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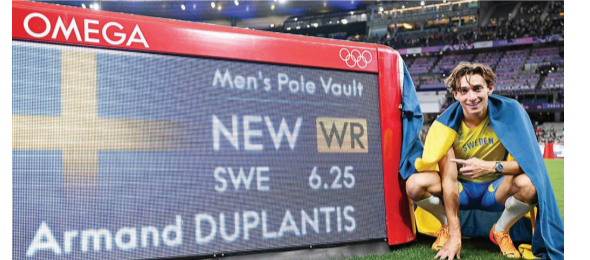
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## Hamas names Sinwar new chief

Hezbollah vows to punish Zionists • US scrambling to avert escalation



GAZA: In this March 25, 2017 photo, Hamas leaders Yahya Sinwar (right) and Ismail Haniyeh attend the funeral of slain Hamas official Mazen Faqha in Gaza City. — AFP

BEIRUT: Hamas named Gaza Strip chief Yahya Sinwar as its new political leader on Tuesday, a week after his predecessor Ismail Haniyeh's killing in Tehran which has sent regional tensions soaring. "The Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas announces the selection of leader Yahya Sinwar as the head of the political bureau of the movement," a statement from the group said.

Meanwhile, Hassan Nasrallah said his Hezbollah group and Iran were "obliged to respond" to the Zionist entity as the Middle East braced for the pair's promised retaliation following high-profile killings last week. The United States said earlier it was working "around the clock" to avert an all-out war in the region, following the killings last week of Hezbollah military commander Fuad Shukur in Beirut and Haniyeh in Tehran.

Speaking in a televised address to mark one week since Shukur's death, Nasrallah said Tehran "finds itself obliged to respond, and the enemy is waiting in a great state of dread". Hezbollah was also "obliged to respond", he said, adding that it will retaliate "alone or in the context of a unified response from all the axis" of Iran-backed groups in the region, "whatever the consequences". Minutes before his speech, Zionist jets flew low over the Lebanese capital, breaking the sound barrier.

US President Joe Biden, whose country has sent extra warships and fighter jets to the region

in support of the Zionist entity, held crisis talks on Monday with his national security team. Biden called King Abdullah II of Jordan, whose country helped down Iranian drones and missiles in an attack on the Zionist entity in April. This was followed by a call with Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, whose country and Egypt have been the key intermediaries seeking a ceasefire in the 10-month Zionist-Hamas war in Gaza.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken also called top officials in Qatar and Egypt. "We are engaged in intense diplomacy, pretty much around the clock, with a very simple message — all parties must refrain from escalation," Blinken said after joining other top officials in a White House meeting. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian hit out on Monday at what he called the "criminal acts" of the Zionist entity "against the oppressed and defenseless people of Gaza", as well as for Haniyeh's killing.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is in no way seeking to expand the scope of war and crisis in the region, but this regime will definitely receive the response for its crimes and arrogance," Pezeshkian said during talks with a senior visiting Russian official, according to the official news agency IRNA. The Zionist entity has not commented on the Haniyeh killing but confirmed it killed Shukur.

Hezbollah has engaged in near-daily

cross-border clashes with Zionist troops since the day after Hamas attacked the Zionist entity in early October. The group claimed several attacks on the Zionist entity on Tuesday, including one with "explosive-laden drones" targeting a barracks north of the coastal town of Acre. Regional councils in the Zionist entity urged residents to stay close to shelters on Tuesday after a barrage of rockets. In southern Lebanon, six Hezbollah fighters were killed in Zionist strikes, according to a Lebanese security source.

Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib, on a visit to Cairo, acknowledged that there was "a possibility of a war between us and (the Zionist entity)... We can't deny that". A European diplomat in Tel Aviv said "a coordinated response" from Iran and its proxies was expected against the Zionist entity but de-escalation efforts persisted. "That doesn't mean there will be a simultaneous response from all fronts," he added, declining to be identified as he was not authorized to speak on the issue. "We're telling them they have to stop playing with fire, because the risk of flare-ups is higher than at any time since October 7," he said.

Numerous airlines have suspended flights to Lebanon or limited them to daylight hours. Lebanese national carrier Middle East Airlines put on extra flights for people wanting to leave or return, a company source said. — Agencies

### NEWS IN BRIEF

**MoI: Report frayed Kuwait flags**

KUWAIT: The interior ministry urged the public to report any worn-out Kuwaiti flag on government or private buildings or roadside banners, either through the emergency number 112 or by sending a picture via WhatsApp on 91110999. The ministry stressed that maintaining the flag as a symbol of the state is a collective national responsibility.

**MEW: Jahra water uncontaminated**

KUWAIT: The ministry of electricity, water and renewable energy on Monday reassured that water in Jahra is safe, noting that samples taken from several areas around the governorate revealed no contamination. The statement came following complaints from several residents about changes in the color of water supplied to their homes. (See Page 3)

**MoH: Treat bedoons as visitors**

KUWAIT: A circular was issued at Amiri Hospital to treat bedoon patients who have expired IDs as visitors, which means collecting KD 20 per patient at trauma centers and KD 30 per patient at outpatient clinics. The circular also indicates that medications are only given to patients who stay in hospital when required.

**40-plus COVID cases at Olympics**

GENEVA: More than 40 athletes at the 2024 Paris Olympics have tested positive for COVID-19, highlighting a new global rise in cases, the World Health Organization said Tuesday. The WHO said the virus behind the COVID-19 pandemic was still circulating and countries need to sharpen up their response systems. Several high-profile athletes have suffered from COVID-19 at the Paris Games. — AFP (See Page 15)

## Zionists kill 12 in West Bank, dozens in Gaza

JENIN/GAZA: Palestinian officials said Zionist forces killed 12 people in three separate raids in the northern West Bank on Tuesday, as violence in the occupied territory showed no sign of abating. Five people were killed in the Jenin area and four in Aqaba town in Tubas district when Zionist forces carried out early-morning raids, the health ministry in Ramallah said.

The Zionist army said three people were killed and two arrested in another

raid in the village of Kafr Qud, west of Jenin. The Palestinian Red Crescent had earlier reported deaths and injuries "due to the occupation's shelling of two vehicles in the eastern neighborhood of Jenin". The strikes came during a Zionist military operation in Jenin in which footage shared on social media showed a column of armored personnel carriers entering the city and armored bulldozers digging up roads.

Aqaba residents said Zionist troops arrived at dawn and surrounded the house of Amid Ghanam, leading to clashes between troops and young Palestinians. Ghanam and two others were killed in the clashes, while another teenager was killed near a hospital, Tubas governor Ahmed Assad told AFP.

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JENIN: Palestinians inspect the destruction following a Zionist raid in this city in the occupied West Bank on Aug 6, 2024. — AFP

## Harris picks Tim Walz as running mate

WASHINGTON: Kamala Harris said Tuesday she was "proud" to tap Tim Walz as her running mate, opting for the Minnesota governor with blue-collar credentials as the partner most likely to boost her historic — and bruising — bid for the White House. Walz had been on a vice-presidential shortlist with a string of other Democratic figures seen as broadening

Harris's appeal as she sprints into the contest against Donald Trump.

Aiming to make history as the first woman president, Harris — already a trailblazer as the first female and first Black and South Asian vice president — has little time before Election Day on Nov 5. "I am proud to announce that I've asked @Tim\_Walz to be my running mate," she posted on X. "As a governor, a coach, a teacher, and a veteran, he's delivered for working families like his. It's great to have him on the team."

