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## Iraq becoming major drug conduit

Kuwait attends anti-drug conf in Baghdad • Iraqi PM urges regional cooperation



BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Mohamed Shia Al-Sudani poses with ministers and delegates from the region, including Kuwaiti Deputy PM and Interior and Defense Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, attending an anti-drug trafficking conference on July 22, 2024. — AFP

**BAGHDAD:** Iraqi authorities seized record quantities of the potent stimulant Captagon last year, at an estimated value of up to \$144 million, with the country increasingly a critical drug conduit, a UN report said Monday. "Iraq has been experiencing a dramatic surge in drug trafficking and consumption for the past five years," according to a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report. In 2023 alone, authorities "seized a record-high 24 million Captagon tablets", the equivalent of over 4.1 tons, with an estimated "retail value" of between \$84 million and \$144 million, it said. "Iraq appears to be at the nexus of regional trafficking routes for both methamphetamine and Captagon", UNODC said, adding that it is "becoming a critical juncture in the complex trafficking dynamics observed in the Near and Middle East region."

Captagon seizures in Iraq "reportedly tripled between 2022 and 2023, and overall amounts seized in 2023 are 34 times higher than in

2019". An amphetamine derived from a once-legal treatment for narcolepsy and attention disorder, Captagon today is trafficked through several Middle Eastern countries, with Syria the main country of origin and Saudi Arabia by far the biggest market. Authorities in conflict-scarred Iraq regularly announce large seizures of Captagon, much of it moved across the porous 600-km border with war-torn Syria. According to UNODC, 82 percent of the Captagon seized in the region between 2019 and 2023 originated in Syria, followed by neighboring Lebanon, at 17 percent. Iraq is also becoming a conduit for the flow of highly addictive methamphetamine stimulants produced mostly in Afghanistan and headed to the Gulf and Europe, with seizures in Iraq increasing almost sixfold in 2023 compared to 2019. The country faces an explosion in domestic drug use, with the repeated crises that have gripped

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### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### UAE jails 57 Bangladeshis

**DUBAI:** An Emirati court has sentenced 57 Bangladeshi expatriates to lengthy prison terms for protesting against their government in the Gulf country, where demonstrations are banned. Official Emirati news agency WAM said three Bangladeshi expatriates were sentenced to life, 53 others to 10 years in prison and one to 11 years for participating in protests. The defendants had "gathered and incited riots in several streets across the United Arab Emirates on Friday", WAM said, adding they would be deported after the completion of their prison terms. — AFP

#### Turkey slams Zionist lies

**ISTANBUL:** Turkey on Sunday slammed Zionist claims Ankara was arming and funding Palestinian group Hamas as "lies", accusing the Zionist entity of trying to direct attention away from the war in Gaza. Turkey's foreign ministry said by accusing President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Zionist Foreign Minister Israel Katz was "trying to conceal the crimes committed by (the Zionist entity) against the Palestinians behind a series of lies, slander and disrespect". "But (the Zionist entity's) dirty propaganda and psychological pressure aimed at our country and our president will remain ineffective," the ministry's statement added. — AFP

#### India court blocks name rule

**NEW DELHI:** India's top court on Monday temporarily suspended directives issued by two state governments requiring eateries to display the names of their owners, following criticism the rule was intended to divide restaurants by religion. The rule was imposed last week by neighboring Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand states — both ruled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) — along a route taken each year by thousands of Hindu pilgrims during the holy month of Shravan. In its interim order Monday, the Supreme Court said that while shops need not specify their owners' names outside, they should display the food items on offer. — AFP

## Scores flee as Gaza martyrs top 39,000

**GAZA:** The Zionist entity sent tanks back into the greater Khan Yunis area and at least 49 Palestinians were killed by Zionist fire, Gaza medics said on Monday, after ordering evacuations of some districts it said had been used for renewed attacks by fighters. The Palestinians were killed by tank salvos in the town of Bani Suhaila and other towns fringing the eastern side of Khan Yunis, with the area also bombarded by air,

they said. Residents of the densely built-up area of southern Gaza said the tanks advanced for more than two kilometers into Bani Suhaila, forcing residents to flee under fire. "It is like doomsday," one resident, who only identified himself as Abu Khaled, told Reuters via chat app. "People are fleeing under fire, many are dead and wounded on the roads."

The Gaza health ministry said the dead included several women and children and that at least 186 other people had been injured by Zionist fire. Around 400,000 people are living in the targeted areas and dozens of families have begun to leave their houses, Palestinian officials said, adding they were not given

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GAZA: Palestinians rush casualties to Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis following Zionist bombardment east of the city in the southern Gaza Strip on July 22, 2024. — AFP

## Harris praises Biden as Dems unite around her

**WASHINGTON:** Democrats rapidly coalesced around Vice President Kamala Harris on Monday as she raced to secure the party's nomination to take on Donald Trump in November, in the wake of President Joe Biden's sensational exit from the race. Armed with Biden's endorsement, the 59-year-old won the backing of a flood of Democratic leaders on her first full day of campaigning. Ahead of a first trip to campaign

headquarters in Wilmington, Delaware, later Monday, Harris presided over a White House celebration for championship college basketball teams. She praised Biden as leaving a legacy "unmatched in modern history". "Every day, our president, Joe Biden, fights for the American people and we are deeply, deeply grateful for his service to our nation," she added. She did not reference her own sudden elevation to presidential candidate in the brief remarks. But the symbolism of the current vice president having the White House to herself in the absence of Biden, who is nursing a COVID infection at his Delaware beach house, was striking.

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WASHINGTON: US Vice President Kamala Harris speaks during an event honoring NCAA championship teams from the 2023-2024 season, on the South Lawn of the White House, on July 22, 2024. — AFP

## Macron: France ready to host Paris Olympics

**PARIS:** President Emmanuel Macron said on Monday that France was ready to host the Paris Olympics as he visited the Athletes' Village four days before the Games begin. "We are ready and we will be ready throughout the Games," Macron said. "We have been working on these Games for years now and we are at the start of a decisive week which on Friday will see the opening ceremony and then the Olym-

piad which will be held in Paris, 100 years since the last one." He added: "This is the fruit of an immense amount of work which has profoundly changed the country, in particular the area" of Seine-Saint-Denis, where the Athletes' Village is situated. International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach also visited the Village to the north of the French capital, where thousands of athletes and officials are arriving, with up to 14,500 expected there at the peak of the Games. Comprising 40 different low-rise housing blocks, the complex has been built by employing innovative

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PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron poses with French athletes during a visit to the Olympic Village in Saint-Denis on July 22, 2024. — AFP



# Zain supports NUKS USA annual orientation session

Company engaged with students before they start their educational journey



Al Doukhi honors Al Musaibeeh in recognition of Zain's support.



US Ambassador Karen Sasahara with Al Musaibeeh, Al Doukhi and guests.

**KUWAIT:** Zain has sponsored the annual orientation session organized by the National Union of Kuwaiti Students in the United States (NUKS USA). This event, held at Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC), was aimed at students recently accepted into this year's scholarship program. Zain's support is part of a 21-year strategic partnership with NUKS USA, through which it supports all NUKS programs and initiatives held across Kuwait and the United States throughout the year.

The event was attended by US Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Sasahara, Zain Kuwait Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al Musaibeeh, Head of NUKS USA Khalid Al Doukhi, notable guests and speakers, along with hundreds of high school graduates preparing to begin their college journey in the United States. The orientation session included many engaging programs and activities designed to meet students' needs, answer their questions, and intro-

duce them to various US states and their requirements. Many notable speakers, experts, and alumni participated in insightful panel discussions, sharing their expertise and experiences about studying in the US. There were also entertainment segments for the students, with prizes provided by Zain.

Under this partnership, Zain supports all community programs and initiatives organized by NUKS USA, including the annual conference in the US that brings

together Kuwaiti students from across the states for days of engaging activities. Zain also supports discussion panels, activities from the local NUKS USA office to guide freshmen, academic sessions, cultural seminars, sports competitions, entertainment programs, workshops, and more. These programs receive a wide positive reaction and participation from students every year.

The company takes pride in its ongoing strategic partnership with NUKS

USA, through which it strives to provide young, enthusiastic Kuwaitis with a rich social experience and listens to their ideas and experiences while they pursue their education abroad. Zain is proud to have been part of the NUKS USA family for over two decades. NUKS USA serves thousands of Kuwaiti students in the United States. The union aims, through its events and programs, to connect Kuwaiti students with each other and with their nation and local community.

## Minister honors Kuwaiti inventor

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah, praised engineer Sara Burajeeb for being the first Arab to win the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) global award, describing it as a Kuwaiti accomplishment. The Minister received Burajeeb on Monday after winning the global award that supports innovation and creativity; she was one of nine winners amongst 667 competitors from 107 countries.

In a statement to KUNA, Burajeeb said that her invention "ScansX" is revolutionizing brain injury diagnostic procedures by replacing or complementing MRIs with a portable, non-invasive brain scanner, which can help detect early signs of brain hemorrhages and tumors. She added that being honored by the Minister meant a great deal to her, which showed Kuwait's interest in supporting their youth in achieving more accomplishments in the name of Kuwait. — KUNA



CAIRO: Arab officials are pictured during the meeting. — KUNA photos

## Arab League commits to preparing youth for various challenges

**CAIRO:** The Arab League confirmed on Monday its ongoing commitment to preparing Arab youth for new developments and challenges, emphasizing the importance of understanding and tackling regional issues. This statement was delivered by the Director of the Youth and Sports Department at the League and the official of the Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Youth and Sports Ministers, Faisal Ghassal, during the opening of the Arab Youth Parliament mock session at the League headquarters, the League said.

The practice parliament session mimics the process and discussions of a parliamentary body as it aims to raise awareness among the youth, instill loyalty and belonging, and develop leadership skills for future regional leadership, the League explained. On his side, Egypt's Minister of Youth and Sports and Chairman of the Executive Office of Arab Youth Ministers Ashraf Sobhy, in a speech, underscored

the importance of fostering loyalty, citizenship, and a culture of tolerance and acceptance among young Arabs as key elements of soft power.

Sobhy noted that the young people have their own perspectives, enabling them to engage with various Arab issues, pointing out the session seeks to unite the youth under common values. He emphasized the need for stakeholders to rely on the youth's vision in a rapidly changing world and stressed the importance of Arab cooperation for sustainable development. Sobhy underlined the importance of training programs to enhance young people's skills and awareness, particularly regarding the challenges facing the Arab world.

The support from governments and organizations for such initiatives positively impacts young Arabs, encouraging them to continue their mission, he mentioned. Earlier, the 2024 Arab Youth Parliament took place, themed "Towards Sustainable Community Participation," which serves as a youth dialogue platform, organized by the General Secretariat of the Arab League (Social Affairs Sector, Youth and Sports Administration) and the Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Youth and Sports Ministers.

It aims to prepare a responsible and politically engaged youth generation capable of addressing



reality's challenges and planning a sustainable future. The event saw participation from 100 young men and women from 15 Arab countries, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Somalia, Tunisia, Oman, Algeria, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Mauritania, Yemen, Libya, Jordan, Qatar, and the host country, Egypt. Kuwait's delegation was led by Superintendent of Administrative and Legal Affairs at the Youth Public Authority Khalaf Al-Habashi and included Vice President of the Youth Assembly of Kuwait, Engineer Dalal Thani, and Youth Assembly member Abdulrahman Al-Qasba. — KUNA

## PIC records a net profit of KD 39m

**KUWAIT:** The Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC) achieved a net profit of KD 39 million (around \$127 million) in the 2023-24 fiscal year ending last March, said PIC CEO Nadia Al-Hajji on Monday. In an interview with KUNA celebrating the 61st anniversary of establishing PIC due on Tuesday, Al-Hajji indicated that the aforementioned net profit announcement came from the relentless efforts of the company to achieve further growth despite the pressures affecting prices of petrochemical products worldwide.

She revealed that PIC managed to conserve expenditure and increase profits via a series of initiatives in the last fiscal year, noting that the company was currently coordinating with Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on the Olefins IV project to gain the latter's approval. The strategic project includes an international-standard petrochemical complex producing "ethylene, polyethylene, ethylene glycol, and specialized petrochemical products."

Al-Hajji revealed that PIC was eager to boost

partnerships with global companies through its mid- and long-term strategies, which include the acquisition of established factories and shares of companies. She revealed that the company had also set mid- and long-term strategies for "green petrochemical" expansion to lessen the impact on the environment and rationalize consumption of natural resources to boost the economic growth in Kuwait.

Al-Hajji also mentioned that the company was studying several initiatives for recycling plastic waste in cooperation with KPC and other entities, including Kuwait municipality, the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, and others. She noted that recycling strategies include repurposing plastic waste via mechanical or chemical means to fabricate viable products. Regarding human resources development, Al-Hajji said that PIC had sponsored the first-of-its-kind initiative in the oil sector to develop the skills of youth, who represent 40 percent of the company's working force.

This came to realize PIC's 2040 strategy, she affirmed, adding that a youth empowerment committee was established in 2020 with rotating members chosen annually to keep things fresh and forward moving. Back to the company's successes, Al-Hajji pointed out that with

the end of the 2023-24 fiscal year, the company had ended 16 years of successfully implementing the Six Sigma plan aimed at improving the quality of technical and administrative operations as well as fully utilizing human resources and preliminary resources.

The plan improved productivity in factories and employees, bringing profits and decreasing operational costs, said Al-Hajji, who noted that the accumulative profits of PIC since implementing the Six Sigma plan since 2007 had reached \$267 million. On PIC's 2040 strategy, Al-Hajji pointed out that the company updated the plan, which was based on three criteria, including firstly, the growth of basic petrochemical products via increasing manufacturing in and outside of Kuwait through acquisition to reach 14 million tons of production by 2040.

The second criterion focused on expanding products in cooperation with international partners to reach one million tons by 2040, with 15 percent of said products aimed at the market in Kuwait, she revealed. She noted that the third criterion was to boost human resources and increase training to reach optimal results, which would create more job opportunities for Kuwaitis in the country and abroad.

Meanwhile, Al-Hajji said that PIC's polypro-



Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC) CEO Nadia Al-Hajji

pylene factory had achieved in 2023-24 the second largest annual production rate since its inception in 1997, reaching 153,000 metric tons with a production capacity of 98 percent. More on the PIC achievements, Al-Hajji said that 11.34 million safe work hours were logged with no accidents, wasted time, or environmental accidents from 2012 until 2023-24. She also revealed that PIC established in 2017 the Kuwait Vietnam Petrochemical Company (KVPC), an establishment aimed at production, export, and import of polypropylene. — KUNA

## Local

# Kuwait charity work a global humanitarian beacon: Envoy

## KRCS launches Kids Volunteer Club

AMMAN: Kuwait's Ambassador to Jordan, Hamad Al-Marri, said on Monday that Kuwaiti charity work is a global humanitarian beacon that is aimed at alleviating the suffering of those in need around the world. This came in a statement made by Al-Marri to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) after meeting with the volunteer team, which is visiting Jordan on a relief mission in cooperation with the Namaa Charity Association to provide humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees in Jordan.

Al-Marri said that the well-known and leading Kuwaiti charity work in the world has taken various forms. He explained that Kuwait has many charitable associations and foundations approved by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs that carry out charitable projects inside and outside Kuwait, in addition to voluntary work associations and volunteer teams.

Ambassador Al-Marri expressed his pride in the charity workers for their great and continuous efforts to achieve their desired goal of serving the needy around the world, pointing out that "they are the best ambassadors for our country, Kuwait." He stressed the readiness of Kuwait's embassy in Amman to provide all necessary facilities to Kuwaiti charities operating in Jordan.

For his part, the director of the relief department at Namaa, Khaled Al-Shamiri, told KUNA that the relief mission is part of the training program for the students. He added that Namaa charity has a volunteering department that aims to promote the culture of volun-



Kuwait Red Crescent Society launches the Kids Volunteer Club at the society's headquarters. — KUNA

teering and humanitarian work among young people and instill the values of giving and helping students through training and volunteer programs.

The team will visit orphanages and families supported by Namaa charity in Jordan and the Hussein Cancer Center to confirm the ongoing partnership with the center to provide the necessary support for the treatment of patients. The team will also join an entertainment program to bring joy and happiness to the orphaned children. The Kuwaiti volunteer team aims to empower youths for the future. It is an important platform to train Kuwaiti youth and qualify them for working at an early age by employing them in field work.

### Volunteer Club

In another development, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) on Monday launched the Kids Volunteer Club, which is attended by 100 children at the society's headquarters. It is aimed at promoting the love of volunteer work among young people and to develop their abilities to serve humanity and their homeland. The director general of the association, Abdul Rahman Al-Aoun, said in a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the project comes within the framework of the association's plans to instill feelings of joy and delight in the souls of children, create a kind of effective communica-

tion, and involve them in social activities.

Al-Aoun added that the club's programs are offered with the participation of trainers, where children from 7 to 12 years old are trained in first aid, time management, health culture, ideal sports, dental health, and preservation of the marine and terrestrial environment. He explained that the club aims to develop the voluntary side among young people and enhances the spirit of cooperation and leadership by training children on some skills that help them understand the needs of society, help others, and develop a sense of community in cooperation with their families. — KUNA

## Children are intelligent readers: Kuwaiti author

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: When a child struggles to fall asleep in the middle of the night, it's often the mother who holds and embraces him - comforting him with bedtime stories that carry him away to a world of peaceful dreams. Or perhaps, that's the common image that we have always known, shaping our perception of women as the dominant storytellers in the children's literature industry.

However, history challenges this perception, showcasing many male narrators who have prominently left their mark in the industry. Hussain Almutawaa, a Kuwaiti writer and poet awarded the Sheikh Zayed Book Award in Children's and Young People's Literature for his short story, "I Dream of Being a Cement Mixer," offers insights into the evolution of children's books in the Arab world.

### Absence of 'Male storyteller'

"Many researchers suggest that children's storytelling began with the folk tales' mothers traditionally told their children at bedtime," said Mutawaa, explaining the reason behind the predominance representation of women in the industry. Supporting his viewpoint, he added, "the phenomenon is also tied to the biological and inherent bond between mother and child, shaped by historical circumstances, where women were often confined to home while men engaged in activities like hunting, warfare, or work."

However, going back in time, particularly to the beginnings of the Arabic children's literature, Mutawaa

reminds us that most of the industry's leaders were once men, referring to Ahmed Shawky, Kamel Al-Kilani, Ali Al-Hadidi and Ahmed Naguib. Similarly, he noted prominent figures in international children's literature such as Aesop, Hans Christian Andersen, the Brothers Grimm (Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm), and Maurice Sendak.



Hussain Almutawaa

### Quite challenging, but enjoyable

Unlike other genres where a writer's prowess is often judged by their expansive vocabulary, Mutawaa explained that children's literature operates quite differently. "We must consider that we are addressing a highly intelligent reader, but one whose linguistic abilities are still developing," he said. Further, he highlighted that the greatest challenge in writing for children, which he personally finds interesting, lies in the author's ability to transcend their own skills and perspectives to genuinely connect with the child's viewpoint.

He elaborated, "it involves writing not for what we want from the child, but rather for what the child desires." Mutawaa finds extra pleasure in the group effort invested in children's literature, combining the touch of the author, artist, and art director altogether. "This leads me to another aspect I appreciate - the aesthetic dimension that illustrations bring to children's books and the imaginative spaces they create."

