a superb equalizer. Cody Ceci's long pass split the Florida defense and was collected by Mattias Janmark, who glided towards the Panthers net and coolly tucked away a finish past Florida's Russian goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky. Florida regained the lead however in the second period after a breathless passage of play that started with defender Dmitry Kulikov desperately shoveling away the puck on the goal line to prevent a certain Oilers score.

Florida's Sam Reinhart gathered and swept up the wing and let rip with a long-range snap shot that

flew past Skinner for the score. Sam Bennett almost made it 3-1 to Florida in the third period only to be denied by a brilliant Skinner save.

As the tension mounted, Edmonton laid siege to the Florida goal and only some last-ditch defending kept the Oilers at bay. Relieved Panthers star Rodrigues meanwhile said Florida had been relaxed going into Monday's decider.

"They say this is the hardest trophy to win in sports, and you can't imagine how hard it is, until you do it," Rodrigues said. "But getting to game seven, it took pressure off of us, and we did it the hard way. But it was a perfect outcome." — AFP



KUWAIT: Players in action at Asian Fencing Championships.

## Japanese Matsuyama wins gold in Asian Fencing tourney

KUWAIT: The Asian Fencing Championships, hosted in Kuwait, continued Monday with Japanese player winning a gold medal in foil competition. Three hundred fifty players representing 36 countries participated, with individual competitors in the men's foil and women's saber. Japanese player Kyosuke Matsuyama won the gold medal in the foil competition by defeating his compatriot Kazuki Imura, who won the silver medal. In contrast, Chinese Zoe Mo won the bronze medal. In the women's saber competition, Japanese Misaki Imura won the gold medal after defeating South Korean Yeosu Yoon, who won the silver medal.

Meanwhile, in a display of exceptional skill and determination, Hong Kong's Wai Hang Ho, a seasoned

fencing player, secured the gold medal in the epee competition on Sunday. Meanwhile, also at the Asian Fencing tournament, Korean player Sina Hong triumphed, winning also the gold medal in the foil competition. Hang Ho earned his medal by defeating his teammate Ho Tin, who won the Silver Medal in the men's epee final with a breathtaking 15-14 score.

Meanwhile, Japan's Akira Kumata and Kazakhstan's Yerlik Sertai won the bronze medals. In the Foil competition for women, South Korea's Sina Hong won the gold medal after defeating Japan's Komaki Kikuchi, who won the silver medal. China's Yuting Wang and Japan's Yuka Uno won the bronze medal.

The Kuwaiti Fencing Federation held a ceremony to honor the President of the Asian and Arab Fencing Federation, Sheikh Salem Al-Qassimi, including members of the organizing committee for the tournament, referees, technical and administrative committees, and volunteers working for the tournament were also honored at the ceremony. The country is hosting the championship until next Thursday under the patronage and attendance of the Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Dr Amthar Al-Huwailah. — KUNA

## Zaccagni rescues Italy leaving Croatia in Euro 2024 limbo

LEIPZIG: Italy might be in the knockout stage of Euro 2024 but all is far from rosy in the defending champions' camp after Mattia Zaccagni's last-gasp goal against Croatia guaranteed them a last-16 berth.

Luciano Spalletti's team will face Switzerland in Berlin on Saturday, giving them four days to reflect on their unconvincing efforts in Group B, where they finished second and five points behind Spain.

Italy once again failed to live up to the standard of play expected by Spalletti, an attack-minded coach who bemoaned his team's inability to retain possession and create goalscoring opportunities. The joyous scenes that followed Zaccagni's leveller in Monday night's thrilling 1-1 draw with Croatia didn't mask the evident issues with new-look Italy who were also taught a footballing lesson by Spain.

"If you don't create, you're not going to score. You could see we were thinking about bringing a result home, without really believing that we needed a win," said Spalletti after the game. "I expect more from my players, because they show it in flashes."

Lazio forward Zaccagni ended up under a pile of blue-shirted bodies as wild celebrations in the stands and on the pitch followed his brilliant leveller in the eighth and final minute of added time in Leipzig. With basically no time left on the clock Zaccagni was the coolest head in the stadium as he approached Riccardo Calafiori's perfectly-weighted pass and curled home a stunning finish.

The 29-year-old's first international goal came at the end of a hugely entertaining match which looked to have been decided by Luka Modric's 55th minute strike, scored just seconds after Gianluigi Donnarumma saved his penalty. Modric, the oldest ever scorer at a Euros, looked haunted when presented with his trophy for man-of-the-match, an award which seemed like a cruel joke after a defeat which leaves his team's hopes hanging by a thread.

"I had no idea that it was the last kick of the game when the ball came to me," said a delighted Zaccagni to Sky Sport after the game. "Calafiori gave me such a



LEIPZIG: Croatia's forward #14 Ivan Perisic (C) jumps to head the ball during the UEFA Euro 2024 Group B football match between Croatia and Italy at the Leipzig Stadium in Leipzig. — AFP

brilliant ball for a first-time shot that I didn't even think twice about it. Then we went mad and I got battered with them all on top of me!"

Zaccagni's strike takes Italy back to Berlin where they won the World Cup in 2006 and was reminiscent of Alessandro Del Piero's winning goal in the semi-final against Germany. Italy beat France to win the World Cup, the last hurrah for a golden generation of players which included not just Del Piero but also the likes of Andrea Pirlo, Gianluigi Buffon and Fabio Cannavaro.

"Alex (Del Piero) has always been my hero. I had his picture on my bedroom wall when I was a kid," said Zaccagni. "We saw each other at (Italy's national training centre) Coverciano before we all left for Germany and after that we've exchanged a few messages on Instagram which for me is amazing."

Zaccagni's joy was not mirrored in Spalletti's livid post-match rant in which he turned on Italian reporters whom he accused of spitting "venom". "I inject myself with this venom," said Spalletti, who was also angry at his tactics supposedly being leaked pre-match and claimed that "everybody" was trying to get Italy eliminated from the tournament.

Turmoil often accompanies Italy to major tournaments and the grit shown on Monday is a typical trait of a national team which is famed for its battling qualities, particularly in defence. But performances will have to improve if Italy are to progress as Switzerland, who have a block of Serie A players, have shown themselves to be an accomplished team and England could be quarter-final opponents. — AFP