Expectations had always been that Harris would pick a white man to balance the ticket and help win over working-class, white, male

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Tim Walz



Kamala Harris

## Bangladesh president dissolves parliament, Yunus ready to lead

DHAKA: Bangladesh Nobel winner Muhammad Yunus said Tuesday he is ready to head a caretaker government, a day after the military took control as mass protests forced longtime ruler Sheikh Hasina to flee. Micro-finance pioneer Yunus, 84, is credited with lifting millions out of poverty — earning the enmity of ousted Hasina and the wide respect of millions of Bangladeshis.

"If action is needed in Bangladesh, for my country and for the courage of my people, then I will take it,"

he told AFP in a statement, also calling for "free elections", after student leaders called for him to lead an interim government. Hasina, 76, had been in power since 2009 but was accused of rigging elections in January and then watched millions of people take to the streets over the past month demanding she quit.

Hundreds of people were killed as security forces sought to quell the unrest but the protests grew and Hasina finally fled aboard a helicopter on Monday after the military turned against her. Army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman announced Monday the military would form an interim government, saying it was "time to stop the violence". The president dissolved parliament on Tuesday, a key demand of the student leaders and the major opposition Bangladesh National Party (BNP), which has demanded elections within three months.

The military on Tuesday reshuffled several top generals, demoting some seen as close to Hasina, and sacking Ziaul Ahsan, a commander of the feared and US-sanctioned Rapid Action Battalion paramilitary force. Ex-prime minister and BNP chairperson Khaledda Zia, 78, was also released from years of house arrest, a presidential statement and her party said.

"In Dr Yunus, we trust," Asif Mahmud, a key leader of the Students Against Discrimination (SAD) group, wrote on Facebook. Nahid Islam, another key organizer of the campaign against Hasina, said in a video message: "Any government other than the one we recommended would not be accepted."

Yunus told Indian broadcaster Times Now in a recorded interview that Monday marked the "second liberation day" for Bangladesh after its 1971 war

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## Local

# Kuwait Relief Society spends \$18m on humanitarian work in Gaza Strip

Kuwaiti leaders praised for their great impact on the speed of response



Kuwait Relief Medical team in Gaza Strip. — KUNA photos



A relief flight via the Kuwaiti air bridge is arranged by the Kuwait Relief Society.



Kuwait Medical Relief Team participates in distributing food to the people in the Gaza Strip.

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Relief Society announced that the total Kuwaiti aid to help those affected by the Zionist occupation attacks on the Gaza Strip since October 7th exceeded \$18 million. In remarks to KUNA, the General Manager of the Association, Abdulaziz Al-Obaid, said that \$18 million was collected through various campaigns over 300 days with the participation of more than 30 charitable societies.

He added that the association sought to spend this amount in some rapid response sectors, especially disasters, crises, and wars, including responding to urgent distress calls from our Palestinian brothers, most notably the food, medicine, and shelter sectors. Al-Obaid also noted that the total support pro-

vided through air flights, land convoys, sea ships, and medical relief flights that have been sent to the Gaza Strip since the beginning of the current aggression until now has exceeded 5 and a half tons of urgent and necessary humanitarian relief materials that the residents of the Strip need.

For his part, the head of the relief and projects sector at the association, Mahmoud Al-Misbah, affirmed that the Kuwait Relief Society and its partners from the Palestinian charitable societies operating in the Gaza Strip implemented relief projects that benefited about one million Palestinians. He stated that the Kuwait Relief Society has implemented dozens of public cleaning projects, garbage and rubble removal, wastewater disposal,

support for hospitals with the necessary medical devices and equipment, and the provision of solar energy systems.

In turn, the Director of the Marketing and Public Relations Department at the Society, Ahmad Al-Nafais, expressed his pride in the high directives of the Kuwaiti political leadership and their great impact on the speed of response and providing the necessary and urgent support to the brothers in the Gaza Strip. He also praised the efforts of local partners from charitable societies operating inside Palestine and international partners from international relief and charitable institutions and the parties concerned with providing facilities for the entry of relief convoys and teams in Palestine, Egypt, and Jordan. — KUNA



## How dependence on AI is changing students' skills

By Abdullah Sabih

**KUWAIT:** Artificial Intelligence is an emerging tool that is transforming various sectors, including education, by providing tools that assist students with tasks ranging from the simplest of assignments to the most complex research papers. As it becomes increasingly integrated into educational systems, concerns rise about whether this growing reliance will drastically change educational systems in the generations to come.

Nandita Bhatia, an English teacher at Carmel School Kuwait, has noticed her students use AI for writing assignments and getting ideas for various projects. "They use it to formulate answers and get grammatically well-written essays," she said. A student in Kuwait, who preferred to remain anonymous, reported minimal interactions between him and his classmates due to their increased reliance on AI. "Many of my classmates use AI for even the smallest of tasks, especially when working on group projects. Because of this, we often forget to consult each other before proceeding with a task," he said.

A study by Forbes shows that 43 percent of students admit that they have tried to implement AI when accomplishing their school tasks. The most commonly used AI tools include Open AI's ChatGPT, Grammarly, Tutor.ai and DALL-E. Learning Management Systems (LMS) have become the backbone of the modern academe. They are softwares designed to create, distribute and manage educational content and courses online. An LMS utilizes advanced AI algorithms to analyze student performance data and provide actionable insights. Along with this, AI-powered tutors have become increasingly popular. They act as personalized mentors by providing feedback and explanations, tailored to the student's intellectual capacity.

"Although I don't entirely depend on it, I do consult AI tools such as ChatGPT whenever needed. It gives me the answers to some specific questions that I am not able to find on Google," said the student. However, Bhatia believes that students are neglecting to enhance their analytical skills by copying blindly. "Many times, they tend to deviate from the topic by generalizing or giving irrelevant infor-



mation that AI tends to churn out," she pointed out.

### Tackling plagiarism

But AI also has quite a few advantages. It helps students build digital literacy, critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving skills, which are among the most sought-after skill sets according to the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs report. "Where skill development is concerned, I feel students are learning to answer in better language and use correct grammar," said Bhatia.

Plagiarism is an issue of great concern as more and more students are using chatbots to write essays and articles and passing them off as their own without giving due credit. Like many teachers, Bhatia believes that plagiarism is a serious crime and teachers have easy access to apps that can sift through AI-transmitted work.

Although the student Kuwait Times interviewed uses chatbots, he admitted being overly dependent on them by plagiarizing essays "reduces one's intellectual contribution and originality". Bhatia said students should not become too reliant on AI. "Students must understand that AI is just a means to help and not an easy access to education. It can be used as a framework, but not work itself." For students, AI is a double-edged sword that needs to be handled with care. "Students should utilize AI as a tool rather than a substitute. This will help enhance, and not replace, human abilities," she added.

## NBK launches enhanced Al Shabab package and student allowance campaign

**KUWAIT:** Underscoring its constant efforts to meet the needs of its youth customers and to provide the best services and offers that suit their various lifestyles, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has announced the launch of its enhanced Al Shabab Package and Student Allowance Campaign, which aims to provide exceptional benefits and exclusive offers to young Kuwaitis aged 13-24.

The NBK Al Shabab Package offers a wide range of benefits centralized on 5 categories: Entertainment, F&B, Electronics, Sports, and Lifestyle. The Package includes a buy-one-get-one free ticket at VOX cinemas, making movie nights more exciting and affordable. Al Shabab customers can also avail a weekly discount of KD 3 on food orders through the Deliveroo App.