### Communicating with children

It's inevitably true that reading now is much more challenging than it ever was, especially with the new generations' short attention spans bombarded by multiple entertainment tools like films, video games,



social media, etc. Mutawaa observed that almost every generation has been prone to evolutionary changes throughout their lifetime, which they initially handled with fear and awe - a natural response stemming from our instinctual fear of the unknown. "My grandfather lived half his life without electricity, my father without the Internet, and I without social media for half of mine," he said.

Acknowledging this historical context, Mutawaa perceived the evolving behaviors of today's children neither strange nor unexpected. However, he believes that to deal with this change, "we must remain in a constant state of mental alertness to perceive, analyze and understand their changing behavior," he said. Additionally, he said, "this requires high amount of intellectual flexibility and active communication with children to bridge any gaps arising from the lack of intergenerational dialogue."

Each of us should contribute to bridging this gap. But Mutawaa highlighted the primary role that government should play in promoting reading and supporting children's literature throughout the educational journey, including revitalizing school libraries. "I believe schools are pivotal in developing a meaningful connection between children and books," he added.

## Councilmembers approve projects and specifications

KUWAIT: The Municipal Council approved in its regular session headed by Khaled Al-Mutairi on Monday the final amendments to the requirements and specifications for the buildings at the Abdali Economic Zone and the project to develop the Darwaza Abdulrazzaq tunnel. The Council also approved the request of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare to amend the boundaries of the housing project in the southern Khaitan area — plots 1, 2, 3, and 4.

The Council also approved the project to develop the Darwaza Abdulrazzaq tunnel and the request of the General Authority for Roads and Land Transport to



allocate a rainwater drainage line to collect and drain rainwater in the South Subahiya and Fahaheel areas. The council members also approved the request of the

Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy to reallocate the site of the main electrical substation in the Fahaheel area, block 4. — KUNA

## Kuwait, Oman discuss education, research

MUSCAT: The Undersecretary of Kuwait's Ministry of Higher Education, Lamia Al-Melhem, discussed with the Omani Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research, and Innovation, Dr Rahma Al-Mahruqiya, ways to enhance joint cooperation and exchange experiences in the field of higher education and scientific research.

Al-Melhem said in a press statement on Monday that this visit came under direct directives from the Minister of Education and the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr Adel Al-Adwani, on the importance of enhancing joint cooperation between the two countries in the field of higher education and scientific research and the exchange of experiences and knowledge to support and develop academic institutions and



Undersecretary of the Kuwait's Ministry of Higher Education, Lamia Al-Melhem holds talks with the Omani Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research, and Innovation, Dr Rahma Al-Mahruqiya. — KUNA

build strategic partnerships that benefit students and researchers.

The visit comes within the framework of cooperation with the ministries and institutions of higher education in the GCC countries and within the ef-

forts of the Ministry of Education in the exchange of experiences in common fields. During the visit, they discussed ways to enhance academic cooperation and develop cultural and student exchange between the two brotherly countries. — KUNA

Financial Affairs Salem Al-Watyan announced that applications for candidates will be opened to select organizers and communication officers from the Ministry's employees who will represent Kuwait at the Expo on Monday on the Ministry's website.

In a statement to KUNA, Al-Watyan said the directives of the Minister of Information and Culture, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, that the selection be made among the applicants according to competence, stressing the importance of choosing the most qualified and appropriate candidates to ensure the best representation of

Kuwait. The selection also would be made to reflect the positive image of Kuwait and empower individuals in international forums, he said.

Al-Watyan added that this comes as a continuation of Kuwait's preparations for its participation at the Expo, which will be held next April to October 2025 in Japan titled "Designing Future Societies for Our Lives." By implementing the selection process, the Ministry of Information can maximize the benefits of its participation at the Expo and consolidate its international presence, he said. — KUNA

### In my view

## Two sides of the same coin

Dr Firyal Alshalabi



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Except for the size, what is the difference between the US and Israel (the Zionist entity)? Speculating an answer to this question brings out more similarities than differences. To mention just a few: Both countries were founded on colonization of lands occupied by indigenous people; both committed ethnic cleansing to get rid of the natives, Indian reservations and Palestinian refugee camps are still witnesses to that fact.

Despite claims of liberalism and separation between state and religion, both countries' politics are based on fundamental theological ideologies, in some cases their systems are run by orthodox religious politicians. The majority of the population of both countries is composed of the same homogeneity of European background. The economies of both are heavily reliant on military industries, with mutual scientific and financial cooperation. Most of that production is used to suppress opposition to their political agendas, no matter where it takes place around the world.

So, what's the difference between the two, aside from size? Not much really. Basically, the Zionist entity can be named 'Little America' in the Middle East. In the days before October 7, when people still believed in 'Western democracies', one was willing to overlook some malpractices here and there, while hoping for change and ultimately peace. Some people, and some Arab countries, welcomed 'Little America' in their midst, hoping for a spread of democracy and eventually peace agreement and justice for all.

But it has become clear, from the current war on Gaza, that the hope for peace is only a dream, and the goal is nothing more than colonial expansion. Democracy and human rights, which people thought meant freedom and justice for all, turned out to be only so for some. Same with freedom of speech, a first amendment in the American constitution. Now in America if you dare say "From the River to the Sea", a slogan started by Zionists, you will be severely punished, especially if you're referring to Palestine.

Only Israelis and Zionists are allowed to say the same phrase, referring to the expansion of the Zionist entity to include many more Arab countries in their future plan. But if you're referring to Palestine, you don't have that freedom of speech. What kind of a democracy has the US become? What kind of a role model is it showing the world? That the US and the Zionist entity are above the law? That other people and countries are inferior to them? Do these governments think they can get away with injustice? Do they think people will forget and forgive the slaughter of tens of thousands of civilians?

The Zionist entity and the US are breaking international laws and making the world a dangerous place. There's not much difference between the US and the Zionist entity. Sadly, the similarities between them are not commendable, but rather condemnable. They have claimed for so long to be role models for other countries, now they are giving the world a much different model of brutality, inhumanity, injustice and barbarism not seen in modern history since the days of Nazi Germany. Quite ironic, isn't it?

*NOTE: Dr Firyal Alshalabi is the author of Summer 1990, a novel about the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein and its liberation. Several of her children's books in Arabic have gained wide acclaim, including 'Tasneem and her Precious Shoes' and 'My Uncle Khaled'.*

## Applications open for ministry employees to participate in Expo

KUWAIT: Commissioner-General for Kuwait Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka and Assistant Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information for Administrative and

## GCC chief voices deep concern over military escalation in Yemen

**RIYADH:** The Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Jassem Al-Budaiwi, voiced his deep concern about the recent military escalation in Yemen and Zionist occupation attacks on Hodeidah Governorate on Saturday. In a press statement, Al-Budaiwi said that these attacks increase current tension in the region and harm the ongoing efforts to end the war on Gaza and reach a political solution to the conflict in Yemen.

The continuation of military operations in the region threatens regional and international security and stability and leads to aggravation of the humanitarian situation in the region, he warned. The Secretary-General called on all parties to exercise restraint and the international community and major countries to assume their responsibility in ending the conflict in the region.

He vowed that the GCC countries would continue efforts to end the war in Gaza and support peace efforts in Yemen. The GCC chief underlined the need for the continuation of all international efforts to put an end to the ongoing violations of the occupation forces and reach an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and all Palestinian territories. The occupation army announced Saturday carrying out several air raids on Yemen's Al-Hodeidah Port that caused massive damage and several human casualties. — KUNA



**HODEIDA:** A man takes pictures of a raging fire at oil storage tanks a day after Zionist airstrikes on the port of Yemen's Houthi-held city of Hodeida on July 21, 2024. — AFP

### Photo of the day



**KUWAIT:** A picture shows the landmark Kuwait Tower. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# Child marriage: Custom or crime?

## Early marriage can limit broader societal contributions

By Anood Al-Sabah

**KUWAIT:** Within the complex fabric of Kuwait's legal and social structure, one aspect that sparks considerable controversy is the provision that allows girls as young as 15 to get married. Ingrained in the country's long-standing customs and traditions, this law contradicts the principles enshrined in the Kuwaiti constitution regarding fairness, freedom, equal rights, and safeguarding the welfare of its young citizens. Even though the constitution upholds families as foundational pillars of society, modern global perspectives, and a growing appreciation for safeguarding the youths through education challenge whether this marriage age aligns with Kuwait's constitutional ideals.

In addressing any societal issue, it's essential to appreciate the historical, cultural, and legal contexts that frame it. Article 9 affirms the family as the cornerstone of Kuwaiti society, emphasizing its foundation on religion, morality, and patriotism (Kuwait constitution). The decision to legalize marriages for 15-year-olds may be seen as an endeavor to guard cultural or religious customs that are deep rooted in Kuwait's history. When viewed through this lens, the law appears to conform to the constitutional obligation of protecting the sanctity of the family and fortifying its bonds. However, numerous individuals raise doubts concerning whether a 15-year-old is suitable for entering into matrimony.

During an interview, Sara Al Ali, a mother of three, stated, "No, absolutely not: a girl at that age is still a child and needs time to develop and get a deeper understanding of life and what she wants. She should not be expected to handle these responsibilities, so the age should be 18 - minimum." This perspective is rooted in concerns about young brides' mental and emotional well-being.

Speaking to Kuwait Times, 23-years-old Lujain Al-Muhana stated, "If a law grants a 15-year-old girl's eligibility for marriage, surely that decision will be made for her; the capacity of her understanding of this law is nonexistent, unless introduced at an even younger age which ultimately challenges the ethicality of this even more. This law masks many underlying consequences of marrying off girls in their early-middle years of adolescence. The probability of broken families will increase, the probability of higher levels of education being robbed will increase, and the probability of struggling to raise children due to the lack of skills and knowledge will increase. The assumption that younger girls can commit to not only a man, but potentially children during their own prime developmental years cannot be justified and will most likely induce trauma as opposed to the alternative."

Youth protection is a prime concern in the nexus between societal well-being and individual rights. These concerns resonate in Article 10 (Youth Protection), which obligates the state to care for the young and protect them from exploitation and moral, physical, and spiritual neglect. Advancing beyond the immediate effects on individual growth and well-being, early marriages have the potential to limit the broader societal contributions that these young individuals can offer in the future.

In a rapidly evolving world where holistic education and personal autonomy hold increasing importance, coercing young girls into assuming marital responsibilities can hinder their progress. Additionally, there is considerable debate surrounding whether a 15-year-old possesses the emotional and psychological preparedness necessary to navigate the complex terrain of marital relationships; thus, it becomes imperative to question whether marriage at such a tender age aligns with this level of commitment — particularly when considering the consequential responsibilities and pressures commonly associated with married life.

In a time where society acknowledges education as a vital tool for empowerment and progress, the prospect of hindrance in this journey for young girls sparks unease. Article 13 (Education) and Article 40 (Compulsory and Free Education) underline the significance of education as a requisite for societal progress (Kuwait Constitution).

Early marriage could interfere with the educational paths of 15-year-old girls. Aside from potential individual consequences, such a practice might have broader implications for achieving national objectives like eliminating illiteracy and promoting economic growth, as Article 20 (Kuwait Constitution) emphasized. This situation brings up queries about how well traditional customs align with contemporary Kuwaiti society's changing desires and requirements.

Ensuring the well-being and progress of society necessitates placing individual rights at the core of any democratic system. The broader implications of this law can also be viewed through the lens of Article 6 and Article 8 of Kuwait constitution. The constitution's democratic underpinnings center on the notion that ultimate authority lies with the people and it is the responsibility of the state to protect the well-being, serenity, and equitable opportunities of its populace.

With marriage bringing immense transformations and obligations, some may contend that allowing girls as young as 15 to make this choice could potentially hinder their access to certain opportunities, thus impinging upon principles of fairness. In a country striving to blend tradition with modern progressiveness, such intricacies in legislation warrant thoughtful introspection and examination.

### Social implications

Traditional customs and practices, deeply rooted in centuries of cultural progression, greatly influence the formation of legal frameworks. Throughout history, young marriages were not uncommon. Occurring in Kuwait and various parts of the globe, these unions often



hinged on social, economic, or political motivations.

Nevertheless, akin to any society that evolves with time, public perspectives and awareness around early marriages have also shifted within Kuwait. The prevailing global tendency leans towards elevating the age at which individuals enter matrimony, prioritizing personal growth, education and empowerment, particularly for girls and young women. Against this backdrop, many Kuwaitis express their concerns regarding existing legislation concerning this matter.

### Economic implications

Nationwide economic growth is a major objective for any country to strive towards. In line with the principles in Article 20 about the national economy, which stresses the importance of enhancing living standards and fostering economic advancement, one can assert that entering into matrimony at such an early stage hampers the potential prosperity of adolescent girls. The institution of marriage imposes numerous obligations on these young brides, often causing them to forsake higher education or career pursuits. As time passes, this could have far-reaching consequences on the nation's overall economic trajectory, particularly if a substantial portion of its female populace remains inactive within the workforce.

### Role of international community

The phenomenon of globalization has also had an influential role in transforming perspectives. As nations increasingly engage with each other, they are bound to encounter global norms and customs. In this regard, international agreements like the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) promote raising the minimum age for marriage. This dynamic presents a unique challenge for Kuwait as it navigates through a junction where domestic legislation could potentially clash with its international obligations.

### The way forward

Establishing channels for open discussions, conducting thorough research, and, most significantly, amplifying the voices of those directly affected by these issues are ways this matter can be addressed. Another potential approach could involve implementing a step-by-step strategy: gradually increasing the minimum marriage age while enlightening society about the advantages associated with such alterations.

Acknowledging that every society is influenced by its distinct cultural, historical, and religious background is crucial. These factors often impact legal choices and frameworks, including the age for consent and marriage. However, as societies progress and aspirations change, constitutions and laws are frequently scrutinized.

In Kuwait, while the law permitting girls (aged 15) to marry may align with certain aspects of the constitution; it contradicts others - specifically those emphasizing safeguarding young people, their right to education, and ensuring equal opportunities. Like any debate or discussion on this matter, it is essential to listen attentively to a range of perspectives, one such perspective being that of mothers like Sara Al Ali. Doing so, helps ensure that society's evolving needs are met while preserving the nation's cultural heritage and history. Striking this balance can be challenging but remains an imperative goal for any progressive country.



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Bangladesh students suspend protests

## Palestinians in distress as settlers terrorize village

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WASHINGTON: A woman holds a sign reading "Thank you Joe" outside the White House after US President Joe Biden announced he will not seek reelection, on July 21, 2024 in Washington, DC. — AFP

# Biden exit offers opportunity for Democrats but doubts remain

## Harris with the right running mate could defeat Trump in 2 of 3 'Blue Wall' states: Poll

WASHINGTON: Joe Biden's withdrawal from the US election offers Democrats the precious opportunity for a late reset in a campaign that was going badly - but ushers in an uncertain few weeks that will make or break their chances against Donald Trump. Grassroots voters will hope to be better served than they were during the initial nomination race, when Democrats put up no serious competition to the 81-year-old president's candidacy despite worries over his age.

"Remarkable leadership shown by Joe Biden. Now it falls to the (Democrats) to show equal leadership by having an open process to determine the best candidate(s) to take on Trump-Vance in November," said entrepreneur Andrew Yang, who ran against Biden for the party's nomination in 2020. "The goal should be simple - to win," he wrote on X.

With Biden's endorsement, Vice President Kamala Harris, 59, starts out in the strongest position to replace him and may be able to consolidate support in the coming days - a coronation that would allow Democrats to turn their fire on Trump. If that doesn't happen then a chaotic - and potentially damaging - fight for the votes of

almost 4,000 delegates at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in just four weeks looks more likely.

The party's national chairman Jaime Harrison promised a "transparent and orderly process" to replace Biden, the first president since Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson in 1968 not to seek a second term.

### Kamala the prosecutor

Biden's campaign began collapsing after his dismal debate performance against Trump last month prompted concerns over his advanced years and mental capacity. Trump, who would be 82 at the end of a second term, appeared more robust - but opposition to a younger candidate would turn the spotlight on his speeches and interviews, where he often appears incoherent and confuses names.

Several rising Democratic stars - all younger than 60 - have been floated as Biden alternatives, including governors Josh Shapiro, Gretchen Whitmer and Gavin Newsom. Whitmer immediately appeared to suggest she would not be running and Newsom has previously said he would not challenge Harris, but neither explicitly ruled themselves out.

A campaign led by Harris and

backed up by a moderate midwestern running mate could present the best chance for Democrats - helping turn out more women, who historically vote in greater numbers than men and are a weakness for Trump. Harris would also give Democrats a chance to redefine the race at their convention as a clash of cultures between a former prosecutor and a convicted felon.

"While she has largely been in the shadows for the last four years it is time for Kamala the prosecutor ... to make her comeback," said Sara Sadhwani, an assistant professor of politics at Pomona College in Claremont, California. A new survey from Democratic polling firm Public Policy Polling released Thursday found that Harris - with the right running mate - could defeat Trump and Vance in Pennsylvania and Michigan, two of the three "Blue Wall" states seen as critical to electing a Democratic president.

### Clean break

Ryan Waite, a political marketing expert from Brigham Young University-Idaho, told AFP a contested nomination might actually benefit Democrats by depriving Trump of headlines for several months. "A new Democrat

candidate will benefit from a short vetting window and significant earned media impact right before the election," he told AFP. "The story is now who will it be and that will take the air out of the room through their convention."

Any new nominee other than Harris would represent a clean break and be immune from much of the criticism directed at the Biden administration v high inflation, the border crisis and the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan. But while Harris would likely inherit all of the Biden campaign's cash reserves - about \$94 million as of July - other candidates may have to share the money with down-ballot candidates.

They would also have to make the case anew for endorsements from some of the Biden-Harris campaign's most influential backers, such as the United Auto Workers union. Harris herself could also face this problem, of course. Republicans have suggested they might challenge any late substitutions in the courts but Marc Elias, the Democrats' top election lawyer vowed that the eventual nominee would be on all 50 state ballots. "There is no basis for any legal challenge. Period," he said. — AFP

## Analysts: Harris might have tougher tone on Zionist entity than Biden

WASHINGTON: Vice President Kamala Harris is expected to stick largely to Joe Biden's foreign policy playbook on key issues such as Ukraine, China and Iran but could strike a tougher tone with the Zionist entity over the Gaza war if she replaces the president at the top of the Democratic ticket and wins the US November election.

On a range of global priorities, said analysts, a Harris presidency would resemble a second Biden administration. "She may be a more energetic player but one thing you shouldn't expect - any immediate big shifts in the substance of Biden's foreign policy," said Aaron David Miller, a former Middle East negotiator for Democratic and Republican administrations.

Harris has signaled, for instance, that she would not deviate from Biden's staunch support for NATO and would continue backing Ukraine in its fight against Russia. That stands in sharp contrast to a pledge by former president Trump to fundamentally alter the US relationship with the alliance and the doubts he has raised about future weapons supplies to Kyiv.

If Harris becomes her party's standard-bearer and can overcome Trump's lead in pre-election opinion polls to win the White House, the Zionist-Palestinian conflict would rank high on her agenda, especially if the Zionist bombardment of Gaza is still raging.

Although as vice president she has mostly echoed Biden in firmly backing the entity's right to defend itself during its ground offensive in the Palestinian enclave. Later, she has at times stepped out slightly ahead of the president in criticizing the entity's military approach.

In March, she bluntly stated that the Zionist entity was not doing enough to ease a "humanitarian catastrophe" during its ground offensive in the Palestinian enclave. Later, she did not rule out "consequences" for the entity if it launched a full-scale invasion of refugee-packed Rafah in southern Gaza.

Such language has raised the possibility that Harris, as president, might take at least a stronger rhetorical line with the Zionist entity than Biden, analysts say. While her 81-year-old boss has a long history with Zionist leaders and has even called himself a "Zionist," Harris, 59, lacks his visceral personal connection to the country.

She maintains closer ties to Democratic progressives, some of whom have pressed Biden to attach conditions to US weapons shipments to the Zionist entity out of concern for high Palestinian civilian casualties in Gaza.

But analysts do not expect there would be a big shift in US policy toward the entity, Washington's closest ally in the Middle East. Haile Soifer, who served as national security adviser to Harris during the then-senator's first two years in Congress, said Harris' support of the entity has been just as strong as Biden's. "There really has been no daylight to be found" between the two, she said.

Harris is expected to have a previously scheduled meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during his visit to Washington this week, her first encounter with a foreign leader since Biden ended his re-election bid. — Reuters

## Beshear, Shapiro among possible Harris VP picks

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden's week-end decision to drop his reelection bid and endorse Vice President Kamala Harris to replace him as the Democratic candidate leaves Harris with a major, immediate decision: whom to pick as her running mate.

These are some of the top people being discussed, provided they don't seek the presidential nomination themselves, according to people familiar with internal policy discussions.

### Andy Beshear

Democratic Governor Andy Beshear has carved a successful political career in a heavily Republican state that voted for Republican Donald Trump by a margin of more than 25 percentage points in 2020. Beshear has touted his record of bringing jobs to Kentucky, supporting public education and expanding healthcare access. As governor, he has vetoed legislation banning abortions and gender-affirming care for transgender youth, although the vetoes were overridden by the Republican-dominated legislature.

Beshear endorsed Harris on Monday, saying she could help the country "move on to something better" for America. Asked if he would consider

the vice presidency, he told MSNBC that he loved serving his state but added: "The only way I would consider something other than this current job is if I believed I could further help my people and to help this country."

### Pete Buttigieg

US Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg built a strong fan base among Democratic Party voters during his 2020 primary run against both Biden and Harris, winning the first-in-the-nation Iowa caucus. Seen as a polished defender of Biden policies, Buttigieg later endorsed Biden and was picked to join the incoming administration's Cabinet in 2021. The former South Bend, Indiana, mayor also has deep ties in Michigan, a critical state for Democrats in November. On Sunday, Buttigieg backed Harris' candidacy, saying "Harris is now the right person to take up the torch, defeat Donald Trump and succeed Joe Biden ... I will do all that I can to help her win."

### Roy Cooper

North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper has won praise from Democrats for his strong focus on economic development and his ability to win relatively strong approval ratings in a politically competitive state that leans Republican and voted for Republican candidate Donald Trump in both 2016 and 2020.

"If you want a nominee who can put Donald Trump's destruction of Roe at center stage, if you want a nominee who actually prosecuted criminals like Donald Trump, and if you want a nominee who

can put Trump's age and fitness in the forefront, Kamala Harris is the person," Cooper told MSNBC on Monday, one day after speaking with Harris and announcing his endorsement.

### Mark Kelly

US Senator Mark Kelly is well liked among Democratic Party elites for striking a relatively moderate tone in a hotly contested state that traditionally has favored Republicans, but which Biden won in 2020. A former US Navy captain and astronaut, Kelly is also the husband of former Representative Gabrielle Giffords, who was seriously wounded in a 2011 shooting. Gun violence is a major campaign issue for Democrats.

### Josh Shapiro

Josh Shapiro, Pennsylvania's governor, took office just last year but is already seen as a rising star for the party nationally. Trained as a lawyer, Shapiro served as the state's attorney general, a legal background that is similar to Harris' own as a prosecutor. He has a long history of winning elections against Republicans in a state that Democrats believe they must win to secure the election in November. Shapiro and Harris spoke on Sunday, according to a source familiar with the matter.

"I've known Kamala Harris for nearly two decades - we've both been prosecutors, we've both stood up for the rule of law, we've both fought for the people and delivered results. Kamala Harris is a patriot worthy of our support," he said in a statement on Sunday. — Reuters

## International

# Palestinians in distress as settlers terrorize village

## Armed Zionists assault villagers in their homes, loot property 'in total impunity'

**SUSYA, Palestine:** The stress shows on the face of Samiha Ismail, who since October 7 has been stuck in her home in an occupied West Bank village that lives in constant fear of attack by Zionist settlers.

The day after the Hamas raid into the Zionist entity, settlers entered Susya, a hilltop village in the south of the West Bank, vowing retribution and "humiliation", the 53-year-old Palestinian recalled. More than nine months on, Ismail is among 450 inhabitants who spend most of the day indoors. Even their sheep are not allowed out of their sheds. "Every time we take them to pasture, the settlers chase us," the panicked Ismail told AFP. Instead, the sheep of Zionist settlers now dot the nearby hills. Susya's inhabitants say their livelihood has gone. One international aid group has sent counsellors to help Susya residents with their mental health. "Before the war, we would have defended our land, but today nobody moves," she said. The settlers are armed and protected by the army, she added, and her husband and son have been "beaten up" several times. Zionist authorities did not respond to AFP's questions about violence in the region.

### Land grab

Since the start of the Gaza war, Zionist settlement of the occupied West Bank — considered illegal under international law — has hit new records. Excluding annexed east Jerusalem, some 490,000 Zionist settlers live in the West Bank alongside some three million Palestinians.

In June, the Zionist government declared more than 12 square kilometers (4.5 square miles) of the West Bank to be state land, the largest land appropriation since the 1993 Oslo Accords set out the foundations for land use in the territory. Land that is declared as Zionist state property can be used for more settlements. In addition, 25 settlement outposts — not even authorized by the Zionist government — have sprung up across the West Bank since the start of the year, according to Peace Now, a settlement watchdog. Men in military fatigues have meanwhile raided Susya at night, kicking down doors and looting property including donkeys and mules, locals told AFP. Some have even entered houses at night to intimidate residents. "Most of us no longer sleep at night," Ismail said. Mohamed Al-Nawajaa, 78, was born before the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians when Zionist entity was created in 1948 — known as the Nakba, or catastrophe, to Palestinians. "After October 7, they took all these hills. We were kicked out in 1948, 1967... and now again in 2024. But this land is ours," the shepherd said, his head wrapped in a traditional keffiyeh scarf.

### 'Gun to the head'

Since the Gaza war, settlers and Zionist troops have killed at least 579 Palestinians, according to the Palestinian authorities. At least 16 Zionists, including soldiers, have been killed in attacks involving Palestinians, according to official Zionist figures.

Nawajaa said his biggest concern is his grandchildren. He does not let them leave the house. He said the settlers had struck him and left him lying on the floor of his house. Others in the village have had similar experiences. "They come at night, around 3:00 am. They say 'this house is mine'," he told AFP.



**SUSYA:** A Doctors Without Borders (MSF) charity member assists Palestinian men at a MSF tent clinic in Susya village, in the south of the occupied West Bank, on July 17, 2024. — AFP

The harassment has frayed nerves in Susya. The Doctors Without Borders (MSF) charity set up tent clinics this year due to concerns for the villagers' mental health. "There is no doubt that this is the biggest problem here," Simona Onidi, an MSF coordinator, told AFP. "We can't talk about post-traumatic disorder here. It's never past, it's a permanent trauma."

Abdul Rahim al-Nawajaa is despondent for the future. "The suffering is endless", said the 60-year old Bedouin as he pruned his acacia tree, the only one left standing since his olive trees were "vandalized". Settlers killed his father a few years ago in a dispute over a sheep, and have demolished Abdul's house "several times". "The settlers act in total impunity. A soldier might put a gun to your head and you can't do anything," the shepherd said. Fears of a new forced exodus stalk Susya. But Mohamed Al-Nawajaa defiantly declared: "We will stay in our houses". Pointing to the ground, he added: "We will live on our land and we will die here." — AFP

Party chairman Gohar Ali Khan, a barrister, said he accompanied Hasan to the police station, after local media and PTI initially reported that he had also been arrested. "I was there for Raof Hassan, he is our senior and I had to be there for him," the MP told media. "We are always ready for an arrest," he added. At least 10 members of PTI or their relatives have been rounded up in the past two months, Hasan told AFP on Saturday. He said they had "disappeared" with "no trace". "Seven of them are from my department alone, which they want to cripple because we refuse to stay silent," he said.

The government's information minister said last week it would ban PTI, just days after the Supreme Court made a crucial ruling in the party's favor that dealt a huge blow to the government. Khan has been jailed for nearly a year, but this month an Islamabad judge overturned his illegal marriage conviction while the Supreme Court awarded PTI more parliamentary seats — a move set to make them the largest party in the National Assembly.—AFP

## Headquarters of Pakistan ex-PM Khan's party raided

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan police raided the headquarters of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party on Monday, a week after the military-backed government vowed to ban the political movement. An AFP journalist at the scene saw the headquarters of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) sealed off by officers, who led a number of party workers into waiting vans. The Interior Ministry said PTI's digital media wing was raided by Islamabad police who arrested Raof Hasan, a founding member of the party and head of its press department. "PTI is involved in anti-state propaganda," the ministry accused in a statement without giving further details.

During an anti-drug conference attended by regional officials, including Kuwaiti Deputy PM and Interior and Defense Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, Iraq's Prime Minister Mohamed Shia Al-Sudani called for regional cooperation. "Coordinating and cooperating to pursue and dismantle drug gangs will serve regional and international security," he said, adding that "Iraq is open to all cooperation" to fight "cross-border crime". "We will support any effort aiming to eliminate drug hubs, manufacturing stations, and cutting off their supply chains." — AFP

tion," the person said. She reportedly spoke to former president Barack Obama, one of those who notably has yet to endorse her.

The party has promised a "transparent and orderly process" to replace Biden, who bowed Sunday to Democratic concerns over his age and mental acuity following a disastrous debate performance against Trump in June. One possible rival to Harris, the independent senator Joe Manchin, who has long been a thorn in Biden's side, on Monday ruled out registering as a Democrat and standing against her.

The instability is also hitting the Republicans hard, with Trump, 78, having to completely retool a strategy built around attacking Biden over his age and physical frailty. Harris' entry not only flips the age issue but puts Trump — a convicted felon who has faced a series of legal cases over sexual assault — up against a woman and former prosecutor. Trump launched a series of invective-filled social media posts after Biden quit, mocking the president's age and saying he and Harris posed a "threat to democracy".

The challenges facing Harris remain daunting in a lightning-fast process. And the vice president has long suffered from poor approval ratings after a lackluster first two years in the White House. She is polling largely neck-and-neck with Trump in the few polls that have looked at a direct match up. That, however, could change as she campaigns, taking charge of her own image for the first time.

Potential convention delegates were being told to expect a vote on August 1 to put Harris's name formally atop the ticket, more than two weeks before Democratic convention, CBS reported. Biden had spent more than three weeks resisting calls to step down but then dropped his bombshell without warning with a written statement on X. The veteran Democrat said it had been the "greatest honor of my life" to be president and promised to address the nation later this week, offering his "full support and endorsement" for Harris. — AFP



**ISLAMABAD:** Women police officers taking the arrested female workers of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) from the party's headquarters into police van after a security raid in Islamabad on July 22, 2024. — AFP

## Iraq becoming major drug ...

Continued from Page 1

the conflict-ridden country of 43 million people driving up usage. Governments in the region have recently stepped up their efforts to crack down on drug trafficking under pressure from the oil-rich Gulf states.

## Harris praises Biden as Dems...

Continued from Page 1

Earlier, a slew of heavyweight governors, including leaders once seen as potential hopefuls for the party's presidential nomination, added their backing. "Let's win this," posted Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, announcing her support in tandem with the governors of Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin. The governor of Kentucky, Andy Beshear, also declared his support, making him one of the favorites to be picked as Harris's vice presidential running mate.

Harris must still win over some key holdouts if she is to wrap up the nomination, which could happen as early as August 1, although some Democrats are still calling for the party to show transparency with an open primary. America's first female, black and South Asian vice president has a unique opportunity to unify the party after 81-year-old Biden's historic decision to step aside from the nomination plunged the race into uncharted waters.

The stunning development has brought a jolt of energy to a demoralized party, transformed an election that threatened to turn into a long slog between two unpopular, elderly men, and could give America its first female president. Harris' campaign said it had raised a stunning \$49.6 million in grassroots donations in less than 24 hours since Biden endorsed her on Sunday.

Harris, dressed in a Howard University sweatshirt and eating pizza with anchovies, spent more than 10 hours Sunday placing calls to over 100 party leaders, members of Congress, governors and other figures, a person familiar with her schedule said. "On each of those calls, the vice president made clear that she... plans to work hard to earn the Democratic nomina-

## UN: 2024 decisive to ending AIDS as health threat

**GENEVA:** Political decisions taken this year will determine whether a target to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 can be reached, the United Nations said Monday. Figures from 2023 show a drop in new infections and fatalities and improvement in access to treatment for HIV-positive patient. But while those figures look positive, the UNAIDS agency warned that the progress remained fragile. "Decisions leaders make this year will determine whether (or not) countries can achieve the 2030 target of ending AIDS as a public health threat and ensure progress beyond 2030," the report said.

In the over four decades since the AIDS epidemic burst onto the global scene, it has killed more than 42 million people. While AIDS-related deaths have been steadily declining, falling from 670,000 in 2022 to 630,000 last year, the number still remains dizzyingly high. "A person dies from AIDS-related causes every minute," UNAIDS chief Winnie Byanyima pointed out in the report, warning the world remains off track to reach ambitious 2030 objectives. "The inequalities that drive the HIV pandemic are not being addressed sufficiently."

Nearly 40 million people live with HIV, the virus that can cause AIDS, the report said. Around 1.3 million new infections were recorded last year, a decline of 100,000 compared to 2022 and a dramatic 60-percent fall since a peak of 3.3 million in 1995. But the long-term trend is still way off track to hit the UNAIDS target of just 330,000 new infections in 2025.

### 'Game-changer'

Access to anti-retroviral medication has also greatly improved, but remains a major issue. Last year, a full 30.7 million people received such treatment compared to just 7.7 million in 2010. But it remains unlikely the world will manage to hit a target of reaching 34 million by next year. Byanyima stressed the need to dramatically scale up access. She urged US pharmaceutical giant Gilead to "make history" by allowing generic manufacturing of its new anti-retroviral medication Lenacapavir, which requires just two injections a year.

Bringing down the price, currently expected to be in the tens of thousands annually, to below \$100 could be "a game-changer", she told a news conference Monday at the start of the 25th International AIDS Conference in Munich.

Eastern and southern Africa remain the most-affected regions, with 20.8 million people living with HIV, 450,000 infected last year and 260,000 fatalities. But the region is also the one that has seen the greatest progress, with a 59-percent drop in new infections there since 2010, the report said. In regions like Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Latin America infections are "moving in the wrong direction and rising", Byanyima warned.—AFP

## Scores flee as Gaza martyrs...

Continued from Page 1

time to get out of harm's way before the Zionist strikes began. Some families fled on donkey carts, others on foot, carrying mattresses and other belongings. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said two of its clinics located in eastern Khan Yunis had been knocked out of operation. The death toll among Palestinians in the Zionist offensive reached at least 39,006 as of Monday, Gaza health authorities said.

At Khan Yunis' Nasser Hospital, some people stood outside the morgue to bid farewell to dead relatives. "We are tired, we are tired in Gaza, every day our children are martyred, every day, every moment," said Ahmed Sammour, who lost several relatives in bombings of eastern Khan Yunis. "No one told us to evacuate. They brought four floors crashing down on civilians... and the bodies they could reach, they brought to the refrigerator (morgue)," Sammour added.

Residents of Khan Yunis initially fled their homes when Zionist tanks stormed in several months ago,

before returning after they withdrew to rebuild their lives. In nearby Deir Al-Balah, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are sheltering, a Zionist airstrike hit a tent used by local journalists inside Al-Aqsa Hospital, killing one of them and wounding two other people, the Gaza government media office said. The new death raised the number of Palestinian journalists killed in the Zionist offensive to 163, it added.

Earlier on Monday, the Zionist military said it had issued new evacuation orders due to renewed Palestinian attacks, including rockets launched from the targeted areas in eastern Khan Yunis. The orders did not include health institutions, Palestinians said. The Gaza Civil Emergency Services said the Zionist entity's new orders showed it had downsized the humanitarian-designated areas in southern and central areas, where 1.7 million people were sheltering, to 48 sq km from 65 sq km in the past. The Palestinians, the United Nations and international relief agencies have said there is no safe place left in Gaza.

Health officials at Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis urged residents on Monday to donate blood because of the large number of casualties being rushed into the medical center. "A family, including children, were all torn to pieces while they were sleeping," said one man who arrived at the hospital in an ambulance bearing the bodies. — Reuters

## Macron: France ready to host...

Continued from Page 1

construction techniques using low-carbon concrete, water recycling and reclaimed building materials. It was also intended to be free of air-conditioning with a natural cooling system, but some Olympic delegations are unconvinced and have ordered around 2,500 portable cooling units for their athletes.

Seine-Saint-Denis, where the main athletics stadium for the Olympics is also situated, is the poorest area in France and is hoping to reap benefits from the sports extravaganza. Macron promised the area would not be forgotten after the Olympics. "I will come back after the Games to see the legacy with you and to see how life has changed," he said.

Meanwhile, France's foreign minister said Zionist athletes were welcome at the Paris Games after a hard-left member of the French parliament sparked

outrage by urging them to stay away because of the conflict in Gaza. French security forces were continuing preparations for the unprecedented opening ceremony on Friday, the first time a Summer Olympics has opened outside the main stadium.

Between 6,000 and 7,000 athletes are to sail down the river on 85 barges and boats, with a backdrop of world-famous monuments including Notre-Dame cathedral, currently being renovated after a devastating fire in 2019. The athletes will disembark for the culmination of a ceremony at the Trocadero opposite the Eiffel Tower that organizers promise will be spectacular.

Up to 300,000 ticketed spectators will watch from stands and on the riverbanks and another 200,000 are expected to watch from the overlooking apartments. Turning to the sport, Slovenian cyclist Tadej Pogacar is setting his sights on Olympic gold in the road race after winning the Tour de France for the third time on Sunday. "We are living in the golden age of cycling," Pogacar said after completing a commanding victory in Nice, where the finish was moved to because of the Olympic preparations in Paris. — AFP

## International

## Bangladesh students suspend protests

## Diplomats question Dhaka's 'one-sided' narrative, use of UN vehicles in quashing protests

DHAKA: The Bangladeshi student group leading demonstrations that have spiraled into deadly violence suspended protests Monday for 48 hours, with its leader saying they had not wanted reform "at the expense of so much blood". What began as demonstrations against politicized admission quotas for sought-after government jobs snowballed into some of the worst unrest of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's tenure. A curfew has been imposed and soldiers are patrolling cities across the South Asian country, while a nationwide internet blackout since Thursday has drastically restricted the flow of information. The streets of the capital Dhaka remained largely quiet Monday, and the army chief said the law and order situation had been brought "under control" since the military was deployed.