In addition, customers can benefit from monthly

significant discounts on selected items from Chips store, ensuring access to the latest gadgets and tech products as well. Furthermore, customers can receive a 20% discount on all Platinum GYM and Miss Platinum subscriptions, encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle. To enhance shopping experiences for the customers, Al Shabab Package also provides a 10% instant discount and points collection at various outlets.

In addition to Al Shabab package benefits, students who transfer their allowance to NBK will have the chance to enjoy further benefits. This includes a weekly cashback of up to KD 5 on fuel at OULA every Friday, and complimentary coffee and snacks from Pret-A-Manger every Saturday. Abdullah Al Najdi, Senior Manager, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait stated, "The Al Shabab and Student Allowance Campaign is designed to cater to the diverse needs of our young customers. We aim to provide value through a range of benefits that support their entertainment, technological, lifestyle, and fitness needs. This campaign reinforces NBK's commitment to enriching the lives of the youth in Kuwait."

It is worth mentioning that NBK Consumer Banking Group always places the youth as a top priority in all the services, enhancements, cutting-edge payment solutions, as well as the prizes and exceptional offers they provide. For more information about the NBK Al Shabab Package and to apply, visit nbk.com/sha or contact our customer service at [1801801].



Abdullah Ahmad Al Najdi



## Local

# Environment Public Authority keen on rehabilitating the environment

## EPA to complete GCC project of 'Qurm plant' cultivation



The Deputy Director General for Technical Affairs at the Environment Public Authority, Dr Abdullah Al-Zaidan and the Director General of Nature Conservation at the Environment Authority in Oman, Sulaiman Al-Akhzami are seen during the event.



Deputy Director General for Technical Affairs at the Environment Public Authority, Dr Abdullah Al-Zaidan and the Assistant Director General at the Environment Authority of Oman, Dr Thuraya bint Saeed Al-Sariri. — KUNA photos



Al-Qurm Reserve in Muscat

**KUWAIT:** The Environment Public Authority (EPA) confirmed on Tuesday its keenness to rehabilitate the Kuwaiti environment by completing its Gulf projects for the cultivation of (Qurm) plants in cooperation with the Sultanate of Oman. Dr Abdullah Al-Zaidan, Deputy Director General for Technical Affairs at the Authority, said that on a recent visit to Oman, he met with the Director General of Nature Conservation at the Environment Agency of Oman, Sulaiman Al-Akhzami, and expressed his "appreciation for their constant efforts to improve environmental conditions locally and in the Gulf."

Al-Zaidan added that the visit came as a continuation of Gulf cooperation in environmental fields and the contribution of the Environment Agency of Oman in providing Kuwait with seeds of mangrove plants, which the Authority has succeeded in cultivating since 2018 through cooperation between the two sides. He explained that during the visit, Kuwait was provided with 2,000 seeds of mangrove plants, which were collected and provided

by the Environment Agency of Oman during this season to be transported and cultivated in the Jahra Reserve.

They also visited the Qurm Reserve in Muscat and met the Head of the Wetland Environments Department, Bader Al-Busaidi. Qurm Reserve was declared a nature reserve in 1975 and is the first site registered in the Ramsar Wetland Convention, with a total area of 104,5775 hectares. Al-Zaidan pointed out that the Omani Qurm Reserve consists of natural forests in which there is one species of natural mangrove trees — the only *Avicenna Marina* that has the ability to adapt to the climatic situation of the environment there.

He pointed out that the reserve has played a key role in the rehabilitation efforts carried out by the Environment Agency to restore mangroves in the Sultanate since 2,000 through the National Mangrove Cultivation Program to preserve biodiversity and promote the concept of ecotourism. He said that during the visit, many topics were also discussed on ways to promote sustainable environ-



Mangrove seeds donated by Oman to Kuwait to be planted in the Jahra Reserve.

mental development and to enrich the cultivation of mangrove plants, which existed 80 years ago in the north of the coast of Kuwait Bay, where logging and overgrazing led to their extinction.

He stressed that the step of cultivating these plants will address the global climatic conditions. Qurm plants contribute to the reduction of carbon dioxide rates three to five times more

than tropical forests and create natural habitats for fish, crustaceans, and birds. Qurm plants work to protect the coasts from erosion, purify seawater, and adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change faced by Kuwait.

The officials also discussed the best ways of cooperation for the two countries to achieve environmental sustainability and preserve its natural resources in line with achieving the goals of Kuwait's sustainable development plan and implementing the commitments of international agreements in the fields of climate change and biodiversity preservation ratified by the two countries.

He expressed his thanks to the Director General of Nature Conservation at the Environment Agency, Sulaiman Al-Akhzami, the Assistant Director General at the Authority, Dr. Thuraya bint Saeed Al-Sariri, and the Qurm expert in Oman, Bader Al-Balushi, "for their continuous cooperation with Kuwait, providing it with Qurm plants and discussing the best sustainable environmental solutions." — KUNA

## GCC Petroleum Media Forum evaluates ties

**SALALAH:** Since its inception in March 2013 in Kuwait, the GCC Petroleum Media Forum has continuously achieved success across various Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC); this year, the forum will be in Oman. The 5th GCC Petroleum Media Forum would be starting on Wednesday in Oman, hosted under the auspices of Oman Undersecretary for the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, Mohsen bin Hamad Al-Hadrami, under the title "Petroleum Media for the Gulf Countries... Enabling Communication and Enhancing Understanding."

The event would witness the participation of energy ministries, agencies, and companies from all the GCC member states, alongside entities and individuals involved in media and communication. The forum presents a valuable opportunity to discuss topics related to petroleum media, including the role of media outlets in shaping a comprehensive strategy for the sector, highlighting the significance of oil revenues in driving economic and social development within the GCC, and emphasizing environmental considerations.

It will evaluate the relationship between the media and the petroleum sector in the GCC, underscoring the media's role in promoting and strengthening petroleum culture across various social segments. The forum seeks to reinforce the role of media in advancing development objectives within the GCC and addressing misconceptions that may hinder progress and serves as a bridge to convey accurate information from officials to media personnel and, subsequently, the public.

### Role of GCC media

Hosted in Salalah, in the Governorate of Dhofar, the forum aims to enhance the role of GCC media in supporting energy sector issues and keeping the media updated on the latest developments in the industry to counter misinformation and misconceptions surrounding oil and gas. This event would provide a platform for dialogue between media professionals and experts, fostering discussions on relevant topics and sharing experiences to strengthen the community's connections to "petroleum culture" amidst the spread of inaccurate information.

Key discussions would focus on the oil, gas, and new energy sectors, aligning with global and local trends, and exploring the media's role in energy matters, the challenges faced by the petroleum sector in producing countries, energy transitions, emission reduction, and the unified petroleum media for GCC nations.

The first session of the 5th forum would be discussing and highlighting critical topics, such as

the role of gas in the global economy, optimizing the use of petroleum resources through downstream industries, optimizing the use of petroleum resources, and sustaining global oil and gas marketing efforts. The session would also feature contributions from Mohammad Al-Shatti, Kuwait's Governor to OPEC and National Representative to OPEC, among other speakers from the GCC.

The second session would be addressing future trends in the oil and gas sector, training the younger generations to create specialized media content for the industry, the challenges faced by media in energy issues in oil-producing countries, the importance of enhancing the skills of petroleum media professionals, and cooperation among GCC states in promoting oil as a global energy resource and countering opposing narratives.