Nahid Islam, leader of the main protest organizer Students Against Discrimination, told AFP that "We are suspending the shutdown protests for 48 hours". Nahid said he was hospitalized after being beaten by people he claimed were undercover police. "We demand that during this period the government withdraws the curfew, restores the internet and stops targeting the student protesters."

On Sunday, the Supreme Court pared back the number of reserved jobs for specific groups, including the descendants of "freedom fighters" from Bangladesh's 1971 liberation war against Pakistan. "We started this movement for reforming the quota," Nahid said. "But we did not want quota reform at the expense of so much blood, so much killing, so much damage to life and property."

At least 163 people have died in clashes, including several police officers, according to an AFP count of victims reported by police and hospitals. Sporadic violence continued Monday, with four people brought to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital with bullet injuries, an AFP reporter at the scene saw, but the flow of casualties was much lower than on previous days.

Government officials have repeatedly blamed the protesters and opposition for the unrest. Dhaka Metropolitan Police spokesman Faruk Hossain told

AFP that "at least 532" people had been arrested in the capital since protests began, including some leaders of the opposition Bangladesh National Party.

Ali Riaz, a professor of politics and leading Bangladesh expert at Illinois State University, described the violence as "the worst massacre by any regime since independence". "The atrocities committed in the past days show that the regime is entirely dependent on brute force and has no regard for the lives of the people," he told AFP. "These indiscriminate killings cannot be washed by a court ruling or a government announcement."

## Diplomatic questions

Bangladeshi Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus urged "world leaders and the United Nations to do everything within their powers to end the violence" in a statement. The respected 83-year-old economist is credited with lifting millions out of poverty with his pioneering microfinance bank but earned the enmity of Hasina, who has accused him of "sucking blood" from the poor. "Young people are being killed at random every day," Yunus told AFP. "Hospitals do not reveal the number of wounded and dead."

Diplomats in Dhaka questioned Bangladeshi authorities' deadly response to the protests. Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud summoned ambassadors for a briefing on Sunday and showed them a 15-minute video that sources said focused on damage caused by protesters. US ambassador Peter Haas told Mahmud he was presenting a one-sided version of events, according to a senior diplomatic official. "I am surprised you did not show the footage of police firing at unarmed protesters," the source quoted Haas as telling the minister.

A US embassy official speaking on condition of anonymity confirmed the ambassador's comments. The diplomatic source added that Mahmud did not respond to a question from a UN representative about the alleged use of UN-marked armored personnel carriers and helicopters to suppress the protests. Bangladesh is a major contributor to UN peacekeeping operations around the world —



KOLKATA: Students take part in a demonstration in Kolkata on July 22, 2024, demanding an end to government crackdowns against protesters in Bangladesh. — AFP

earning significant revenues from its efforts — and has UN-marked equipment in its military inventories.

## 'Sheikh Hasina never flees'

With around 18 million young people in Bangladesh out of work, according to government figures, the quota scheme's reintroduction deeply upset graduates facing an acute jobs crisis. The Supreme Court curtailed the number of reserved jobs from 56 percent of all positions to seven percent, mostly for the children and grandchildren of "freedom fighters" from the 1971 war.

While 93 percent of jobs will be awarded on merit, the decision fell short of protesters' demands to scrap

the "freedom fighter" category altogether. Critics say the quota is used to stack public jobs with loyalists to Hasina's ruling Awami League. Opponents accuse her government of bending the judiciary to its will.

Hasina, 76, has ruled the country since 2009 and won her fourth consecutive election in January after a vote without genuine opposition. Her government is also accused by rights groups of misusing state institutions to entrench its hold on power and stamp out dissent, including by the extrajudicial killing of opposition activists. The violence of recent days raised speculation about her future, but she told an audience of businessmen Monday: "Sheikh Hasina never flees." — AFP



MANILA: A protestor holds a placard as their march to congress is blocked by police during a demonstration coinciding with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos' State of the Nation Address, in Manila on July 22, 2024. — AFP photos



Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos (center) greets well-wishers after delivering his national address.

## Marcos: Philippines 'cannot yield' in territorial disputes

MANILA: The Philippines "cannot yield" in territorial disputes, President Ferdinand Marcos said Monday, after a series of escalating confrontations with Beijing in the South China Sea. Manila is locked in a longstanding territorial row with Beijing over parts of the strategic waterway through which trillions-of-dollars-worth of trade passes annually.

Without naming China, Marcos said the Philippines would continue to "find ways to de-escalate tensions in contested areas ... without compromising our position and our principles". "The Philippines cannot yield. The Philippines cannot waver," Marcos said in his annual State of the Nation address to Congress.

His remarks came after the Philippines and China agreed to a "provisional arrangement" for resupply missions to Filipino troops stationed at Second Thomas Shoal, which has been the focus of violent clashes in recent months.

The Chinese foreign ministry confirmed a "provisional agreement" with the two sides agreeing to jointly manage maritime differences and de-escalate the situation. China claims nearly all of the South China Sea, including the Second Thomas Shoal, where the Philippines maintains a rusty naval ship,

the Sierra Madre, that it deliberately grounded in 1999 to reinforce its maritime claims. Manila regularly sends supply missions to sailors stationed at the shoal, turning it into a flashpoint with Beijing. During a mission last month, a Filipino sailor lost a finger after what the Philippine military described as intentional ramming by China Coast Guard vessels against its boats.

Philippine relations with China have been turbulent since Marcos took office in 2022 vowing to defend his country's claims to the South China Sea. A series of clashes between Philippine and Chinese vessels at flashpoint reefs have fueled fears of a conflict that could drag in the United States owing to its mutual defense treaty with Manila.

The Philippines has also deepened defense cooperation with other countries, including Australia, France and Japan, in the face of China's growing assertiveness in the waterway. Manila signed a key defense pact with Tokyo this month that will allow the deployment of troops on each other's territory.

"We are continuing to strengthen our defensive posture both through developing self-reliance and through partnerships with like-minded states," said Marcos, who received a standing ovation when he declared "the West Philippine Sea ... is ours".

Manila calls the South China Sea waters to the country's immediate west the West Philippine Sea. Beijing has brushed aside competing claims to the South China Sea from several Southeast Asian nations, including the Philippines, and an international ruling that its expansive claims have no legal basis.

## VP Duterte absent

Marcos highlighted the government's efforts to boost agriculture, prepare for natural disasters, build highways and bridges, and improve the education system. There were loud cheers when he declared an immediate ban on online gambling operations in the country, which are mostly run by Chinese nationals and have been linked to scams, kidnapping, prostitution, torture and murder.

They flourished under former president Rodrigo Duterte, but there have been growing calls for them to be outlawed after allegations that a local mayor had links to one that was also running a massive scam center north of Manila. "We hear the loud complaints of our countrymen," Marcos said to a standing ovation. "We must stop this troublemaking in our society and the abuse of our country."

Lawmakers, foreign diplomats and judges were among the audience, but noticeably absent was Vice President Sara Duterte, who previously announced she would not attend. Domestic politics have been rocked by the public rupture of an alliance between the Marcos and Duterte families as they attempt to shore up their rival support bases and secure key positions ahead of the 2025 mid-term elections. Duterte, the daughter of the former president, quit her cabinet post of education secretary in June.

Police with riot shields stood by as about two thousand protesters marched along a major avenue in Manila in the hours leading up to Marcos's speech to demand higher wages and greater efforts to combat corruption. — Agencies

## 20,000 rally against overtourism in Spain's Mallorca

PALMA: Some 20,000 protesters hit the streets of Palma in Mallorca Sunday for a mass demonstration against overtourism, demanding changes to a touristic model they say is harming the Spanish Mediterranean island. Under the slogan "Let's change course and set limits on tourism", the demonstrators formed a sea of brightly-colored flags and banners as they surged through the city's most visited streets, in the latest in a wave of mass anti-tourism protests in Spain.

"Your luxury, our misery," read one sign, while another placard said: "This isn't tourismophobia, it's numbers: 1,232,014 residents, 18 million tourists." The protests were called by some 80 organizations and social groups who want limits to be placed on excessive tourism in the Balearic Isles, whose main three islands are Mallorca, Menorca and Ibiza.

They say the current model of tourism has



PALMA: People hold a placard which reads "Tourism yes, but not like this" during a demonstration to protest against overtourism and housing prices on July 21, 2024. — AFP

stretched public services to breaking point, harms natural resources and makes local access to housing increasingly difficult. Organizers claimed that 50,000 joined the protests, with police estimating 20,000 participants. Earlier, the central government's delegation in the islands had said 12,000.

Last year, a record 17.8 million people visit-

ed the Balearic Islands, from mainland Spain and abroad, and the figures are expected to be even higher this year. The demonstration followed another mass protest across the archipelago's three main islands at the end of May, in which many thousands of marchers hit the streets to demand steps to limit overtourism under the slogan: "Our islands are not for sale".

"From a practical point of view, it is a legitimate economic activity. But as an economic activity, it should ultimately be regulated in the same way as hotels," said architect and urban planning expert Jose Maria Ezquiaga, who told TVE public television he believes tourist rental flats should require the approval of local residents' associations. "It should be local property owners who set the rules of the game and decide whether or not certain formats are acceptable," he said.

And Manuel de la Calle, an expert in the field of tourism and business, said imposing a tourist tax could be part of the solution. "It is one of the possible solutions that could be put in place. It will not reduce the flow of tourism, but it will generate resources that can be driven into tourism management or other avenues to help the local population," he told TVE. — AFP

## Bangladesh student protest leader says he fears for his life

DHAKA: Bangladeshi student protest leader Nahid Islam lay in a hospital room in the capital Dhaka on Monday, bruised and battered and in fear for his life. The 26-year-old sociology graduate leads Students Against Discrimination, the main group organizing demonstrations against employment quotas for sought-after government jobs that spiraled into deadly violence.

Nahid personally led protests against the quotas, which critics say are used to benefit ruling Awami League party loyalists, until Friday. Wearing a national flag as a bandana, he roused demonstrators with the chant: "Quota or merit? Merit, merit." However, in the early hours of Saturday, a group of people identifying themselves as police detectives broke through the gate of a friend's house where he had been staying due to a government-imposed curfew. He fled to the roof but to no avail. "Four, five people forcibly took me down and took me to their car. I was blindfolded and handcuffed," Nahid told AFP in an interview in hospital.

He said he was driven to a house 30 or 40 minutes away and interrogated. "Why we are doing this, what is our purpose, why we were not withdrawing the protests, who was behind this movement," Nahid said he was asked. "They were not happy with my replies and then at one stage they started beating me, they hit me with something like an iron bar and at one stage I lost consciousness."

He said he found himself on a roadside in Dhaka's east when he came to his senses early on Sunday morning. A rickshaw took him home and his family took him to hospital. Nahid asked AFP not to identify where he was being treated for fear of being attacked by members of the ruling party's youth league or police. "Me and many other coordinators are fearful for their lives," he said, displaying a large purple bruise on his right arm. "A few of my fellow coordinators are missing."

## 'Irresponsible behavior'

Nahid has not been able to get a job since graduating from Dhaka University but has been involved in student politics since joining protests against the employment quotas in 2018. This time, the demonstrations snowballed into some of the worst unrest of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's tenure.

Authorities cracked down on protesters and ordered a curfew, while a widespread internet shutdown was imposed on Thursday. Nahid accused authorities of "irresponsible behavior", "provocative remarks" and repression, blaming them for the escalating tension. "People are expressing their anger at the government," he said. "We want justice for people who were martyred in the movement and injured. The ministers, the heads of law enforcement agencies who ordered the attack, shooting, we want their resignation," he said. — AFP



DHAKA: Nahid Islam, a top leader of the main protest Students Against Discrimination, shows his bruises after being allegedly beaten by law enforcers, in Dhaka on July 22, 2024. — AFP

# Business

TUESDAY, JULY 23, 2024

## Aviation summit opens amid jet shortages, supply chain snags

Ryanair warns ticket prices falling as travel boom fades • Boeing gets order boost from Korean Air

**FARNBOROUGH:** A plunge in Ryanair's quarterly profits cast a shadow over the opening of the Farnborough Airshow on Monday, where aviation leaders were already fretting about supply chain snags, aircraft delays and floundering plans to cut emissions.

Boeing announced a bumper order from Korean Air for 20 777X jets and 20 787s, worth \$7 billion according to estimated delivery prices from Cirium Ascend, in a boost for the US planemaker's long-delayed 777X program. But many delegates at the July 22-26 gathering of aviation leaders were not expecting the traditional deluge of deals as Airbus struggles to reach output goals and Boeing adopts a low-key posture amid its safety crisis, which was triggered by a panel flying off a 737 MAX jet in January. Aviation was hit hard by the pandemic which saw air travel collapse only to bounce back sharply. That left many firms scrambling to resolve labor and parts shortages.



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer addresses visitors during the opening of the Farnborough International Airshow 2024, south west of London, on July 22, 2024. -- AFP

The situation has been exacerbated by a spiraling crisis at Boeing, which has had to slow production of its best-selling 737 MAX plane following the panel blowout. Delays in delivering planes have hampered airlines' efforts to capitalize on the post-pandemic surge in travel and inflated costs, and signs are growing they are struggling to pass those costs on to consumers as demand starts to normalize.

Ryanair, Europe's biggest budget airline, reported on Monday an almost halving in quarterly profit, with fares plunging 15 percent and management warning of more pressure to come on prices. CEO Michael O'Leary added there had been some improvement on deliveries from Boeing, but that there were still delays and he was getting a little concerned about deliveries due next year.



FARNBOROUGH, UK: Delegates look at the Global Combat Air Program (GCAP) 6th generation fighter jet concept design, bathed in the colors of the United Kingdom's national flag, on the opening day of the Farnborough International Airshow 2024, south west of London, on July 22, 2024. -- AFP

Separately, flydubai said its fleet expansion plans had been hit by delays in Boeing deliveries, while the boss of Air India said it was having to rob parts from other aircraft to keep its planes flying amid industry supply chain snags. "The big question for the airlines here at Farnborough is what has happened to the halo effect of demand after the pandemic - has that recovery stalled?" said veteran aviation journalist Mark Pilling, who was due to host a panel of CEOs.

Pegasus Airlines CEO Guliz Ozturk told reporters customers were going "back to basics" seeking lower fares. "We have started seeing the normalization of demand. What does it mean? I mean, the demand is there, but now the travelers are looking for, as before the pandemic, for the most affordable, the lowest, the best price for their travel," she said.

Ryanair's warning on fares deepened worries about pressure on yields - a measure of average fare paid per mile by each passenger and a key barometer for airline profitability. Airline shares

were among the biggest fallers in Europe. Ryanair was down more than 14 percent and set for its worst day since June 2016 at 1140 GMT, while rival easyJet fell 8 percent, TUI was down 4.9 percent and BA-owner IAG lost four percent.

With dealmaking likely to be limited, the focus at the air show is likely to fall on how manufacturers are tackling supply chain blockages. Stephanie Pope, Boeing's new head of commercial aircraft, told a media briefing on Sunday that 737 MAX production was improving and the company was undergoing "transformational change" across safety and corporate culture. Airbus CEO Guillaume Faury also said on Sunday it was making progress ramping up production of its top passenger jets.

Some deals will get over the line, delegates said. Virgin Atlantic is close to placing a top-up order for Airbus A330neos and Flynas, a Saudi low-cost carrier, is poised to order up to 30 of the same widebody aircraft, industry sources said. Japan Airlines 9201.T

is expected to firm up recent tentative orders for jets and Boeing is seeing leasing interest for its 737 MAX, while Turkish Airlines is in the midst of negotiations to buy Boeing jets, industry sources said. The companies declined to comment.

This week's air show will be peppered with sustainability panels and workshops as aerospace giants and airlines seek to emphasize their commitment to reducing carbon emissions, even as they plan to massively expand global air travel. On the defense side, the focus will be on Ukraine, possible delays to America's future F-22 fighter replacement, code-named NGAD, and a defense review by Britain's new Labour government.

Speaking at the show, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he wanted to put "on record" just how important the Global Combat Air Program (GCAP) was, dampening speculation that the fighter jet project with Japan and Italy could be axed following the defense review. -- Reuters

## Geopolitics is back to break markets' stride

**NEW YORK/SINGAPORE:** Politics has toppled global markets from record peaks and over a turbulent few weeks stepped to the fore as investors confront the prospect of an increasingly fractious Europe, isolationist America and a slowdown in the pulse of world trade. Geopolitics topped the risk list of sovereign money managers this year and, after a roaring rally, money is rushing out of potential flashpoints - such as Taiwan's stock market - and into havens such as gold, which hit an all-time high last week. The line of thinking is that a period of peace and free trade is finished and the next one looks less profitable. Nearly half the globe votes this year and results so far underpin the shift in mood: Taiwan elected a president detested in Beijing, voters lurched to the right in France and installed the largest left-wing majority in Britain for a generation.

Over just eight days, the US campaign trail created shock waves: frontrunner Donald Trump was grazed by a bullet and Joe Biden quit with less than four months to go until polling day. Markets are tuning in and the news has pulled geopolitical concerns to the front of investors' minds. "It is definitely one of the more important considerations we have been working into our process all year," said Erik Knutzen, multi-asset chief investment officer at Neuberger Berman, which manages \$481 billion in assets.

"The high-level way that is being manifested is by assessing our overall portfolio risk levels," he said. "An environment of elevated geopolitical risk would lead you to turn that risk dial down."

That has already been evident in prices as markets immediately focus on two potential pitfalls likely to be heightened by a Trump victory: inflation and restrictions or disruptions to semiconductor sales, particularly for Taiwan. Gold, considered an inflation hedge and a beneficiary of demand from central banks in a climate of mistrust, shot to a record high above \$2,450 an ounce in the days after the attempt on Trump's life, an event that has galvanized his supporters. "All of Trump's policies are likely to be inflationary - be it tax cuts, immigration, or re-shoring, and hence dollar bearish... so the dollar is likely to depreciate against gold," said Prashant Kothaari, CEO at Alpha Alternatives.

At the same time more than \$100 billion has been wiped from the market value of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co in less than a week after Trump sounded equivocal about his commitment to Taiwan's protection and chip industry. Goldman Sachs' cross-strait risk indicator, which analyses news, is below peaks but has rebounded over the past week.

Taiwan's currency slumped to its lowest in more

than eight years on Monday as investors fled the island which is at the forefront of chipmaking technology and the front line of US-China tension. "The return of this geopolitical risk has effectively blunted enthusiasm for the AI hardware trade," said Norman Villamin, chief strategist at Union Bancaire Privée.

As money managers have become more certain of US rate cuts in September and of a Republican White House, geopolitical concerns are seeping in to longer-term thinking about the globe's economic potential and risks building in the background. High interest rates are starting to bite and China's growth is slowing. There are wars in the Middle East and the fringe of Europe where major powers are lined up on opposite sides.

"We see tensions remaining high and stemming policy consequences that will likely last the decade," said David Bianco, Americas chief investment officer at DWS. He mentioned energy and defense stocks and commodities including copper and uranium as being on the investing radar.



NEW YORK: A trader works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City on July 22, 2024. -- AFP

To be sure, there is no sense of panic in the selling which has pushed the S&P 500 only some 3 percent from an all-time high, something many market participants see as a healthy pullback - rather a re-consideration of how to trade political risks. For now US equities volatility, measured by the VIX index, is rising but low by historical standards and, as of early last week, there have been no dramatic flows into so-called "tail-risk funds" designed to profit in a downturn.

"Geopolitics is never the main focus of financial markets, which particularly for the equity market is always on interest rates and earnings growth," said Matt Sherwood, head of multi-asset investment strategy at Perpetual in Sydney. "But geopolitics is one of those issues that if it's triggered it can be a large left tail event," he said. "And so what an investor would need is a low-cost diversification strategy, which gives downside protection and upside potential." -- Reuters

## EU tells Meta to allay consumer fears over 'pay for privacy'

**BRUSSELS:** EU consumer authorities told Facebook owner Meta on Monday to take action to assuage European consumer groups' fears over its new "pay or consent" model or face further action.

Launched late last year, Meta's system means users have to pay to avoid data collection, or agree to share their private data with Facebook and Instagram to keep using the platforms for free. European consumer groups including in France and Spain filed complaints to the network of consumer protection authorities (CPC) over the pay-for-privacy model. Now national consumer protection authorities in Europe have sent a letter to Meta, warning the model's roll-out "could potentially be considered unfair and contrary". There are concerns Meta misled or confused consumers with its language, different screens and other practices as it rolled out the new scheme. Meta has until September 1 to reply to the letter and to offer solutions. EU regulators in the European Commission coordinated the action with the CPC network. "If Meta does not take the necessary steps to solve the concerns raised, CPC authorities can decide to take enforcement measures, including sanctions," the commission said in a statement.

Meta faced fierce scrutiny over the model amid concerns over users' privacy. Earlier this month, EU regulators accused Meta of violating the bloc's new competition rules with the model that Brussels said forced a "binary choice" on users. If the breach is confirmed, it could mean hefty fines for the US giant. A Meta spokesperson defended the model, insisting it adheres to the rules.

"Subscriptions as an alternative to advertising are a well-established business model across many industries," the spokesperson said. "Subscription for no ads follows the direction of the highest court in Europe and we are confident it complies with European regulation." The European Consumer Organization welcomed the latest move against Meta's initiative. Agustin Reyna, director general of the umbrella group for European consumer groups, urged Meta "to change its pay-or-consent choice screen as soon as possible and in a way that provides consumers with a fair and freely-given choice".

Meta and the EU are at loggerheads over the bloc's tougher rules. The company last week said it would delay the release of its most powerful generative AI models in Europe because of what it called unpredictable EU regulation. --AFP



NAJAF, Iraq: A worker fills bags with rice in a mill in Iraq's central province. -- AFP

## Iraq resumes rice cultivation after two-year ban

**BAGHDAD:** Iraq has resumed rice cultivation after a two-year ban prompted by water scarcity, and is testing out a strain of the grain that consumes less water than traditionally planted versions. Deputy Minister of Agriculture Mahdi Sahar Al-Jubouri told Reuters the country has earmarked 150 sq km (58 sq miles) for rice growing this season and forecast a yield of 150,000 tons, as officials said water is more abundant due to heavy winter rainfall and the promise of more water flows from Turkey.

This follows a two-year production ban which saw just 5 to 10 sq km of rice planted annually for the purpose of seed extraction, amid a water crisis that experts say was tied to upstream dams built by Turkey and Iran, less rainfall and other climate change-driven factors. Iraq is one of the world's top 10 importers of rice and wheat, to supply a huge food rationing program held over from the era of former ruler Saddam Hussein.

Decades ago, the country grew most of its own rice and exported wheat and barley and at one time was the world's top exporter of dates, until problems with soil salinity, poor irrigation systems, drought and decades of conflict all hit its agricultural sector and made it a major buyer on world markets. Iraq will still need to import around 1.25 million tons of rice this year to meet domestic demand, the same as last year, grain board officials said. Rice farming in Iraq typically begins in June and concludes with a harvest in November. Several varieties of rice are grown, with the Amber rice, known for its unique aroma and flavor, the most popular. -- Reuters



Business

# KD 175.6m stc's revenues for first six months of 2024; net profit KD 16.9m

Revenue increased by 0.6% to reach KD 175.6 million

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc), a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers and enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its financial results for the six months period ended June 30, 2024, highlighting the most significant achievements, financial and operational performance in addition to the social initiatives made by the company during 2024.

In this regard, Eng Muataz Abdullah Aldharrab, the company's CEO, stated: "Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc) managed to achieve good financial and operational results during the second quarter of 2024, due to the continuous and increasing demand for ICT and digital solutions for both the individual and the enterprise sectors. Since the beginning of the year, the company has been keen on implementing its corporate strategy focused on market leadership, through enhancing its portfolio of products and services while actively seizing potential opportunities that support stc's business model and efficiently optimizing its internal operations.

Additionally, stc continually strives to strengthen its position as a leading telecommunications company and to increase its market share in a highly competitive industry. This ambition is driven by expanding its business into new areas of sustainable growth, focusing on developing its infrastructure, and offering cutting-edge solutions specifically designed to meet the evolving needs of both the individual and enterprise customers." Aldharrab added, stc proudly announced that stc group maintained its position as the most valuable telecom brand in the Middle East for the fourth consecutive year, confirming its leadership status amongst the top five strongest telecom brands in the world, based on the latest report issued by "Brand Finance Global 500".

stc also consistently strives to stay abreast of the latest global developments by offering fixed telecommunications services, information technology, and the best integrated solutions in the fields of communications and networks in addition to providing advanced technical solutions, fixed services, broadband, system



integration, cloud, 5G, Internet of Things (IoT), and data analytics services for the individual and enterprise customers. By implementing strategic business transformation plans, stc has leveraged its highly advanced network and the expertise of its specialized subsidiaries in fixed-line telecommunications and information technology to excel in providing comprehensive, high-quality, and innovative digital solutions."

- EBITDA increased by 2.2% to reach KD 43.1 million
- Net profit increased by 5.0% to reach KD 16.9 million
- stc's customer base reached 2.3 million customers

Commenting on the announcement of the financial results as of June 30, 2024, Aldharrab stated that: "stc has achieved good financial results during the first half of 2024, with total revenue reaching KD 175.6 million by the end of June 2024 with a growth rate of 0.6 percent compared to KD 174.6 million during the same period last year. The main reason for this growth is attributed to the increase in the Consumer sector revenues, which constitute 73 percent of total revenues. Meanwhile, Business sector revenues accounted for 27 percent of the company's total revenue during the first six months of 2024. Overall, the growth in stc's revenue is a result of expanding the company's business model, developing digital services, and providing integrated technical solutions to companies in various fields."

Aldharrab added: "These outcomes resulted in a growth of EBITDA by 2.2 percent to reach KD 43.1 million in the first six months of 2024 compared to KD 42.1

million during the same period in 2023 supported by the increase in stc's revenue. As a result, the company's net profit increased by 5.0 percent to reach KD 16.9 million (EPS 17 fils) in the first six months of 2024 compared with KD 16.1 million (EPS 16 fils) in the same period last year. The increase in net profit is mainly attributed to the cost optimization program and enhancing the company's operational efficiency at both stc and its subsidiaries. Whereby, stc's customer base stands at approx. 2.3 million customers at the end of June 2024".

Commenting on the company's financial position as of June 30, 2024, Aldharrab said, "stc's total assets reached KD 435.9 million by the end of June 2024, while the total equity of the company's shareholders amounted to KD 225.8 million. Furthermore, stc has a strong solvency position amongst the telecom companies in the Middle East. As stc envisions a sustainable future, stc will continue to launch sustainability programs which aim to increase awareness and adopting long-term sustainable practices. stc also directs its efforts on the CSR program while focusing on activating sustainable development partnerships with entities and institutions from the government and private sectors, with whom we share same goals and values within a series of various initiatives to contribute to creating positive change and enhancing Culture of social responsibility."

Aldharrab noted: "Driven by the importance of stc's financial strategy in allocating its resources in a manner that serves the company's interests to remain at the forefront of the telecommunications companies in addition to meeting customer needs, and providing



an added value to shareholders, stc is committed to periodically review and continuously update all the factors that may affect the financial strategy. stc continues to successfully implement numerous strategic projects concerning transformation and synergies with the support of the digital solutions that align with the company's strategic and financial objectives to enhance operational efficiency and regulatory practices, as well as achieving excellence in treasury management operations."

The financial results for six months period 30 June 2024	
Revenues	KD 175.6 million
EBITDA	KD 43.1 million
Net Profit	KD 16.9 million
Earnings per share	17 Kuwaiti fils
Assets	KD 435.9 million
Shareholders' equity	KD 225.8 million
Book value per share	226 fils per share
Customer base	2.3 million customers



NEW YORK: Delta Air Lines planes are parked at La Guardia International Airport one day after a global IT outage, in New York. — AFP

## Delta Air Lines grapples with flight cancelations

NEW YORK: Delta Air Lines struggled on Sunday to restore normal operations after last week's crippling global cyber outage, canceling 1,250 flights beyond the 3,500 it had already scrapped. The issue has stranded thousands of Delta travelers across the United States, with some having to rent cars to drive hundreds of miles while others could have to wait days for new flights or cancel trips altogether.

The Atlanta-based airline, which canceled a third of its schedule and delayed another 1,700 flights or 44 percent, according to FlightAware, is battling operational issues after the outage hit its crew tracking system. Delta has offered no timetable for resumption of normal operations and has already canceled another 305 flights for Monday, the flight tracking website said. Its total of canceled flights since Friday now stands at more than 5,000.

A software update by global cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike triggered system problems for Microsoft customers, including many airlines, on Friday. Although other US airlines have largely recovered, Delta has struggled to return to normal. United Airlines canceled 9 percent - or 266 - of Sunday's flights, the second most among carriers.

Delta CEO Ed Bastian said the issue affected its Microsoft Windows systems, snarling a critical application. "In particular one of our crew tracking-related tools was affected and unable to effectively process the unprecedented number of changes triggered by the system shutdown," Bastian told customers in an email. In a separate note, he told employees that Delta would continue to "tactically adjust" schedules to ensure safety. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg spoke with Bastian, according to an official, reminding him of the carrier's responsibilities to customers and the department's enforcement role. — Reuters

## India seeks licenses to scout Pacific Ocean for critical minerals

NEW DELHI: India will apply for licenses to explore for deep-sea minerals in the Pacific Ocean as it competes to secure supplies of minerals critical for energy transition technologies, a top government scientist told Reuters. The UN-backed International Seabed Authority (ISA) has issued 31 deep-sea exploration licenses, including two for India in the Indian Ocean, but is yet to allow mining because the 36-member body is still working on regulations.

The 36-member ISA council is meeting in Jamaica this month to negotiate the latest draft of a mining code. M Ravichandran, the top scientist at India's Ministry of Earth Sciences, said his ministry will work closely with India's mining industry as it readies to apply next year for exploration of seabed minerals in the Pacific. India's critical minerals plans in the Pacific have not been previously reported.

China, Russia, and some Pacific Island nations have already secured exploration licenses for the Pacific Ocean. India plans to focus on the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, a vast plain between Hawaii and Mexico known to hold large volumes of polymetallic nodules containing minerals used in electric vehicles and solar panels including manganese, nickel, copper, and cobalt. First discovered by British sailors in 1873, the potato-shaped nodules take millions of years to form.

Unlike China, India lacks seabed mining expertise and will take at least three to four years before it is ready to extract minerals from the ocean's depths, experts said. "We have done a lot of work on the deep sea mining technology but not perfected (it). In that aspect, we are not yet ready," said M Rajeevan, former chief of India's Ministry of Earth Sciences.

Opponents of deep-sea mining say that not enough is known about its impact on marine ecosystems. "I am not confident that current technologies and methods can overcome the environmental concerns," said Pradeep Singh, an ocean governance specialist at the Research Institute for Sustainability in Potsdam, Germany. Some 27 countries have called for a moratorium or suspension of all ocean mining-related activities, but some Pacific nations including Nauru and Cook Islands favor deep-sea mining. Nauru is expected to submit a mining license application to the ISA on behalf of Canada's The Metals Company later this year.

India also expects to receive two more exploration permits from the ISA this year for the Indian Ocean, focused on the Carlsberg Ridge and Afanasy-Nikitin Seamount regions, known for polymetallic sulphide deposits and ferromanganese crusts, Ravichandran said.

The permits last for 15 years, according to the ISA website. Polymetallic sulphide deposits contain metals such as copper, gold, silver and zinc. Ferromanganese crusts are known for cobalt, nickel, manganese, platinum and rare earth elements among other resources.

India, which relies on imports of raw materials such as copper and lithium, has listed 24 minerals as "critical" for energy transition. It is also scouting for overseas mineral assets to meet its rising green energy requirements. "This is like racing," Ravichandran said of the urgency to seek seabed minerals. — Reuters

## Net Profit

16.9

+5.0% ▲  
KD Million

The Board of Directors of  
**Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc)**  
is pleased to announce to its shareholders that the company has achieved a net profit of KD 16.9 million (earnings per share 17 fils) for the six months period ended 30 June 2024.

First Half 2024

Total Revenue 175.6

+0.6% ▲  
KD Million

30 June 2024

Subscribers 2.3

-6.6% ▼  
Million

First Half 2024

EBITDA 43.1

+2.2% ▲  
KD Million

First Half 2024

EPS 17

+5.0% ▲  
Kuwaiti Fils per share

stc

## Business

NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

# Kuwait's property sales hit 2-year high in Q2 24, helped by one-offs

## Real estate prices ease for the third consecutive quarter

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's real estate sales hit a two-year high in Q2 2024 helped by sizable one-off deals across the main three segments. The underlying picture remains softer, highlighted by continued weakness in the residential segment, while prices also appear to have edged lower. Still, excluding one-offs, overall sales activity has stayed in a fairly narrow range for several quarters, pointing to a degree of market stability. We still expect improving economic conditions and potentially lower interest rates to lift the market in 2025. Meanwhile, plot distributions under the government's housing program reached above 5,000 in H1 by our estimates, but the backlog of applications still edged up to more than 97,000. Addressing the housing shortage is set to be a key focus of the new government.

The level of overall sales rose 22 percent q/q in Q2 to KD 853 million. Without the outlying sales in the commercial, investment, and residential segments, we estimate that sales would have been broadly flat versus Q1. We also note that seasonal factors, including the Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha holidays, may have weighed slightly on activity during the quarter.

Residential sales dropped -4.7 percent q/q to KD 337 million, following minimal growth in Q1 and just below the 2023 quarterly average. However, residential sales were also supported by one large land sale in Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorate

(Al-Funaitees) of KD 32 million. Excluding this, the residential segment would see a sharper fall of -13.7 percent q/q, confirming the prevailing low sentiment and demand weakness factors including high costs of financing, the potential for global interest rates to remain higher for longer and still-elevated valuations within this segment.

At the same time, the investment segment registered its first quarterly decline since Q2 2023 of -3.7 percent to KD 223 million, despite a large building sale in Al-Salmiya of KD 22 million. The number of transactions in the sector also remained historically low. Data from the consumer price index show that inflation of actual rents softened to 1.4 percent y/y in May from the multi-year high of 3.2 percent in August 2023 and below the rate of inflation overall, providing for modest growth in rental receipts. A recent loosening of visa regulations (including removing the bachelor's degree requirement to apply for a family visa albeit with income requirements) should offer some incremental support for apartment sector demand going forward.

In contrast to the other segments, sales in the commercial sector jumped during Q2 to a record high at KD 294 million. Some 46 percent of commercial sales by value were in Al-Salmiya (four building sale deals worth KD 71 million) and Sabah Al-Ahmad coastal area (10 plot sale deals worth KD 64

million). The increase in large plot deals in the Sabah Al-Ahmad coastal area over the past few quarters could be related to the lower prices per square meter compared to the inner areas. Meanwhile, growth in credit to the real estate sector (ex-housing loans) had picked up to 4.3 percent y/y as of May and its best since end-2022. While not strong by historical standards, it does point to broad market sentiment potentially ticking up.

### Real estate prices ease

Our overall real estate price index, which is estimated from Ministry of Justice transactions data, declined for the third consecutive quarter, by -3.2 percent q/q in Q2 from -2.1 percent in Q1. This was driven by a -7.0 percent q/q dip in the investment segment index on lower building prices, while the residential index partially offset this by being unchanged in Q2. In year-on-year terms, overall real estate prices declined -3.9 percent in Q2 (-1.2 percent y/y in Q1), with falls across both the investment and residential segments. Solid plot distributions in H1 but outstanding applications move higher.

According to our calculations from data on the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) website, plot distributions under the government's housing program for citizens totaled 5,005 during H1 2024 including 2,860 in Q2.

Most of these allocations were concentrated in South Sa'ad Al-Abdullah city (N3,4,5) with around 7,600 remaining under the project in addition to around 4,400 residential units in Taima and Al-Sulaibiya. Although this represents a solid pace of distributions, the outstanding balance of existing housing applications still rose by 5,973 (+6.6 percent y/y) to 97,144 in May 2024, highlighting the challenges faced by PAHW in addressing the housing shortage.

The PAHW has tendered four awards to construct 6,455 houses within the affordable housing project in addition to two infrastructure tenders for 13,812 plots in South Sabah Al-Ahmad that are expected to be completed in 2026-27, while two future large projects in Nawaf Al-Ahmad City and Al-Sabriya, of 52,000 residential units each, are in early planning stages. But a consistently fast pace of distributions is needed over the coming years to reduce the backlog of housing applications and resolve the housing crisis.

Meanwhile, disbursed loans by the Kuwait Credit Bank, the public organization in charge of providing residents with home loans, saw a marginal increase of 1 percent y/y in Q2 to KD 115 million while approved loans fell by around 21 percent y/y to KD 126 million. Softness in this area could also be related to the impact of Eid Al-Adha & Eid Al-Fitr holidays during Q2.

## Galp's quarterly profit up 16%, Namibia oil in focus

**LISBON:** Portugal's Galp Energia reported on Monday a 16 percent rise in second-quarter net profit, beating expectations as higher oil prices and lower production costs offset reduced output and the refining margin held steady. The company also confirmed ongoing preparations for a second drilling phase of four wells in Namibia's Mopane field, where it has an 80 percent stake, starting in the fourth quarter. It said it was in preliminary talks with possible partners.

Galp shares, up more than 40 percent so far this year, rose more than 1 percent. It booked an adjusted net profit of 299 million euros (\$325.34 million), above the 236 million euros expected by 18 analysts polled by the company. Adjusted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) fell 7 percent to 849 million euros, compared with the 821-million consensus.

Galp has estimated Mopane could contain at least 10 billion barrels of oil, making it one of the largest discoveries in the nascent basin following successful exploration by TotalEnergies and Shell. Reuters reported earlier that more than 12 oil companies, including Exxon, Shell and Brazil's Petrobras, had expressed interest in buying a 40 percent stake in Mopane.

"We're having preliminary discussions with potential partners, but you will understand there is nothing much we can say at this stage," Chief Executive Filipe Silva told a conference call with analysts. He said Galp would give priority to a partner keen to develop quickly and that would provide the capital expenditure. The timing of any farmout agreement would depend on the development needs and on when Galp can get the most for the stake, he added. After completing the sale of assets in Angola and agreeing to sell those in Mozambique, Galp has unprecedented financial strength and can keep delivering long-term growth from "high return projects," he said.