### Raising awareness

A workshop would be held that focuses on media's role in raising awareness of energy's importance, influencing consumer behavior to conserve energy, utilizing social media for energy topics, supporting energy transitions, and highlighting key investment opportunities in renewable energy projects for the GCC. The concept of a petroleum media strategy was first proposed by Kuwait during a Petroleum Cooperation Committee in Doha in 2008. Kuwait presented a paper on the impact of petroleum media in the GCC, emphasizing the media's role in guiding public opinion given petroleum status as a strategic commodity and a primary energy source essential to the GCC and global economies.

During its 29th meeting in Kuwait on October 10, 2010, the GCC Petroleum Cooperation Committee resolved to prepare a petroleum media strategy, which later received approval during the 31st meeting in Riyadh on October 9, 2012, leading to the inaugural Petroleum Media Forum in Kuwait in March 2013. Organized once every two years, under the auspices of the GCC General Secretariat, the forum is an initiative of the GCC Petroleum and Gas Committee, aimed at strengthening collaboration between petroleum media organizations within GCC ministries, national companies, and local and international media.

The forum was first held in Kuwait, with Riyadh hosting the second, Abu Dhabi the third, and Dubai the fourth during the GCC Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, as part of efforts to implement the GCC Petroleum Media Strategy and enhance the capabilities of specialized media personnel in accurately portraying the petroleum sector. The 5th forum was anticipated to gain momentum and drive progress within the GCC, held in Oman, a country committed to sustainable energy projects and experiencing significant investment growth in this area under the leadership of Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, whose efforts in supporting the energy sector were widely recognized. — KUNA



## Ministry checks water samples

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy confirmed that a number of fresh water samples were collected and tested from various areas in Jahra and their validity. This is part of the periodic maintenance of the

water network to ensure its quality. The Ministry said in a press statement on Tuesday that the quality of fresh water pumped into the network is monitored around the clock through emergency centers distributed across the country's six governorates. It explained that in the event of detecting any change in the water quality, a report can be submitted via the unified call center (152) or the Ministry's official accounts on social media platforms. — KUNA

## Saudi approves MoU on SPA and KUNA news exchange

**RIYADH:** The Council of Ministers of Saudi Arabia gave thumbs up Tuesday for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on news exchange between the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) and the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA). Acting Minister of Information Dr



Issam bin Saeed said in a statement that the meeting mulled the latest updates concerning the new cooperation that is built upon the MoU between KUNA and SPA, which was signed on the 7th of March. The MoU was signed by the two respective heads of both agencies, Dr Fatima Al-Salem representing KUNA and Fahd Al-Aqran representing SPA. — KUNA

## 448 properties traded in July

**KUWAIT:** Statistics from the Real Estate Registration and Documentation Department at the Ministry of Justice showed on Tuesday that contracts for 448 properties with a total value of KD 359.07 million (about \$1.2 billion) were traded during the month of July. The statistics published on the website of the Ministry of Justice showed that private real estate contracts came out on top with 321 properties worth KD 153.02 million (about \$445.9 million), followed by investment real estate with 105 properties worth KD 105.62 million (about \$348.4 million).

Real estate contracts for the commercial sector

amounted to 11 properties worth KD 65.9 million (about \$217.4 million), in addition to the registration of five contracts in the artisan real estate sector worth KD 6.1 million (about \$20 million dollars) and three properties in the exhibition sector worth KD 28 million (about \$92 million). One property was traded last July in the warehouse sector worth KD 2.5 million (about \$8.2 million) and two properties in the coastal strip worth KD 15.6 million (about \$51.4 million).

Regarding the distribution of real estate contracts to the governorates, the statistics showed that Ahmadi Governorate came in first place with the number of registered contracts (156 contracts), followed by Hawally Governorate (103 contracts), Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate (67 contracts), Farwaniya (49 contracts), Kuwait Capital with 38 contracts, and finally Jahra Governorate with 35 contracts. — KUNA

## Awqaf, KUNA explore ways to enhance ties

**KUWAIT:** The Director General of KUNA, Dr Fatima Al-Salem, explored on Tuesday with Acting Secretary General of Awqaf General Secretariat, Amal Al-Dallal, ways to enhance media cooperation to support endowment activities and projects in Kuwait. During the meeting, both sides discussed ways to benefit from KUNA's news services to publish about Awqaf's activities, highlighting their impact on society and their role in the country's development.

Al-Salem expressed her appreciation regarding the General Secretariat of Awqaf's role in supporting charitable and development projects in Kuwait, stressing KUNA's full commitment in providing all necessary media support to enhance these efforts. For her part, Al-Dallal expressed appreciation for the great role that KUNA plays in providing media support for the secretariat's work, stressing its keenness to strengthen cooperation further. — KUNA



KUNA Director General Dr Fatima Al-Salem meets Acting Secretary General of Awqaf Secretariat Amal Al-Dallal and other officials. — KUNA photos

# Burgan Bank celebrates academic achievement of employees' children

Confirming bank's steadfast support of the growth and success of employees, families



**KUWAIT:** As part of its unwavering support for its employees and their families, Burgan Bank organized a ceremony to honor the academically outstanding children of its employees, who graduated from high school with top honors. The ceremony was held at Burgan's Head Office in the presence of the Bank's Executive Management, the 11 honorees, and their families, as a testament to Burgan's steadfast support of the youth of Kuwait, beginning with the Bank's family and extending to all circles of society.

This comes as part of the Bank's comprehensive social responsibility program and committed strategy for adopting Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles in business and community development efforts. In his opening speech, Naqeeb Amin, General Manager - Human Resources and Development for the Group at Burgan Bank, said: "On behalf of the entire Burgan family, I would like to congratulate our young graduates on their remarkable academic achievement."

To all young graduates, I remind them that as they transition to their new academic journey in college that brings newfound excitement and novel experi-



Naqeeb Amin

ences, it is important to maintain a spirit of perseverance and dedication; no matter the challenges or obstacles. I would also like to extend my regards to all dedicated parents, starting with our valued Burgan Bank employees, whose support and encouragement remain integral to their children's long-term success."

Given the vital role of youths in realizing Kuwait's vision for growth and progress, Naqeeb confirmed that Burgan Bank remains committed to crafting human capital development programs that cater to the young and aspiring professionals of Kuwait, who will build the workforce of tomorrow. He also added that Burgan's HRD department continues to focus its energy on supporting its staff inside

and outside the workplace, guaranteeing that they achieve a healthy work-life balance which allows them to perform their duties as parents in meeting their children's needs.

The honorees, all of whom graduated from public and private schools with 90 percent or more in their field of study, whether literature, sciences or other disciplines, received valuable gifts from Burgan Bank. As part of its dynamic and encompassing social responsibility program, its committed adherence to the guiding ESG principles, and its mission to remain an employer of choice, Burgan Bank continues to provide its employees with multiple resources that enable them to grow personally and professionally.

This includes efforts such as hosting the "Burgan Talks" series and offering summer internships for aspiring undergraduate students who wish to pursue a career in banking and finance. Beyond these efforts, the Bank strives to organize different engaging events and campaigns that aim to raise awareness about vital topics (health, education, and financial literacy) among its community, and contribute to the multifaceted development of Kuwait.

## Kuwait marks academic scholarships centenary

**KUWAIT:** As Kuwait marks the centenary of academic scholarship programs, which saw its sons and daughters head abroad to gain knowledge and skills, the state continues to invest in such schemes to meet challenges and build a better future. In 1924, Kuwait sent its very first scholarship delegation to Baghdad, Iraq, which included seven students: Sheikh Fahad Salem Al-Sabah, Mohammad Al-Dosiri, Khaled Al-Adsani, Ahmad Al-Ali, Abdulkareem Al-Ali, Abdullah Al-Abduljaleel, and Salman Al-Enezi.