Galp maintained its guidance for average annual net capex of 1 billion euros over 2023-25. Galp's share of oil and gas production from upstream projects in Brazil fell 5 percent on the year to 106,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day (boepd). It did not book production in Mozambique in the quarter after booking 5,000 boepd a year ago. — Reuters

## Indian adviser backs more Chinese direct investment: Report

**NEW DELHI:** India's annual economic report card has backed more Chinese investment in the country, even as investments worth billions of dollars from China suffer disruption due to increased geopolitical tensions between New Delhi and Beijing since 2020. India's Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran said in the annual economic survey tabled in the Parliament on Monday, that to boost its global exports New Delhi can either integrate into China's supply chain or promote foreign direct investment (FDI) from China.

"Among these choices, focusing on FDI from China seems more promising for boosting India's exports to the US, similar to how East Asian economies did in the past." The report said choosing the FDI strategy "appears more advantageous than relying on trade" as it can arrest the growing trade deficit New Delhi has with Beijing, the top exporter for India. India has tightened its scrutiny of investments from Chinese companies since 2020, as relations between the two nuclear giants have soured after clashes between their soldiers on their largely undemarcated Himalayan frontier left 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers dead. Along with investments scrutiny, India has also virtually blocked visas for all Chinese nationals since 2020, but it is considering easing them for Chinese technicians, as it had hindered investments worth billions of dollars. — Reuters

## China cuts interest rates to support fragile economy

**SHANGHAI:** China surprised markets by cutting major short and long-term interest rates on Monday, its first such broad move since August last year, signaling intent to boost growth in the world's second-largest economy just days after a Communist Party leadership meeting.

The cuts to the central bank's key short-term policy rate, its market operations rates and benchmark bank lending rates came after China reported weaker-than-expected second-quarter economic data last week and its top leaders met for a plenum that occurs roughly every five years. The country is verging on deflation and faces a prolonged property crisis, surging debt and weak consumer and business sentiment. Trade tensions are also flaring, as global leaders grow increasingly wary of China's export dominance. "The cut today is an unexpected move, likely due to the sharp slowdown in growth momentum in the second quarter as well as the call for 'achieving this year's growth target' by the third plenum," said Larry Hu, chief China economist at Macquarie.

The People's Bank of China (PBOC) said on Monday it would cut the seven-day reverse repo rate to 1.7 percent from 1.8 percent, and would also improve the mechanism of open market operations. That is the first cut to the rate since August 2023.

Minutes later, China cut benchmark lending rates by the same margin at the monthly fixing. The one-year loan prime rate (LPR) was lowered to 3.35 percent from 3.45 percent previously, while the five-year LPR was reduced to 3.85 percent from 3.95 percent. The PBOC subsequently lowered the rates on its standing lending facility (SLF), a type of loan that it gives commercial banks to fulfill their temporary cash demands, by the same amount.

Ju Wang, head of Greater China FX & rates strategy at BNP Paribas, said that growing expectations for the Federal Reserve to start cutting interest rates also gave the PBOC room to ease its policy, given the

## Western miners push for higher prices to ward off China rivals

**SALMON-CHALLIS NATIONAL FOREST, Idaho:** The only US cobalt mine sits fallow in the northern Idaho woods, a mothballed hunk of steel and dirt that is too expensive for its owner to operate because Chinese rivals have flooded global markets with cheap supplies of the bluish metal used in electric vehicle batteries and electronics.

Jervois Global, which dug the mine into the side of a nearly 8,000-foot (2,400-meter) mountain, watched helplessly last year as cobalt prices plunged after China's CMOOC Group opened the Kisanfu mine in the Democratic Republic of Congo, pushing global production of the metal to an all-time high. The Idaho site, which Jervois bought in 2019, was idled in June 2023 just weeks before it was set to open. More than 250 workers lost their jobs. A skeleton crew now rotates unused rock crushing equipment weekly to keep it from flattening under its own weight. "We were straightforward with our staff and told them: 'This is all about the price of cobalt,'" site manager Matthew Lengerich told Reuters during a visit to the facility.

Jervois says cobalt prices need to reach at least \$20 per pound for the site to open. But prices sat near \$12.17 in July. A similar quandary faces BHP, Albemarle and other Western mining companies trying to compete with metals produced by Chinese-linked companies, some of which use coal-generated electricity, child labor or other practices not meeting the standards set by many governments and manufacturers. Western miners say their competitors have inherent cost advantages that enable rapid production expansions even as prices for cobalt, lithium and nickel have plunged more than a third in the past 18 months. Operational costs for many of these Western companies have, as a result, been exceeding what market prices will cover.

That has fueled growing calls from some policymakers and miners, including Jervois and Albemarle, for a two-tier pricing system with a premium for sustainably



BEIJING: People shop at a store along the Nanluoguxiang street in Beijing. — AFP

produced the yuan has been under because of a wide yield gap with the dollar.

The official Xinhua news agency cited unnamed sources close to the PBOC as saying the "decisive" rate cut showed its determination to bolster the recovery and it was in response to the plenum's aims to achieve this year's growth target. The PBOC also made adjustments to its lending program, saying collateral requirements for medium-term lending facility loans will be lowered from July. Analysts said that meant banks would need to hold fewer longer-term bonds for collateral needs and could sell or trade more, helping the central bank with its mission to put a floor under longer-term yields, rein in a bubble in bonds and get a steeper yield curve.

Following the rate cuts, China's yuan dropped to a near two-week low of 7.2750 per dollar, before paring some losses. Chinese sovereign bond yields fell across the curve before stabilizing at 2.24 percent and 2.45 percent, respectively.

produced metals, according to interviews with more than three dozen traders, investors, executives, purchasing agents, and pricing agencies.

The plan is to charge more for a metal that is produced sustainably, whether that is through direct transactions or via multiple prices for a metal listed through futures exchanges, depending on production methods. For example, there would be one price for standard nickel and another for green nickel. "Western miners simply can't compete with China, and China has shown the willingness to drive market prices way, way down," said Morgan Bazilian, director of the Payne Institute for Public Policy at the Colorado School of Mines.

Two-tier pricing could radically shift how metals needed for energy transition have been bought and sold for centuries yet also reduce market transparency as miners could bypass metals exchanges to negotiate directly with customers. It could also, two analysts told Reuters, lead to multiple definitions of what exactly constitutes "green metal."

### 'Commitments have a cost'

Industry leaders have pushed for two pricing structures for several years, but the call for change started gaining more attention from investors, policymakers and customers last fall as Western governments grew more concerned about Chinese competition. In meetings across Washington and Brussels, mining executives have been pleading with governments for some kind of intervention until two-tiered pricing is more widely embraced, suggesting that tariffs, supply chain transparency requirements, or government insurance for mines could be potential remedies, three industry sources said. US and EU officials have privately expressed sympathy with the mining industry, according to two of the sources, but have so far been loath to inject themselves into the mechanics of how prices are set by exchanges and others. "I don't want to say what the markets should or shouldn't do to ensure strong ESG practices," said the US State Department's Jose Fernandez, who oversees a program designed to facilitate metals supply deals. "But it is true that all of those commitments have a cost."

As a result, mining industry customers such as au-



MADRE DE DIOS, Peru: A miner works in a gold mining area in the Madre de Dios department, in Peru's southeastern Amazon region. — AFP

tomakers are in the uncomfortable position of trying to keep their costs low while maintaining secure and diverse metals supplies. Some deals are taking shape, prodded in part by regulations tied to emissions. The European Union by 2027 will require EV manufacturers to show where they procure metals and the carbon footprint for their production. Refusal to comply would mean an EV can't be sold in the region, a step not yet taken by the United States but one widely seen as the most aggressive globally to boost supply chain transparency and likely to fuel premium metals contracts.

In Canada last year, Northern Graphite started successfully demanding a premium from customers wanting guaranteed North American supplies of the battery metal. Teck Resources earlier this year started selling a lightly processed type of copper known as concentrate to Aurubis, a source with direct knowledge said. The transaction does not rely on exchange pricing and guarantees Aurubis a steady supply of ESG-compliant concentrate that it turns into copper for sale to the auto industry. Teck declined to comment. Aurubis said it sees "the way to a green-friendly copper industry as a joint task for the entire value chain, which needs to be honored from the raw material supplier to the end consumer." — Reuters

TUESDAY, JULY 23, 2024

## Insect infestation ravages North African prickly pear



**A**mor Nouira, a farmer in Tunisia's Chebika village, has lost hope of saving his prickly pear cacti, ravaged by the cochineal insect spreading across North Africa. The 50-year-old has seen his half-hectare of cactus crops wither as the invasive insect wreaked havoc on about a third of the country's cacti after an outbreak in 2021. "At first, I wanted to experiment with prickly pear production and gradually develop investments while looking for customers outside the country, especially for its natural oil," said Nouira. "But... as the cacti became damaged, I abandoned the idea of investing and stopped thinking about it altogether."

from cultivating *Opuntia*. The North African country is the world's second-largest producer of its fruit, after Mexico, with about 600,000 hectares of crops and a yield of about 550,000 tons per year, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Only production allocated for export - about a third of overall crops - has remained in good condition, said Rabeh Hajlaoui, head of the department of plant health at Tunisia's agriculture ministry.

"We're making every effort to save these plants, which are an important source of income to some locals," he explained, as one liter of extracted *Opuntia* oil can be sold for as much as \$4,200. Farmers also plant prickly pear cacti for their resistance to drought and desertification, and sometimes use them to demarcate and fence property in Tunisia and neighboring Libya. In Morocco, where the first cases of cochineal were found in 2014, *Opuntia* is cultivated over a total of 160,000 hectares.

In 2016, the Moroccan government issued an "emergency plan" to combat cochineal infestation by experimenting with various chemicals, burying infected cacti and conducting research on developing variants resilient to the insect.

Despite the plan, by August 2022, about 75 percent of *Opuntia* crops in Morocco had been infested, according to Mohamed Sbaghi, a professor at Rabat's National Institute of Agricultural Research (INRA) and the emergency plan coordinator. In neighboring Algeria, authorities recorded an outbreak in 2021 in Tlemcen, a city near the border with Morocco. Prickly pear cultivation in the country covers around 60,000 hectares, and the fruit is so cherished that a festival dedicated to it is held every year in the eastern Kabylia region.

### 'Public safety'

Neither the plant nor cochineal is native to North Africa, but the region's dry climate helped them spread, said Tunisian entomologist Brahim Chermiiti. "Climate change, with increasing drought and high temperatures, facilitates their reproduction," he told AFP. The region has experienced severe drought in recent years, with declining rainfall and intense heat. Chermiiti believes it's a matter of "public safety" to combat cochineal infestation, requiring "strict border crossing monitoring and public awareness".

The researcher fears total contagion, as "sooner or later, it will spread, with the help of many factors such as the wind and livestock".

Hajlaoui, from Tunisia's agriculture ministry, said the issue could even cause social unrest if it spreads to farms in marginalized areas, such as Tunisia's

the insect, said Hajlaoui. Last summer, Morocco's INRA said it identified eight cochineal-resistant *Opuntia* varieties that could potentially be cultivated. The other solution, added the expert, is spreading the *Hyperaspis trifurcata* ladybird - also native to the Americas - among the cacti, which preys on cochineal.



A member of the Dar Si Hmad Foundation inspects prickly pear cacti affected by cochineals.

Prickly pear is consumed as food and used to make oils, cosmetics and body-care products. In Chebika, as in other rural areas in central Tunisia, many farmers' fields of prickly pear - also known as *Opuntia* - have been spoiled by the cochineal, which swept through North Africa 10 years ago, beginning in Morocco. The insect, like the prickly pear, is native to the Americas and feeds on the plant's nutrients and fluids, often killing it.

The infestations have resulted in significant economic losses for thousands of farmers reliant on prickly pear, as authorities struggle to combat the epidemic in a country where its fruit is widely consumed as a summertime snack.

### Livelihood

Tunisian authorities estimate that about 150,000 families make a living



A man stands near prickly pear cacti in the Sidi Ifni region.



Prickly pear cacti infected by the cochineal insect.



A member of the Dar Si Hmad Foundation inspects prickly pear cacti affected by cochineals in the Sidi Ifni region along central Morocco's Atlantic coast.

Kasserine governorate, where *Opuntia* is nearly the only source of livelihood for many. He said the "slowness of administrative procedure" during the first major outbreaks in Tunisia impeded efforts to stem the spread of cochineal.

At first, Morocco and Tunisia burned and uprooted infected crops, but authorities now aim for "natural resistance" to

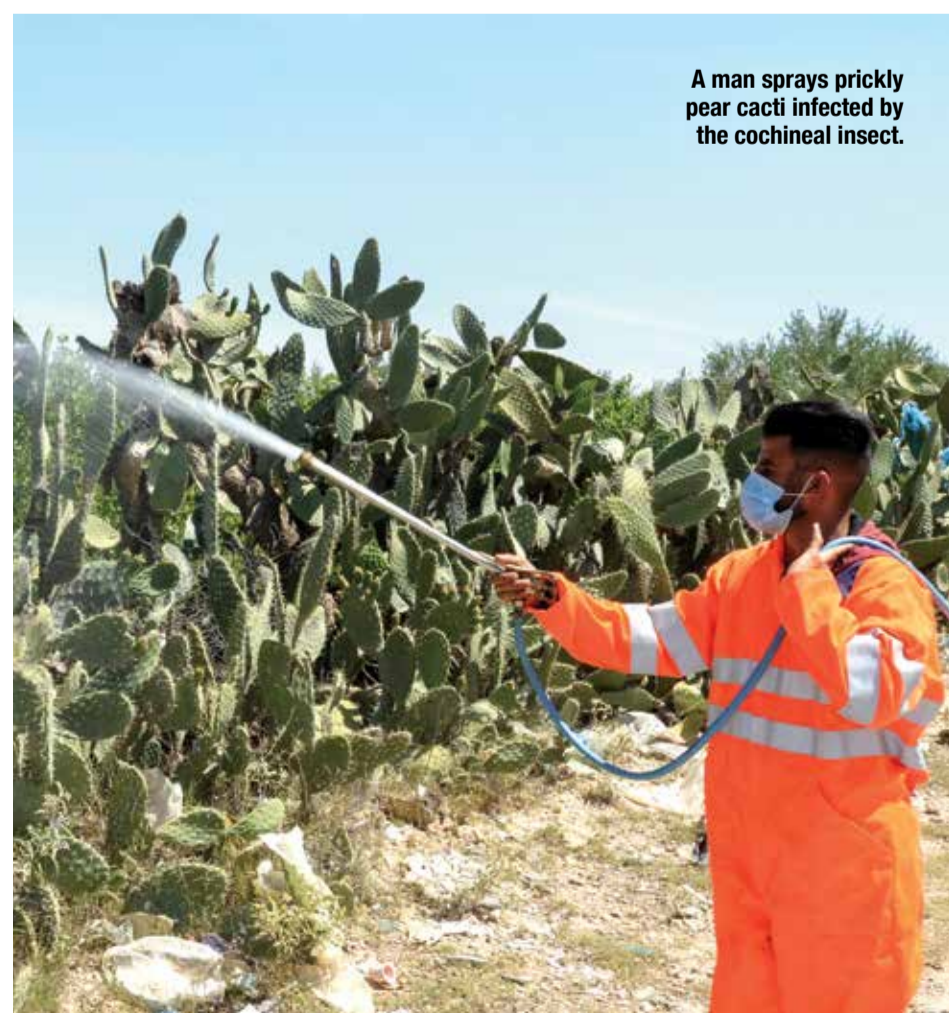
In Morocco, farmers began raising the ladybird "so that it is always ready" in case of outbreaks, said Aissa Derhem, head of the environmental association Dar Si Hmad. Last month, Tunisia received 100 ladybirds along with an emergency budget of \$500,000 to battle cochineal, allocated by the FAO. —AFP



Prickly pear cacti infected by the cochineal insect.



A member of the Dar Si Hmad Foundation inspects prickly pear cacti affected by cochineals.



A man sprays prickly pear cacti infected by the cochineal insect.



A trident lady beetle (*Hyperaspis trifurcata*) eats cochineal insects on a prickly pear cactus leaf.



Prickly pear cacti infected by the cochineal insect.

Lifestyle



An aerial view of the date palms of M'heiret, a village located in the Adrar region in Mauritania. — AFP photos



A general view of date palms covered by the water retention of the Seguelil dam.



An aerial view of the Seguelil dam in the Adrar region of Mauritania.

A man pulls a branch of a date palm that has dried up in the oasis of M'heiret.



Climate change  
threatens age-old  
Mauritania date harvest



A man walks through the oasis of M'heiret.

**W**andering atop a small sand dune in central Mauritania, Aliene Haimoud gazed despondently at the yellowing date palms before him - the trees are dying if they are not already dead. The advance of the desert is striking in the oasis village of Azougui, some 450 kilometers (280 miles) northeast of Nouakchott, the West African state's capital. Despite the ever-encroaching sand which is gradually swallowing up the trees, residents here are preparing for the Guetna - the annual date harvest. The popular event is rooted in a long nomadic tradition and involves large family celebrations centered around the small, sweet fruit - the region's main source of income. "You go from 10 to 1,000 friends," one local said cheerfully.

But when a palm tree dies, a little of the life in each village is extinguished. "Because of the sand, people are forced to settle elsewhere, because



Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Brihm poses for a portrait in front of his date palm in the oasis of M'heiret.

here there can be no more harvests," said Haimoud, president of the local cooperative association. Nearly 20,000 palm trees have perished since the 1980s and his village is becoming emptier every year, he said. Like oth-



Khalil Ould Talib poses next to a date palm in the oasis of Maaden in the Adrar region of Mauritania.

er countries in Western Africa and the Sahel region, Mauritania is on the front lines of climate change. Temperatures in the region are rising 1.5 times faster than the global average, while rainfall is erratic and wet seasons are decreas-

ing, according to a 2022 report from the UN Human Rights Office.

In Mauritania, the government has tried to halt the desertification by planting trees to repel the onslaught of sand. But the chosen prosopis variety has caused the soil to dry out even more, further exacerbating the palm trees' fragility. Around 70 kilometers further south, the green oasis of M'Heiret has also been decimated. Some 6,000 palm trees, already weakened by years of drought, were swept away two years ago by the massive flooding of a wadi - a stream that forms during the rainy season. The trees now lie in the riverbed, which is completely dry at this time of year. "This place used to be full of palm trees," said Amou Dehah, who was mayor of the village at the time. "Their owners are still here, but there's nothing left for them," he added.



A man looks inside a well dug with a traditional technique in the oasis of M'heiret.



A man walks on the Seguelil dam in the Adrar region of Mauritania.



A man passes under a date palm devastated by last year's floods in M'heiret.



A man drinks water from a well in an oasis of date palms.

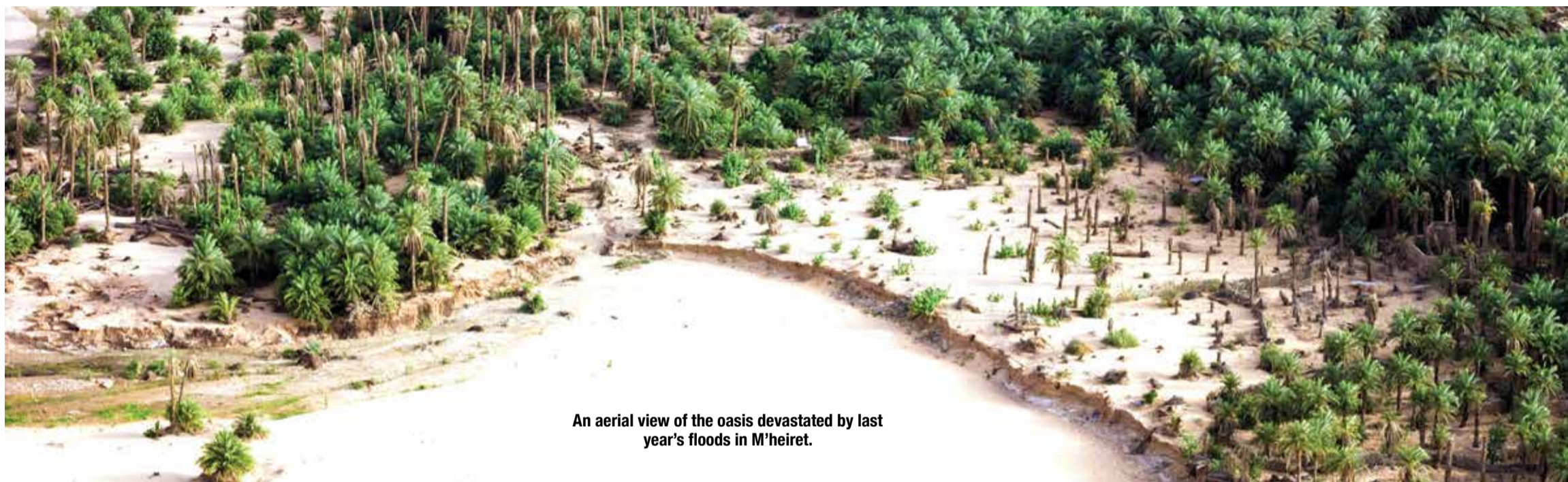
Lifestyle



A general view of dates that are almost ready for the harvest in the oasis of M'heiret.



Aliene Haimoud observes the state of a palm threatened by the advance of the desert in the village of Azougui.



An aerial view of the oasis devastated by last year's floods in M'heiret.

**'Only source of income'**  
"If there are no more palm trees, there is no more work. If there's no work, there's no money," Dehah said. "We need to find a solution. If we don't, people will go and live elsewhere, because this is our only source of income," he added. Beside him, 56-year-old Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Brihm said he was worried about his 50 palm trees which are planted close to the

wadi and have been passed down through generations.  
"Of course, I'm afraid of losing everything. I'm even afraid that my house will be destroyed," he said. The residents of M'heiret, which is renowned for its quality and variety of dates, have called for the construction of a dam which they say would act as a buffer against future downpours and create favorable growing conditions.

"The dam is the best solution," said Houdy Sidina, professor of biology and agronomy at the University of Nouakchott. "It helps to combat drought, irrigate palm trees and prevent flooding," he added. Sidina referred to the region's Seguelil Dam, which was inaugurated in 2019, and permanently irrigates the surrounding oasis, transforming the lives of local people. The government has also improved irriga-

tion systems, provided solar panels and planted new date palms for poor farmers, said Sidi Ahmed, president of a network of groups for the sustainable development of oases.  
In his garden of around 20 palm trees near the regional hub of Atar, Moustapha Chibany picked a succulent date and popped it in his mouth. "What interests me is not the economic aspect, it's the love of dates. With-

out them, there would be no life here, in such hostile conditions", he said. Faced with competition from North African dates, Chibany said that sharing the most effective techniques, combating waste and promoting better quality species, would help revive the Mauritanian industry. — AFP

## Baby flamingos saved from drought-decimated lake in Algeria



A volunteer picks an injured and dehydrated flamingo near a dried-up lagoon area.



Volunteers treat an injured and dehydrated flamingo.

**A**round 300 pink flamingo chicks were rescued by volunteers in eastern Algeria after the Salt Lake where they hatched dried up following years of high temperatures and drought. Thousands of flamingos migrate each year to nest in Lake Tinsilt, located around 450 kilometers (about 280 miles) southeast of the capital Algiers. It is one of the largest wetlands in the country, with an area of more than 20 square kilometers. "Barely a month ago there was water here," volunteer Mourad Ajroud told AFP on Friday, pointing to what is now a vast expanse of cracked earth littered with the carcasses of dead birds.

The disappearance of the lake, which locals and Algerian media attribute to high temperatures and a years-long drought, has driven the adult flamingos away. They left behind their unhatched eggs and defenseless chicks, dozens of which have died from hunger, thirst, poaching and wolf attacks. A group of volunteers provided their cars and trucks to transfer 283 pink flamingos about 50 kilometers away to Lake Mahidiya, about 50 kilometers away.

The wetland near Ain Miila remains flush thanks to a steady flow of water from nearby rivers and lakes. The rescue operation was initiated by local

amateur photographer Tarek Kawajlia, who documents the wildlife in his area, and noticed the decrease in the size of the lake and the flight of birds. The volunteers carry out "morning and evening patrols to follow the chicks until they recover and are able to fly, so that they can return next year to the sabkha (marsh) and life can resume its normal course," Kawajlia told AFP.

Ajroud, 53, said the group was not able to save all the birds. "We couldn't transport them all," he said sadly, as another volunteer takes an injured bird to a veterinary clinic. A few hours after the chicks were released at their new habitat, some adult birds joined them. "The operation was successful and the parents found their little ones in a magnificent scene," Kawajlia said in a comment on one of his photos posted to Facebook. Lake Tinsilt is one of the around 50 bodies of water in Algeria declared wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar international environment treaty to protect wetlands. Last year, about a hundred pink flamingos died at Lake Telamine in western Algeria's Oran province due to wastewater pollution, according to environmental activists. — AFP



Flamingos float in the wetland near Ain Miila in northeastern Algeria that remains flush thanks to a steady flow of water, while drought hit nearby areas affecting birds around a dried-up lagoon. — AFP photos



A rescued flamingo is pictured at a sanctuary.



A rescued flamingo walks past volunteers treating dehydrated birds.



The "Twisters" Oklahoma City special screening presented by Universal Pictures, Warner Bros Pictures and Amblin Entertainment at Harkins Theatres Bricktown in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

## Universal's 'Twisters' storms to top of North America box office

**U**niversal's weather thriller "Twisters" spun up a huge maiden weekend, earning an estimated \$80.5 million to top the North American box office, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations said Sunday. The stand-alone follow-up to 1996's popular "Twister" - under the seemingly unlikely direction of the man who helmed sweet Korean-American family drama "Minari," Lee Isaac Chung - had been projected to make closer to \$50 million. But strong reviews and a cast led by Glen Powell and Daisy Edgar-Jones helped propel the film - about storm chasers caught in the middle of fast-converging tornadoes - to what The Hollywood Reporter said was the top domestic opening ever for a natural disaster film.

"The spectacle, the special effects and the set pieces are bigger and better (than the original film)," said analyst David A. Gross. "It's perfect summer entertainment." "Twisters" ousted the previous top earner, another Universal film, animated comedy "Despicable Me 4," which placed second with \$23.8 million in ticket sales for the Friday-through-Sunday period. Holding steady in third was Disney and Pixar's coming-of-age animation "Inside Out 2," at \$12.8 million. In its six weeks out, it has earned \$596.4 million domestically and an additional \$847 million globally.

In fourth, down two spots, was horror mystery "Longlegs" from indie studio Neon, at \$11.7 million. Nicolas Cage stars in the tale of an FBI agent (Maika Monroe) tracking a creepy serial killer. And in fifth, slipping one spot,

was Paramount's apocalyptic horror film "A Quiet Place: Day One," at \$6.1 million. Lupita Nyong'o plays a seriously ill woman in a New York invaded by keen-eared extraterrestrials.

**Rounding out the top 10 were:**  
"Fly Me to the Moon" (\$3.3 million)  
"Bad Boys: Ride or Die" (\$2.7 million)  
"Bad Newz" (1.1 million)  
"MaXXXine" (\$819,000)  
"The Bikeriders" (\$700,000). — AFP



(From left) Anthony Ramos, Daisy Edgar-Jones, and Glen Powell attend the "Twisters" Oklahoma City special screening presented by Universal Pictures, Warner Bros Pictures and Amblin Entertainment at Library of Distilled Spirits in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. — AFP photos

## Sports

# Five-wicket Bashir excites Stokes as England seal West Indies series

## England triumph by 241 runs to take an unassailable 2-0 lead

**NOTTINGHAM:** Ben Stokes said Shoaib Bashir had "showed the world" he belonged in international cricket after the 20-year-old off-spinner bowled England to a series-clinching victory over the West Indies in the second Test at Trent Bridge on Sunday.

Bashir took 5-41 as the West Indies collapsed to 143 all out on the fourth evening, with England triumphing by 241 runs to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in a three-match campaign. It was Bashir's third five-wicket haul in just five Tests but first in England after he twice achieved the feat on spin-friendly Indian pitches earlier this year.

His latest exploits were all the more impressive given Bashir did not bowl a single ball and was out for a duck during England's innings and 114-run thrashing of the West Indies in the first Test at Lord's. Bashir removed Kirk McKenzie, Kavem Hodge and Alick Athanaze - all top-order batsmen - in quick succession before bowling Jason Holder and last man Shamar Joseph as West Indies, set 385 to win, slumped to 143 all out.

### 'Pretty cool'

"I think what Bash has done today is to show the world what he can do," said England captain Stokes. "That wicket hardly offered anything for a spinner throughout the whole Test match and look at what he was able to do today."

"The way in which he can change his pace, produce over-spin and under-spin...I think he showed his full bag of tricks. He's got so much talent and the

ceiling is so, so high. He's got an unbelievable desire and a will to get better and learn."

Stokes added: "It's really good for a young guy to come out and put in a performance that wins England a Test match, it's pretty cool for him." For all his success in India, rising star Bashir was unable to break into the Somerset side at the start of the season after the side opted for a more experienced England spinner in Jack Leach.

That led Bashir to go on loan to Worcestershire last month, but England kept faith with him all the same. "The decisions we make are all based around not only how far we think their talent can take them, but whether we think they're good enough for international cricket straight away," explained Stokes. "I don't want to sound like it's an 'I told you so' kind of thing but it sort of is." Defeat left West Indies with just pride to play for in next week's third Test at Edgbaston.

They actually managed a much-improved showing with the bat in Nottingham while making 457 in reply to England's first-innings 416 prior to Sunday's spectacular slump, which saw all 10 of their second-innings wickets lost in 23 overs.

"The big positive was our first innings, scoring 400 runs was great," said West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite. "The two defeats are gone but we still have five Tests matches remaining for this year. So we keep learning and by the end of the year we'll be better off, once we have that correct mindset." — AFP



**NOTTINGHAM:** England's Shoaib Bashir loses his wicket from West Indies Jayden Seales on the fourth day of the second Test cricket match between England and West Indies at Trent Bridge in Nottingham. — AFP

## England open to IPL investment in Hundred

**NOTTINGHAM:** English cricket chiefs confirmed on Monday they have held talks with Indian Premier League (IPL) owners about acquiring a stake in their domestic Hundred competition. The fourth edition of the controversial 100-balls per side tournament, which features eight specially created teams - each with a men's and women's side - rather than the traditional 18 first-class English counties, starts on Tuesday.

Its future remains uncertain, with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) looking to secure private investment in a bid to cement its position in the global calendar and boost the finances of the domestic game. The ECB are trying to balance a desire for a cash injection while retaining control of the Hundred by selling off a 49 percent stake in each team to private investors, with host teams retaining the remaining 51 percent of shares.

But the hosts could sell part or all of their shares. "Control comes at different levels, it comes at team level and it comes at competition level - that's not something we are ceding control of," ECB chief executive Richard Gould told reporters during a conference call.

"Different investor groups have different needs, for some it is about control of what happens on the field, for others it's the commercial element. "You're right about the strength of the Indian market - it represents probably 90 percent of the revenues coming into the ICC (International Cricket Council) and we have seen the proliferation of IPL teams moving outside of their home market into other national markets. I think that's to be welcomed," he added.

The cash-rich T20 IPL, a multi-million dollars spectacle underpinned by the mass enthusiasm for cricket in India, the world's most populous nation, has changed the sport's global landscape, with players no longer needing to go through the grind of five-day international Test matches in order to enjoy lucrative careers.

There is a view that IPL owners, such as the billionaire Ambani family who are in charge of the Mumbai Indians, would only be interested in full control of a Hundred team. "There is certainly the opportunity for people to have potentially 100 percent ownership," said Gould.

"It depends on the capabilities they can bring both in terms of finance and operation delivery." The ECB's director of business operations Vikram Banerjee said while he had spoken to IPL owners about the Hundred, he was also open to offers from American Football's NFL.

"I've now met and spoken to, a number of times, all the IPL owners and WPL (Women's Premier League) owners that don't overlap and there is interest there, from what they've told me, which is fantastic and lends into a very exciting process," Banerjee said.

"I would really hope we have a level of partnerships with some IPL teams, I think that would be brilliant. They have done a great job and know cricket very well." He added: "At the same time, we've just sent out a document and video to some NFL owners that explains what cricket is and what the rules are."

"In terms of fan engagement, how they can build stadia experience and bring in the next generation, those guys are amazing. "So, we can bring that blend together, which I think is what we hope to do and that can work really well." — AFP

## Pandya fitness issues cost him T20 captaincy

**MUMBAI:** Hardik Pandya lost out on India's T20 captaincy to Suryakumar Yadav because of concerns over his availability after frequent injury absences, India's chief selector Ajit Agarkar said Monday. Explosive middle-order batsman Suryakumar, 33, was last week named Rohit Sharma's successor in the T20 format for India's white-ball tour of Sri Lanka, which begins Saturday.

All-rounder Pandya, 30, was Rohit's deputy during India's T20 World Cup triumph last month but he has suffered from fitness problems and missed the 50-over World Cup last year with an ankle injury. "Fitness has been something that he's struggled with," Agarkar told reporters in Mumbai alongside new coach Gautam Gambhir.

"As selectors, it becomes difficult then. The thought behind it was that we want someone who is likely to be available more." India begin their Sri Lanka trip with the first of three Twenty20 internationals on Saturday and Pandya has reportedly opted out of the three subsequent one-day internationals.

He was "still a very important player," Agarkar said. "And that's what we want him to be, those skill sets are hard to find." Agarkar praised Suryakumar's captaincy credentials. "He is one of the best T20 batters in the world," said Agarkar.

"We feel that Surya has all the necessary qualities to be a good captain. "We wanted a captain, who is likely to play all the games." Suryakumar would remain solely a T20 player, said Agarkar. Rohit has

## All Blacks' legend casts doubt on Savea's Moana move

**WELLINGTON:** All Blacks legend John Kirwan has cast doubt on Ardie Savea's switch to Moana Pasifika, saying it could affect his Test form for New Zealand.

Savea, 30, announced Sunday he would end more than a decade of association with the high-flying Wellington Hurricanes to make the bombshell move to Moana, who finished second bottom of the Super Rugby standings in 2024.

Kirwan said the move could hamper Savea's form for the All Blacks, if Moana struggle again. "Don't get me wrong, I want Moana Pasifika to be great. But is it good for Ardie Savea if they have another season where they are second to last?" Kirwan said on Sky Sports.

"Is that going to help us as All Blacks that Ardie is going to be coming from possibly doing extra or struggling? "It'll be a bigger workload," added Kirwan, 59, who was basing his comments on his own experience after he signed for a second-tier club in Italy during his playing career.

Savea enjoyed a sabbatical this year playing club rugby in Japan following the 2023 World Cup. Without him, the Hurricanes finished top of the Super Rugby table before losing in the playoff semi-finals last month.

The All Blacks back-row forward, who has played 84 Tests, will link up with older brother

## ICC puts USA on notice for 'non-compliance'

**COLOMBO:** The International Cricket Council put USA Cricket on notice Monday to comply with the world body's membership rules, just weeks after the country co-hosted the T20 World Cup. The US board and Cricket Chile "have been formally put on



**LAUDERHILL:** (FILES) India's coach Rahul Dravid (L) speaks with Hardik Pandya (C) and Ravindra Jadeja before the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup 2024 group A cricket match between India and Canada at Central Broward Park & Broward County Stadium in Lauderhill, Florida on June 15, 2024. — AFP

retained the 50-over captaincy.

Gambhir explained his coaching philosophy, speaking to reporters for the first time since succeeding Rahul Dravid. "I think it is important to give players the freedom, that's what I believe in," he said. "The best relationship is built on trust. I can promise that the most important thing is that they will always have my back."

Rohit, 37, and Virat Kohli, 35, both quit T20

internationals after the World Cup. Gambhir, a former India teammate of both Kohli and Rohit, expects the veteran pair to remain key figures in the Test and 50-over teams. "Both those guys have a lot of cricket left in them," Gambhir said, adding he hoped they are motivated to feature in the 2024/25 tour to Australia and next year's 50-over Champions Trophy. Retirement is "a very personal decision" he added. — AFP



**SAN DIEGO:** Ardie Savea #8 of All Blacks scores a try against Fiji during the International Test between New Zealand All Blacks and Fiji at Snapdragon Stadium in San Diego, California. — AFP

Julian at the Auckland-based Moana, a club comprising players with Pacific islands family backgrounds. Savea has signed a three-year deal, leaving him eligible to represent New Zealand through to the 2027 Rugby World Cup in Australia. Samoa-born Savea said Sunday he believed the time was right to honor his Samoan family and "give back to my heritage."

The signing of the All Blacks vice-captain is a

coup for Moana, who finished bottom of the Super Rugby table in their first two seasons after joining in 2022, but has come as a disappointment to the Hurricanes.

"While we are sad to see him go, he's been a fantastic Hurricane," said Wellington chief executive Avon Lee on Monday. "He had a clause in his contract to play for another Super team. "The relationship with Ardie is very good. We just wish him all the best." — AFP

notice and have 12 months to rectify their current non-compliance with the ICC Membership Criteria", the ICC said in a statement following its annual conference in Colombo.

"Neither Member is considered to have in place a fit for purpose detailed governance and administrative structure and systems." It did not give further details but said the board "will reserve its right to suspend or expel the Member for continued non-compliance."

The move comes with cricket set to return to the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles in the T20 format - the theme of the four-day ICC conference was "capitalizing on the Olympic opportunity". The ad-

ministrative structure of American cricket has long faced problems and the former governing body, USA Cricket Association, was expelled in 2017.

The US played host in June to top teams in the T20 World Cup co-hosted by the West Indies with matches held in New York, Dallas and Florida. But there were issues with playing elite cricket at the venues.

The wicket in New York, developed in Florida and "dropped in" shortly before the tournament, was criticized for its uneven bounce and unpredictability which led to low-scoring games. The ICC said there would "a review into the delivery of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024". — AFP

Sports

# Pressure builds in Serbia for Jokic to deliver at Olympics

Serbia's performances in France will be among the most closely watched sports

**BELGRADE:** After winning three MVP titles and one NBA championship, Nikola Jokic stands on the threshold of securing eternal glory in Serbia if he can bring home an Olympic gold medal to the basketball-mad country.