The state is currently reworking measures to over-

haul the negative aspects of the scholarship program and further develop them to avoid wasting of finances and elevate the level of academia and knowledge seeking. Tasked with the tremendous responsibility, Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr Adel Al-Adwani had assigned a committee to look into the matter to achieve the national development goals for education, especially within scholarship programs.

The minister said that the task was daunting; however, it should not stand in the way of finding serious and fundamental solutions for scholarship programs, which caused undeniable waste of financial resources. Creating solutions for scholarship problems would help develop Kuwait's youth foundation, achieving the goals set by the Kuwait Vision 2035 in meeting demands of the job market and establishing a strong foundation for education. According to a 2023 annual report by the State Audit Bureau, some 4,432 students academically faltered between 2020 and 2022, a number overshadowing similar statistics in 2013-14 and 2017-18 with only 2,634.

Faltering causes woes for students who could not continue their academic quest in addition to affect-

ing their parents financially. The State of Kuwait has set a considerable budget for scholarships and also provides scholarship students with a monthly allowance in accordance with the country of scholarship. Students with A merit scholarships also have a monthly bonus of 50 percent on top of their monthly allowance, while students with B merit scholarships get around a 25 percent bonus.

While expenses are on the rise, the state has made it clear that any losses from the higher education budget must be dealt with; therefore, the government will come out with a study that sets plans for annual scholarships to avoid wastefulness and also focus on the academic policies beneficial for students and Kuwait.

The Ministry of Higher Education had established several initiatives, including the Al-Deera (country) system, which academically linked Kuwaiti cultural bureaus abroad. The scholarships are also within Kuwait to help provide more options to students. It is worthy to note that Kuwait is eager to create a system for academic development able to face challenges, progressing skills of citizens and institutes in accordance with the 2024-25 annual development plan. — KUNA



Picture of the first Kuwaiti students to study in US in the fifties. — KUNA

## Senior military officers discuss security issues

**KUWAIT:** Commander of the Air Defense Force Major General Khaled Saad on Tuesday discussed with Commander of the Support Group in the region Colonel Billy Restrepo security issues. The Ministry of Defense said in a press statement that the meeting included friendly talks and discussions on important issues of common interest, especially those related to military aspects. — KUNA



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Away from home, Gazans agonize over loved ones

## Families of political prisoners in Bangladesh demand answers

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WEYMOUTH: A police officer restrains a protester during a 'Enough is Enough' demonstration called by far-right activists in Weymouth, on the southwest coast of England where the Bibby Stockholm migrant accommodation barge is moored, on August 4, 2024. — AFP

# No end in sight for UK riots

## UK expands jail capacity to house anti-Muslim mobs as online messages call for more protests

LIVERPOOL: The British government has increased its prison capacity to help tackle violent, week-long anti-Muslim riots that have prompted a growing number of countries to warn their citizens about the dangers of travelling in Britain. Riots across a number of towns and cities have erupted following the murder of three girls at a Taylor Swift-themed event in Southport, a seaside town in northern England, after false messaging on social media wrongly identified the suspected killer as an Islamist migrant.

Unrest has spread, with rioters targeting mosques and smashing windows of hotels housing asylum-seekers from Africa and the Middle East, chanting "get them out", in the first widespread outbreak of violence in Britain for 13 years. They have also pelted mosques with rocks, unverified videos online have shown some ethnic minorities being beaten up and one man photographed at a protest in Sunderland on Friday had a swastika tattooed on his back.

"My message to anyone who chooses to take part in this violence and thuggery is simple: the police, courts and prisons stand ready and you will face the consequences of your appalling acts," Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood said. The justice department, which is due to release some prisoners early as it battles a jail overcrowding crisis, said nearly 600 prison places had been secured to accommodate those engaged in violence. About 400 people have been arrested so far.

The unrest has prompted India, Australia, Nigeria and other countries to warn their citizens to stay vigilant. Saminata Bangura, a 52-year-old support worker in a care home in Liverpool, northern England, said she had felt so welcome in Britain after she moved from Sierra Leone. But she was now scared and largely staying at home. "I'm so scared, even when I'm walking now, because everywhere, we're scared, especially, we Blacks," she said, describing how a library was vandalized near where she lives.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer has vowed a reckoning to those who have engaged in rioting, hurling bricks at the police and counter protesters, and looting shops and burning cars. Police on Tuesday charged a 28-year-old man with stirring up racial hatred over Facebook posts linked to the disorder. A 14-year-old pleaded guilty to violent disorder.

### Racial hatred

On Monday night trouble flared in Plymouth, southern England, and again in Belfast in Northern Ireland, where hundreds of rioters threw petrol bombs and heavy masonry at officers and set a police Land Rover on fire. Messages online say immigration centers and law firms aiding migrants would be targeted on Wednesday, prompting anti-fascist groups to say they will counter any demonstration.

In Birmingham, Britain's second largest city, videos on Monday showed Asian men gathering with Palestinian flags after reports that anti-Muslim protesters may target the area. Reporters on the scene said they were met with hostility and videos appeared to show one white man being attacked in a pub.

The prospect of clashes between white and ethnic minority groups revived memories of race riots that broke out in Oldham and other northern English towns in 2001 - which an official report later attributed to a lack of social cohesion, with two communities living parallel lives. A poll by YouGov on Tuesday said three quarters of respondents said the rioters did not represent the views of Britain as a whole, with 7 percent saying they supported the violence. — Reuters

## Meta says Malaysian PM's posts on Haniyeh were removed in error

KUALA LUMPUR: Meta Platforms apologized on Tuesday for erroneously removing Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's social media posts in which he expressed condolences to a Hamas official about the assassination of the group's leader Ismail Haniyeh. Meta was sorry for "an operational error", adding that the content had been restored with "the correct newsworthy label," a Meta spokesperson told Reuters. The US social media giant designates Hamas, the Palestinian Islamist movement that governs Gaza, as a "dangerous organization" and bans content praising the group. It uses a mix of automated detection and human review to remove or label graphic visuals.

Anwar posted on Facebook and Instagram on July 31 a video recording of his phone call with a Hamas official to offer condolences over Haniyeh's death. He also posted a picture from his last meeting with Haniyeh in Qatar in May, along with a condolence message. In a similar incident in May, Meta restored Facebook posts by Anwar over his meeting with Haniyeh, saying they were taken down in error. Muslim-majority Malaysia, a staunch supporter of the Palestinian cause, has warned that firm action could be taken against Meta and other social media companies if they blocked pro-Palestinian content on their platforms. — Reuters

## Musk fans flames of anti-Muslim riots, spars with UK govt

LONDON: As far-right riots grip England, provocative tech billionaire Elon Musk is posting sympathy for the anti-immigration demonstrators, angering the UK government, which blames social media companies for fueling the unrest. The week-long disturbances that have spread to numerous cities are linked to misinformation online that the suspect behind a mass stabbing that killed three girls was a Muslim asylum seeker.

A war of words between X owner Musk and Prime Minister Keir Starmer's recently elected Labour administration began on Sunday when Musk tweeted that a British "civil war is inevitable". Starmer's spokesperson said Monday there was "no justification" for the comment, only for Musk to respond with a stream of posts Tuesday questioning the British leader's response to the riots.

Musk also referenced a dubious claim about policing that has been widely denied by lawmakers from across the political spectrum and police chiefs. "Use of language such as a 'civil war' is in no way acceptable," justice minister Heidi Alexander said on Tuesday, branding Musk's comments "deeply irresponsible". "We are seeing police officers being seriously injured, buildings set alight, and so I really do think that everyone who has a platform should be exercising their power responsibly," she told Times Radio.

The riots follow the murder on Monday last week of three girls aged between six and nine at a Taylor Swift-themed dance party in Southport, northwest England. The suspect is 17-year-old Axel Rudakubana, who was born in Britain, reportedly to immigrants from Rwanda. He did not come to the UK on an illegal small boat crossing as false rumors on social media have suggested.

Far-right protesters - sometimes masked and brandishing British flags - have clashed with police, torched cars, and attacked mosques and hotels housing asylum seekers, leading the government to provide emergency security to Islamic centers. In a post on X on Monday, Starmer vowed to apply "criminal law online as well as offline", adding that "we will not tolerate attacks on mosques or on Muslim communities".

Musk replied: "Shouldn't you be concerned about attacks on \*all\* communities?" His original "civil war" post came in reply to another X user blaming the riots on "the effects of mass migration and open



ALDERSHOT: Protesters hold placards during a 'Enough is Enough' demonstration called by far-right activists near a hotel housing asylum seekers in Aldershot on August 4, 2024. — AFP

borders". The comment was "not surprising for Elon Musk, who's been also feeding some of the conspiracy myths and some of the hateful rhetoric" surrounding the riots, said Julia Ebner, Senior Researcher at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue who specializes in far-right extremism.

In a post on Tuesday, Musk retweeted a video claiming to show Muslims attacking a pub, repeating "why aren't all communities protected in Britain?" and tagging Starmer. He also added a hashtag "TwoTierKeir", referring to allegations by those on the right of "two-tier policing" in which far-right agitators are punished more harshly.

Hard-right Reform UK leader Nigel Farage said on Monday that "since the soft policing of the Black Lives Matter protests, the impression of two-tier policing has become widespread". The BLM protests were largely peaceful, but pockets of disorder were heavily cracked down on by police. So were previous riots largely involving minority ethnic groups in 2011 when Starmer himself was chief state prosecutor.

### 'Nowhere to hide'

In Musk's latest series of posts, he claimed the UK

was censoring online content, saying "is this Britain or the Soviet Union?" Influencer Andrew Tate and far-right, anti-Islam figurehead Tommy Robinson are among people who promoted false claims about Rudakubana on X. EuropeInvasion, an anti-immigrant X account with hundreds of thousands of followers, still has a post up falsely claiming that the attacker was "confirmed to be Muslim".

One man charged with intending to stir up racial hatred related to alleged posts on Facebook in connection to the riots was due to appear in a court on Tuesday. "Online comments can have a huge influence on offline behavior," Ebner said.

Technology minister Peter Kyle met representatives from TikTok, Meta, Google, and X on Monday and warned that social media users spreading misinformation will have "nowhere to hide". Musk - who has reduced content moderation on Twitter since taking over in 2022 - regularly voices support for right-wing causes and politicians like ex-US president Donald Trump and Argentina President Javier Milei. He has reinstated several far-right accounts, including that of former English Defence League leader Robinson who had been banned since 2018. — AFP

## Sleeper agents tell Russian TV about living under cover

MOSCOW: Two sleeper agents returned to Russia in a prisoner exchange have spoken to state television about breaking the news to their Spanish-speaking children that they were in fact Russian. Artyom Dultsev and Anna Dultseva, a married couple who spent years posing as Argentine expats in Slovenia while acting as "illegals", returned to Russia to a hero's welcome last week, with their two children, Sofiya, 11, and Daniil, 9.

Such spies live abroad long-term under assumed identities. In 2010, a similar couple returned to Russia in a prisoner swap after bringing up their sons as Canadians. In their first interview since the exchange, which returned at least four Russian agents, the Dultsevs talked to Rossiya television channel at a foreign intelligence facility. The Dultsevs were convicted in Slovenia last month for spying.

"We told the children that we are Russian, that they are Russian, that we are the Dultsevs" Dultseva said, smiling, recalling the conversation on the plane from Ankara. Her husband said their daughter "had emotions, she started crying a little bit." Their son "reacted more calmly to this but very positively" he added.

Dressed in pink shirt and dark jeans, the couple walked hand in hand with their children, who had been placed in foster care after their arrest in December 2022. Dultseva was shown praising her children in Spanish - "muy bien" - as they said their first phrases in Russian. She said she had found it hard to speak Russian again. "You don't think in the language (Russian) - you are controlling yourself all the time and when we arrived we realized we couldn't speak," she said. Russia, whose president is a former KGB agent, has praised the couple's dedication. — AFP

## International

# Families of political prisoners in Bangladesh demand answers

## People wait for news of loved ones after some believed to be missing get released

**DHAKA:** Families of political prisoners secretly jailed in Bangladesh under the autocratic rule of ousted premier Sheikh Hasina waited desperately Tuesday for news of their relatives, as some of those missing were released. "We need answers," said Sanjida Islam Tulee, a coordinator of Mayer Daak, meaning "The Call of the Mothers", a group campaigning for the release of people detained by Hasina's security forces.

Rights groups accused Hasina's security forces of abducting and disappearing some 600 people — including many from the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the banned Jamaat-e-Islami, the country's largest Islamist party. Tulee told AFP that at least 20 families gathered outside a military intelligence force building in a northern Dhaka neighborhood, waiting for news of their relatives.

Former prime minister Khaleda Zia, a bitter rival of Hasina, was also released from years of house arrest. Army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman announced Monday that Hasina had resigned after weeks of deadly protests, and the military would form a caretaker government.

Hours later President Mohammed Shahabuddin — after a meeting with the army chief — said it had been decided to free all those arrested during the student protests, as well as key opposition leader Zia. "People who were detained between July 1 and August 5 as part of the anti-discrimination protests are being freed, and already many have been freed," Shiplu Zman, a press secretary of the president, said.

**'What happened to others?'**

Among the most high profile of those released on Tuesday was opposition activist and lawyer Ahmad Bin Quasem, son of Mir Quasem Ali, the executed leader of Jamaat-e-Islami. "He was released from secret detention this morning," family friend and relative Masum Khalili told AFP. "He had a medical check-up, his condition is stable."

Quasem, a British-educated barrister, was abducted — allegedly by security forces in plainclothes — in August 2016. Others released include former brigadier-general Abdullahil Aman Azmi, abducted in 2016, Jamaat-e-Islami said in a statement.

His father Ghulam Azam, the former head of Jamaat-e-Islami, died in prison in 2014. Security forces during Hasina's rule were accused of detaining tens of thousands of opposition activists, killing hundreds in extrajudicial encounters, and disappearing their leaders and supporters.

Human Rights Watch last year said security forces had committed "over 600 enforced disappearances" since Hasina came to power in 2009, and nearly 100 remain unaccounted for. Hasina's government denied the allegations of disappearances and extrajudicial killings, saying some of those reported missing drowned in the Mediterranean while trying to reach Europe. "We heard Ahmad Bin Quasem has been released," Tulee said. "But what happened to others?" — AFP



**DHAKA:** Families of prisoners arrested during the recent student protests and those who disappeared since Bangladesh's ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was elected in 2009, wait outside the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence office in Dhaka on August 6, 2024. — AFP

## Minorities' homes, businesses attacked in Bangladesh: Group

**DHAKA:** Hundreds of Hindu houses, businesses and temples have been vandalized since the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, a community association said on Tuesday, and mainly Hindu India said it was worried about the incidents. Hindus constitute about 8 percent of Bangladesh's 170 million people and have historically largely supported Hasina's Awami League party, which identifies as largely secular, instead of the opposition bloc that includes a hardline Islamist party.