Jokic's return to international competition comes a year after he skipped the Basketball World Cup in the Philippines, where Serbia finished second after a nail-biting 83-77 loss to Germany in the final. The 29-year-old's absence from that tournament ignited outrage in Serbia just months after being lavished with an outpouring of love when he led the Denver Nuggets to an NBA title win.

Serbian fans took to social media to slam Jokic, with the NBA star centre labelled a "traitor" by many. "The nation's sentiment is entirely justified in believing that playing for the national team is more of a hobby for him, rather than an act of patriotism or genuine desire," Serbian sports journalist Vladimir Zivanovic told AFP.

Basketball has long been an obsession in Serbia, with some domestic teams regularly selling out games in Belgrade's 18,000-seat Stark Arena. Fans are known to wake early in the morning to watch NBA games while also participating in colorful rivalries that make Serbia one of the best places to watch live basketball in the world.

Serbia's performances in France will be among the most closely watched sports involving the country during the Olympics. Jokic's international career began with promise, after winning a silver medal in Rio during the 2016 Olympics.

But since then, he has been unable to win any major international tournament with Serbia - a fact he hopes to change in Paris. Serbian national team coach Svetislav Pesic said Jokic was one of the team's vital components heading into the Olympics. "Jokic's participation certainly matters, in every sense. Both from the perspective of indi-

vidual quality and from the perspective of his personality," said Pesic during an interview in June.

**Hometown and horses**

The media-shy MVP has always been upfront about valuing his time away from the game - a point driven home in media appearances during his NBA title run last year. "The job is done, we can go home now," he famously said during an on-court interview moments after winning the final.

Off the court, Jokic regularly returns to his native Sombor - a sleepy northern city near the border with Croatia. There, the NBA star prefers to keep a low profile and shuns interviews, while spending time with his family and indulging his other passion: horses.

When away from the race track, Jokic regularly drops by his former school in Sombor to talk to young players on a small court. Videos posted on social media over the years has also seen him dancing to folk music with friends or towering over revellers at Serbia's famed nightclubs.

**MVP**

Back on the court, his playing style is reminiscent of a formula developed in the former Yugoslavia described as "jazz basketball" - which relies on individual creativity rather than speed and sheer power.

Jokic is known for keeping things simple on the court, mixing light movement and simple tap-ins along with laser-sharp precision - especially with his passing game, which saw him finish second in the league with overall assists this year.

In May, Jokic was named the NBA's Most Valuable Player (MVP) for the third time in just four seasons. The title followed an all star-run where he averaged 26.4 points, 12.4 rebounds and nine assists to beat Oklahoma City Thunder star Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Luka Doncic of the Dallas Mavericks in final



**ABU DHABI:** Serbia's centre #15 Nikola Jokic fights for the ball against US guard #05 Anthony Edwards during the Basketball Showcase friendly match between the United States and Serbia at Etihad Arena in Abu Dhabi. - AFP

voting for the award. But securing the latest MVP title was followed by a disappointing loss during the Western Conference semifinals to the Minnesota Timberwolves. The early exit in theory has allowed the 6ft 11in (2.11m) centre plenty of time to rest ahead of the Olympics, where Serbia is among the shortlist of favorites to finish in the medals.

Basketball was first introduced by an American Red Cross envoy a century ago, while the former Yugoslavia's government invested generously in the

sport, with basketball courts built in almost every neighborhood. The Balkan remains a fertile field for talent and Jokic is firmly established among the region's best.

Pressure to bring his winning NBA ways to Paris during the Olympics remains high. "The expectation is certainly that he will make up for all the previous years and be the best player on the team," said Zivanovic. "Otherwise, the question of his future participation will arise." - AFP



McLaughlin-Levrone

## Barrier-breaking McLaughlin-Levrone hunt hurdles double

**LOS ANGELES:** From the moment she qualified for her first Olympic Games as a 16-year-old high school student, Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone has never paid much attention to conventional wisdom. For more than three decades since Soviet hurdler Marina Stepanova became the first woman to run the 400m hurdles in under 53 seconds in 1986, the athletics world had wondered when, or if, the 52-second barrier would be broken. Yet in the space of a few seasons, McLaughlin-Levrone has obliterated that longstanding benchmark, redefining notions of what was possible in her event. In 2021 she clocked a world record 51.90sec at the US Olympic trials in Eugene, Oregon, to become the first woman under the 52-second mark.

She followed that up by shaving a massive 0.44sec off her own record when she stormed to victory at the Tokyo Olympics in 51.46sec. In 2022, she bettered that mark at the US trials in Eugene with a time of 51.41sec, before clocking a jaw-dropping time of 50.68sec on her way to victory at the World Championships a month later. After dabbling with the flat 400m in 2023, McLaughlin-Levrone returned to her specialist event this season and has once again returned to her record-breaking ways. She booked her place in Paris with another world record at the US Olympic trials last month, storming home in 50.65sec with a performance that appeared to take even herself by surprise. - AFP

## Adeleke the face of modern Ireland eyes Olympic glory

**PARIS:** Rhasidat Adeleke hopes to become the first Irish female to win an Olympic athletics gold in Paris, an achievement that would provide a fitting riposte to racists who have targeted her for online abuse.

Born and raised in Ireland to Nigerian parents, Adeleke, 21, heads to Paris as the European 400 metres silver medalist - one of three medals she won in Rome in June - and an impressive win at the Monaco Diamond League meet.

However, the warm afterglow of her performances at the European Championships - gold in the mixed 4x400m relay and silver in the 4x400 women's relay - was overshadowed by a wave of racist abuse on social media which questioned her right to represent Ireland.

"Irish athletes have trained all their lives just to see opportunities taken away from them by Africans," said one post on Twitter. Those close to Adeleke say the abuse affected her deeply. "I think that's probably the most pain I've seen her have," Edrick Floreal, her coach at Texas University, revealed. "She was really in a dark place when she read those things on the Internet. 'She doesn't cry ever, so when she cries it's like, 'Oh my God', so that bothered her more than I ever thought and I just let her handle it.' The abuse prompted Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris into saluting her as an inspiration to "young girls and boys."

**'You are Ireland'**

"Rhasidat Adeleke is not only a world-class champion, she is a world-class person," said Harris. "You are class, so please do not let online cowards bring you down. "You are Ireland and Ireland could not be more proud of you." Adeleke's mother, Ade, decried the abuse - "she is just a little girl" - while telling her daughter to "look forward to the positivity, not the negativity." Indeed there is much to be positive about heading to the Olympics, with her clocking the fourth fastest time of the season thus far of 49.07 seconds in Monaco. Had it not been for her mother, though, Adeleke might not be in the position of dreaming of Olympic gold and



**ROME: (FILES)** Ireland's Rhasidat Adeleke finishes second in the women's 400m final during the European Athletics Championships at the Olympic stadium in Rome on June 10, 2024. - AFP

bettering the 5,000m silver won by Sonia O'Sullivan at the 2000 Sydney Games, which remains Ireland's only female Olympic athletics medal.

"Her mom, Ade, was very keen that Rhasidat would get the best and education and homework had to align with sport," her former school head teacher Aine Mulderrig told Buzzie in June. "There was a straight-forward bus ride from her home in Tallaght (suburb of Dublin) but Ade picked her up every evening past fourth year because there was a tight schedule.

"She had training, she had her homework and that all had to be done because mom was extremely determined that she was getting her education." Adeleke showed she had taken as much care of her homework as her training as she won a scholarship to Texas despite taking the exams in 2020 during the Covid pandemic.

As ever, she had been accompanied by her mother to have a look at the campus - but unlike a legion of tricky relationships between pushy parents and talented athletes - this one seems unbreakable. "My mam comes to every single meet ever since I was growing up. She put me first all the time," Adeleke told Irish broadcaster RTE after taking European silver. "She would switch out shifts at work. She would take me everywhere, pay for everything. "To be able to be here, doing what I love, I just feel so grateful to her because I definitely wouldn't be here without her." Adeleke, whose sister Latifah is also a promising athlete, feels she owes her mum and there could be no better gift than Olympic gold. - AFP

## Xander Schauffele: Golf's nearly man becomes main man

**TROON:** Xander Schauffele was until May the nearly man of golf. Now he is a two-time major winner after claiming the British Open in impressive style. The Olympic champion produced a record-breaking performance at the PGA Championship in May for his breakthrough on the sport's biggest stages.

On Sunday the 30-year-old started steadily at Royal Troon before taking the competition by the scruff of the neck and remorselessly driving towards the Claret Jug with a bogey-free round. The world number three from California, watched by his wife and parents on Scotland's west coast, is the first player to win two majors in a year since Brooks Koepka in 2018. Schauffele was outside the world's top 350 when he tied for fifth on his major debut at the 2017 US Open, but he climbed into the top 20 when he was a joint runner-up to Francesco Molinari in the following year's British Open at Carnoustie.

He was also tied for second at the 2019 Masters behind Tiger Woods and was joint third two months later in the US Open and at Augusta National in 2021. Before he won the PGA title, Schauffele had 12 top-10 finishes at major tournaments but had not won an event since the Scottish Open in 2022. The San Diego native carded four sub-70 rounds at Valhalla in May for a 21-under-par total - the lowest score to par in major championship history. - AFP



Xander Schauffele

# Classifieds

**Change of Name**

**I, Raju Upputuru**, holder of Indian Passport No. P1095315 having permanent address 9 34 A Rajampet Kadapa Andhra Pradesh 516115, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: (given name) Subbarayudu and (surname) Upputuru. (#5636, 23/07/2024)

**I, Murtaza** (current name in passport) holder of Indian Passport No. M7068737 having permanent address - Mohammadiyah Colony, Post - Galiyakot, Durgapur, Rajasthan, Pincode No. 314026 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth in future my name will be read as (given name) Murtaza and (surname) Tapiya. (#5635, 23/07/2024)

**I, Anil Suresh Nagdev**, holder of Indian Passport No. V3746767, do hereby change my name to Anil Sureshlal Nagdev for all purposes. I will

henceforth be known in the name of Anil Sureshlal Nagdev, & I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#5907, 21/07/2024)

**I, Javed Abdul Kader Khan**, holder of Passport No. M8451426, do hereby change my name to Javed Abdul Kadar (as given name) Khan (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Javed Abdul Kadar Khan and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all documents. (#5904, 21/07/2024)

**I, Pathan Mohamad Hasim Khan Mustufa Khan**, holder of Indian Passport No. V3757349 having permanent address Darugalla Mohalla Lunawada, Mahisagar Pin: 389230, Gujarat, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: (given name) Mohmadhasimkhan Mustufakhan and (surname) Pathan. (#5634, 21/07/2024)

**Clinics & Hospitals**

**Clinics**

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
Ayoum 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

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## Pogacar hails 'golden age' after securing third Tour de France title

'It was an amazing journey, what a battle with Jonas and Remco'



NICE: UAE Team Emirates' Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar celebrates his overall victory on the podium with the overall leader's yellow jersey after the 21st and final stage of the 111th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, a 33.7 km individual time-trial between Monaco and Nice, on July 21, 2024. — AFP

NICE: Tadej Pogacar hailed a new "golden age" for cycling after securing a third Tour de France title on Sunday to add to his 2020 and 2021 triumphs.

The 25-year-old won the final day's time-trial with defending champion Jonas Vingegaard coming second at 1 minute 03 seconds on the day to seal second overall ahead of Remco Evenepoel, third on the day and also third overall. Victory also gave Pogacar the first Giro d'Italia-Tour de France double since Marco Pantani in 1998.

"It was an amazing journey. What a battle with Jonas and Remco. So much happened," said the champion who finished 6mins 17secs ahead of Vingegaard in the final standings. Evenepoel was 9mins 18secs off the pace.

"We are living in the golden age of cycling. The rivalry with Remco (Evenepoel), Jonas (Vingegaard), Primož (Roglič) is just incredible. We have to take advantage of this moment." Astonishingly Pogacar won six stages on this edition of the Tour, just as he did when winning the Giro earlier in the season. "To achieve the double is incredible," added Pogacar who had

been runner-up to Vingegaard for the last two years.

### 'Next level'

"When I won the Giro, some people said that it would serve as a safety net for me if I didn't win the Tour. Winning the Tour still represents the level above and winning the two is the next level." The world's greatest bike race, broadcast across the globe, featured a novelty finale on the French Riviera because of the Olympic Games in Paris.

Instead of the last day race around the Champs-Élysées the Tour avoided the Olympic Games sites altogether. With five stage wins already under his belt, Pogacar stormed out of his adopted hometown of Monaco and up the coast to Nice where he leapt into the arms of his teammates on the celebrated Promenade des Anglais.

Pogacar took the overall lead on a downhill on day four as the race arrived in France from Italy via the Alps. By the time the race returned to the Alps, Pogacar was three minutes clear and Vingegaard was starting to flag with the Dane still not fully recovered from a major crash in March.

After winning stage 19 on Fri-

day, Pogacar knew he had won and Vingegaard switched his attention to finishing second. Vingegaard crashed heavily earlier this year and was praised for even making it to the start line, but ahead of Sunday's time-trial he expressed a desire to win another stage.

"Under normal circumstances I would have been disappointed. This is such a wonderful race, the yellow jersey is the most beautiful of all. I'll be back to try for a third one next year," said the 27-year-old.

Although he started well, as has often been the case in this Tour, he was a distant second best. He did however beat pre-race favorite Evenepoel, who cried at the finish line. There are many prizes on offer on the Tour with Pogacar's yellow jersey for overall race leader being the chief amongst them.

### 'On another planet'

Evenepoel may not have won the final day time-trial but he captured the first time-trial in week two. He also came third in the overall standings and won the white jersey for best young rider. "Tadej is on another planet. I have a gap to bridge between me,

Tadej and Jonas, but this was a good Tour, a good test for me," said the 24-year-old Belgian.

Other stars emerged along the way as Eritrean rider Biniam Girmay won three stages, the sprint points green jersey and national hero status in his homeland. Riding a green bike and also decked out from head to toe in the colour, Girmay was seen off by a clutch of his countrymen in Monaco.

"It's astonishing," the Eritrean said. "The feelings, the emotions, I want to share them with the people from my country." Olympic champion Richard Carapaz won a stage, took the yellow jersey for a day and came close to other victories. He raced on Saturday in the polka dot best climber's jersey.

Mark Cavendish also took the headlines, claiming a record 35th stage win and was given a special podium presentation for his career achievement. Greeted by his family in Nice there were no tears from the "Manx Missile".

"There are a hundred and seventy odd cyclists in this race, and most of them finish a Tour winning nothing," Cavendish said after his podium award. When asked if this was his last Tour he replied: "Yes 100 percent." — AFP

## Is Coe a future IOC president?

PARIS: Sebastian Coe has been portrayed by some as a potential successor to Thomas Bach as president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) but the athletics legend suggested to AFP it is out of his hands.



Sebastian Coe

Bach, who like Coe is an Olympic gold medalist, will oversee the Paris Olympics that start on Friday but is due to step down next year having served the maximum two terms since being elected in 2013. There have though been calls from some IOC members that Bach should seek a third term, although that would require a change in the Olympic Charter.

The two-term limit was one of the anti-corruption reforms imposed following the Salt Lake City scandal in the 1990s. Coe, who at 67 is three years younger than Bach, has been credited with transforming the image of the sport since being elected World Athletics president in 2015.

"Look, I think there's a huge deal of uncertainty about what is happening in Lausanne (the site of the IOC headquarters) at the moment," Coe told AFP in an interview this month when asked about whether he would run to be IOC president.

"I think those questions are probably best directed at other people." The Briton, whose third and final term as athletics chief ends in 2027, had his work cut out when he took over WA. His predecessor Lamine Diack was embroiled in a cover-up of Russian doping cases in exchange for bribes and was sentenced by a French court to four years in prison, of which two were suspended, and fined 500,000 euros (\$544,000).

### 'Better governed'

Coe, who was a Conservative Party lawmaker from 1992-97, said his close friend William Hague, Britain's former foreign minister, told him that in comparison to other jobs the head of Monaco-based World Athletics would be "a calmer, quieter atmosphere".

"I did remind him not long ago over supper that that quieter period ended up with me sitting in a Monaco police station for five hours, where my predecessors had gone and subsequently been arrested," Coe said.

He insisted that he did not go for the World Athletics top job because he was sure he would get it. "I've never done things because I think there's any certainty of outcome," he said. "I've tended to do things that I've found interesting or the need to do them." — AFP

## Verstappen, Norris reputations tainted at Hungarian Grand Prix

BUDAPEST: Max Verstappen and Lando Norris did little to enhance their reputations on Sunday when a calm and mostly assured drive by Oscar Piastri set an example and carried him to a controversial victory at the Hungarian Grand Prix.

On a day when teams' radio transmissions of dialogue with their drivers over-shadowed an intriguing race, the tetchy and sometimes outright rude behavior of the two leading championship contenders set a dismal example. It also offered evidence that both struggle to cope with the pressures of expectation as their teams, Red Bull and McLaren, vie for the constructors' championship. Defending champions Red Bull hold a diminishing lead as their rivals reel them in. AFP Sport looks at three things we learned from the weekend's drama at the Hungaroring:

### Out of control Verstappen

Three-time champion Verstappen stayed up until three in the morning to compete in a late-night session of on-line simulated racing before the race. He was, as anyone might be, not at his sunniest on Sunday.

Tetchy, irritable and abusive, he finished a frustrated fifth after a poor performance highlighted by his profanity-riddled outbursts at race engineer Gianpiero

Lambiasi, a collision with old rival Lewis Hamilton's Mercedes and a vulgar post-race response to his critics. He had indulged in late-night gaming in May before winning the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix and, unchecked by Red Bull, clearly felt he could do it again. But not this time. As the charming Piastri led Norris home, with the aid of clumsily-administered team orders that corrected a strategic error by the McLaren team, to claim his maiden victory, the contrast was stark.

Red Bull's troubled team boss Christian Horner, who faced claims of inappropriate and controlling behavior against him earlier this year, said the team would speak to Verstappen. "He knows exactly what's required and we trust his judgment," said Horner.

"I think people draw conclusions. Max knows what's required, he knows what it takes to drive a Grand Prix car and to win and be a world champion. We always work as a team and whatever discussions of how to improve will always not take place in the media. "You've just got to work harder to find incremental gains. We know we have to improve in the second half of the year." Without a win in three races and only three in the last eight, Verstappen's waning form and behavior represent a major part of the challenge ahead.

### Piastri emerges from Norris shadow

While McLaren demonstrated superior all-round performance in qualifying and race, to lock out the front row and finish first and second, it was Piastri's composure that caught the eye as he became Australia's fifth winner of a Grand Prix race.

At 23, he became also the first driver born in this century to triumph in an F1 race, and deservedly so in



MOGYOROD: (L-R) Second placed Team McLaren-Mercedes' Lando Norris, winner Team McLaren-Mercedes' Oscar Piastri, Team McLaren-Mercedes' Racing Director Randy Singh and third placed Team Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton celebrate on the podium. — AFP

spite of a minor controversy over team orders that was handled with insufficient clarity. By requesting Norris to move aside 'at your convenience', McLaren invited him to consider his options. It was to his credit he conceded the team was more important than his own title ambitions as he 'sacrificed' seven points. McLaren will learn. So, too, Norris. Hamilton's class is temporary.

Hamilton's drive to an unprecedented landmark 200th podium finish, surviving a collision with the aggressive Verstappen along the way, demonstrated that class is permanent, even at the age of 39. — AFP