Neighboring India, now sheltering Hasina after she fled on Monday from deadly protests after 15 years in power, said what was "particularly worrying was that minorities, their businesses and temples also came under attack at multiple locations". The Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC) said 200-300 mainly Hindu homes and businesses had been vandalized since Monday, and 15-20 Hindu temples damaged. Up to 40 people have been injured though not seriously, its general secretary, Rana Dasgupta, told Reuters.

"The communal atrocities erupted hours before she resigned," he said. "Although there is no killing, there is injury. Houses and businesses of minorities, especially Hindus, as well as temples, have been targeted, looted, damaged."

Reuters could not verify the scale of reported incidents amid the post-Hasina turmoil and police officers did not answer calls from Reuters seeking comment after mobs attacked many police stations. "The situation is horrific," said Manindra Kumar Nath, a Hindu community leader. "Even today, we are getting calls from people asking us to save their lives, but we are not receiving any support from anywhere." The military's media office said security forces were helping maintain law and order across the South Asian nation, without specifying any incidents. "Everyone's cooperation is highly desired in this regard," it said in a statement. — Reuters

## Tunisian presidential would-be hopefuls, jailed, restricted

**TUNIS:** A key Tunisian opposition figure and potential candidate for the upcoming presidential election jailed since October was sentenced to two years in prison late Monday night, according to local media.

Abir Moussi, 49, head of the Free Destourian Party and a former parliament member, had submitted her candidacy on Saturday via her lawyers, two days before her sentence, which local radio Mosaique FM reported. Moussi is a staunch critic of the incumbent Tunisian President Kais Saied and has been sentenced under Decree 54, a law enacted by Saied in 2022 to combat "false news". The High Independent Authority for Elections (ISIE) filed complaints against Moussi in February after she made public statements criticising ISIE as the country readies for its presidential election.

On Monday morning, Saied submitted his official candidacy for the election set to take place on October 6, while key candidates were being barred from challenging the incumbent president — including by prosecution and imprisonment.

Upon registering his candidacy, Saied, 66, told reporters in the capital Tunis that his candidacy was part of "a war of liberation and self-determination" aiming to "establish a new republic". That was shortly before three key presidential hopefuls said authorities had rejected their requests to access their criminal records — a requirement for candidates to register for the election — and Moussi's prison term.

Moussi, 49, a renowned politician and former lawmaker, was arrested on October 3 in front of the presidential palace, where she came to file

appeals against decrees issued by Saied. If the sentencing is upheld on appeal or later proceedings, Moussi will officially be barred from running for office as one of the candidacy criteria is that hopefuls must have a clean criminal record. She is accused of other crimes including "attacks that aim to change the form of government", in addition to her prosecution under Decree 54.

### Critics prosecuted

Critics have said the law has been used to stifle political dissent as the country prepares for the election in which Saied is the frontrunner. Over the past 18 months, more than 60 critical voices have been prosecuted under the decree, according to the National Union of Tunisian Journalists.

Several would-be candidates challenging Saied — who seized wide-ranging powers two years after his 2019 election — are either in prison or being prosecuted. Media personality Nizar Chaari was also handed an eight-month sentence Monday night, days after three staffers on his campaign were arrested on suspicions of forging signatures.

Mondher Zenaidi said in video posted on Facebook that "the authority working under Saied's instructions refused to give (him) the criminal record". The move unofficially bars him and others from joining the race, with the August 6 deadline to submit candidacies looming.

Retired admiral Kamel Akrouf also said in a Facebook post that authorities were "unable to deliver (his) criminal record" because the job title on his national ID card was out of date. "The ruling authority has decided to exclude every opposing voice" and "move towards an undemocratic system that rejects pluralism and peaceful alternation of power", Akrouf said.

Rapper-turned-businessman Karim Gharbi — better known by his stage name K2RhyM — posted a video on Facebook in which he showed a letter rejecting his request to obtain the criminal record,

without specifying a reason for it. Last week, four women working on Gharbi's presidential campaign were given jail time for allegedly buying signatures of endorsement. To be listed on the ballot, candidates are required to present a list of signatures from 10,000 registered voters, with at least 500 voter signatures per constituency. Saied said he collected over 240,000 signatures.

### 'Fueling fear'

Facing repression allegations, Saied on Monday denied that his government was mistreating critical voices, saying that "whoever talks about restrictions is delusional". "I did not oppress anyone, and the law applies to everyone equally," he said. "I am here as a citizen to run for office." "We will not accept any foreign party interfering in the choices of our people," he added.

Other jailed would-be candidates include Issam Chebbi, leader of the centrist Al-Joumhour party, and Ghazi Chaouchi, head of the social-democratic party Democratic Current, both held for "plotting against the state". The two politicians are among the more than 20 Saied opponents detained since a flurry of arrests began in February 2023.

A group of around 30 NGOs denounced last week the candidates' "arbitrary detention", an electoral authority which has "lost its independence" and "the monopolization of the public space" to bolster Saied's re-election bid.

Last month, Amnesty International Secretary General Agnes Callamard said that since Saied's power grab, "violations that we thought part of Tunisia's past are becoming more and more discernible and systematic". "Instead of the vibrant debates of a pluralist political scene, I observed government repression, fuelling fear and dread about what's to come." Saied on Monday said "we are in a war of liberation and we don't want to restrict anyone's freedoms... I did not interfere with the judiciary." — AFP

## Zionists kill 12 in West Bank...

Continued from Page 1

"The army entered and surrounded the house as snipers took positions on nearby rooftops and shot anyone who moved," he said. The teenager was shot when the troops "entered the area of the hospital", Assad said.

Aqaba mayor Abdel Razzaq Abu Arra said the teenager "was killed in cold blood". "This Zionist crime is a systematic crime that the (Zionists) carry out on a daily basis," he added. In a separate incident on Tuesday, police said they killed a Palestinian after he attacked a border police officer with a screwdriver at a checkpoint between Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

The Zionist military campaign in Gaza has killed at least 39,653 people, according to the territory's health ministry, mostly women and children. On Tuesday, air strikes killed five Palestinians in the Al-Bureij camp, in the

central Gaza Strip, medics said, while two others were killed in a separate air strike in Rafah, near the southern Gaza border with Egypt. The Islamist movement's armed wing said its fighters destroyed two Zionist troop carriers in an ambush east of Rafah, where heavy fighting has been reported for weeks.

The territory's health ministry said Zionist military strikes have killed at least 30 Palestinians and wounded 66 others in the past 24 hours. "Many victims are still under the rubble and on the roads, where the teams of the ambulance and civil emergency service can't reach," the ministry said in a statement.

Most of Gaza's population has been displaced multiple times since the start of the war and the fighting has brought misery to thousands trapped in overcrowded tent shelters. Residents said Zionist tank shelling continued overnight in Bureij, Al-Maghazi, Nuseirat and Deir Al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip, where tens of thousands of displaced families from all over the enclave have sought temporary refuge. Residents and Hamas media said tanks made a brief advance earlier on Tuesday in Al-Zahra City northwest of Nuseirat. — Agencies

Monday was the deadliest day since protests began in early July, with a further 10 people killed on Tuesday, taking the total toll overall to at least 432, according to an AFP tally based on police, government officials and doctors at hospitals.

Protesters broke into parliament and torched TV stations. Others smashed statues of Hasina's father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh's independence hero. Some businesses and homes owned by Hindus — a group seen by some in the Muslim-majority nation as close to Hasina — were also attacked, witnesses said. Bangladeshi rights groups, as well as US and European Union diplomats, said Tuesday they were "very concerned" about reports of attacks on religious, ethnic and other minority groups.

Key police unions said their members had declared a strike "until the security of every member of the police is secured", offering their "apology" for police actions against the protesters. Key regional allies of Bangladesh, neighboring India and China, both called for calm on Tuesday. China hopes that "social stability can be restored in Bangladesh" soon, the foreign ministry in Beijing said on Tuesday, while Indian foreign minister S. Jaishankar said he was "deeply concerned till law and order is visibly restored". — Agencies

## Harris picks Tim Walz as...

Continued from Page 1

voters, a demographic that propelled Trump to victory in 2016. Walz fits that description as a 60-year-old Midwesterner with a folksy manner, decades of military experience and a rural perspective — a gun-owning Democrat who tweets about hunting.

The onetime teacher and school sports coach flipped a Republican district to win a seat in the US House of Representatives in a state seen as light years from the coastal elites of California, Harris's home turf, or the East Coast. At the same time, Walz will appeal to the left for championing popular Democratic policies including cannabis legalization, increasing worker protections, safeguarding abortion rights, and supporting tighter firearm restrictions.

Trump's campaign immediately branded the Minnesota as a "dangerously liberal extremist" seeking to impose California values on the nation. But "to characterize him as left is so unreal", Nancy Pelosi, the former House speaker who worked extensively with him in Congress, told MSNBC. Walz "is right down the middle. He's a heartland of America Democrat."

Walz called his naming the "honor of a lifetime" and quipped it felt like "the first day of school". He and Harris will hit the campaign trail immediately, launching an intense, five-day swing through battleground states starting Tuesday in the biggest prize, Pennsylvania. Fresh from securing the official Democratic nomination, Harris will head to the national convention in Chicago in two weeks in total control of her party.

It has been a remarkable journey for Harris, who only entered the race last month when 81-year-old President Joe Biden withdrew, bowing to mounting concerns over his mental acuity. In a campaign barely two weeks old, the 59-year-old former prosecutor and senator has obliterated fundraising records, attracted huge crowds and dominated social media on her way to erasing what had been Trump's growing lead in polls over Biden.

The latest presidential poll by the University of Massachusetts Amherst released Monday has Harris leading Trump nationally by three percentage points — 46 to 43 — compared to a four-point lead for Trump over Biden in

January. In the swing states that decide the Electoral College contest in US elections, Harris is neck and neck with Trump, who shocked the world with his 2016 presidential victory but was beaten by Biden in 2020.

Picking a running mate was seen as the first big test for Harris in her bid to become the country's chief executive. Now, Harris and Walz will face the first hurdle of their ground game as they make the nationwide swing this week from Philadelphia to Wisconsin, Michigan, Arizona and Nevada. Tropical Storm Debby has forced the postponement of a stop in battleground Georgia, and according to media reports also North Carolina.

Pennsylvania is part of the "blue wall" that carried Biden to victory in 2020, alongside Michigan and Wisconsin. That was a main reason many expected Harris to instead pick that state's governor, Josh Shapiro. Also on the vice presidential shortlist had been former astronaut and current US Senator Mark Kelly, of Arizona, and Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear.

Trump was riding high politically last month after surviving an assassination attempt at a rally, and then using the Republican convention to highlight his image of vigor against the physically frail Biden. But with Biden's dramatic exit and Harris's fast start, he is scrambling to recalculate. At a rally Saturday in Georgia, Trump called Harris a "Marxist" who would cause an "economic crash". Three days earlier, he shocked many when he told an audience of Black journalists that Harris had "turned black" out of political expediency. Walz has attacked Trump and his running mate JD Vance as "weird", a catchy insult that has been picked up by the Harris campaign, social media and Democratic activists. Walz gave the nascent Harris campaign the new attack line in a late July interview: "These are weird people on the other side: They want to take books away. They want to be in your exam room," referring to book bans and women's reproductive consultations with doctors.

Walz has also assailed claims by Trump and Vance of having middle-class credentials. "They keep talking about the middle class. A robber baron real estate guy and a venture capitalist trying to tell us they understand who we are? They don't know who we are," Walz said in an MSNBC interview. The Harris campaign hopes Walz's extensive National Guard career, coupled with a successful run as a high school football coach, and his Dad joke videos will attract rural voters who are not yet dedicated to a second Trump term in the White House. — Agencies

## Bangladesh president dissolves parliament...

Continued from Page 1

of independence from Pakistan. But he said Bangladeshis were angry with neighbor India for allowing Hasina to land there after fleeing Dhaka. "India is our best friend... people are angry at India because you are supporting the person who destroyed our lives," Yunus said.

Streets in the capital were largely peaceful on Tuesday — with traffic resuming, shops opening and international flights resuming at Dhaka's airport — but government offices were mainly closed a day after chaotic violence in which at least 122 people were killed. Millions of Bangladeshis flooded the streets of Dhaka to celebrate after Waker's announcement on Monday — and jubilant crowds also stormed and looted Hasina's official residence.

"We have been freed from a dictatorship", said Saizid Ahnaf, 21, comparing the events to the independence war that split the nation from Pakistan more than five decades ago. Police said mobs had launched revenge attacks on Hasina's allies and their own officers, as well as broke into a prison, releasing more than 500 inmates.

## International

# Away from home, Gazans agonize over loved ones

## France blames Zionist authorities' closure of Rafah crossing for tearing apart evacuated families

RENNES, France: When Zionist air strikes hit his neighborhood early on in the Gaza war, Palestinian social worker Tareq Abu Eita, 42, saw his whole life upended in seconds. The bombardment on October 14 blew in the walls of his two-storey family home. It killed his 77-year-old father Hamed, his wife of 15 years Muntaha, 37, and his 11-year-old son Ilyas. It also took the lives of his two nieces, eight-year-old Mira and 14-year-old Tala. "It's all gone," said Abu Eita, a tear streaming down his cheek in the French city of Rennes, after showing AFP pictures of his wedding and late son grinning on his phone.

"It's not just numbers," said Abu Eita. "Every one of these human beings had their loved ones, their family, their memories." He and his son Fares were outside their home in the northern Jabalia refugee camp after receiving a water delivery when the strikes hit, and were both badly wounded. Fares suffered a large skull fracture that plunged him into a coma for more than three weeks.

### 'Going through hell'

Ten months on, with Zionist forces still pounding Gaza, both are recovering in France following extensive medical care. But Abu Eita is terrified he could now also lose two other sons he was forced to leave behind without a mother in the besieged territory: 10-year-old Jud and 15-year-old Ahmad. "It'll be a disaster if anything happens to them," the father said. "I really couldn't cope."

Abu Eita says he has been promised that as soon as he is granted asylum, he will be able to apply to bring his children to France. But he is still waiting, leaving him with too much time to agonize about the impossible choice he made. "Fares was dying. If I had stayed, I would have lost him," he said. The Zionist offensive has wounded more than 91,000 people since October 7, the Gaza authorities say. Among these, around 10 children in Gaza every day lose one or both legs, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees says.

Aspiring soccer player Asef Abu Mhadi, 12, is one of them. He says he was playing football outside his home in the central Nuseirat refugee camp on October 16 when his neighborhood was hit, reducing it to rubble. "I thought there was debris on my leg," he told AFP, sitting in a wheelchair with a Palestinian football scarf over his shoulder near a Paris suburb hospital. "I sat up to remove it and I discovered my leg was severed."

Asef was also flown to France for treatment with his mother Raja Abdulkarim Abu Mhadi. But Abu Mhadi, a 47-year-old who lost her husband when Asef was an infant, was not allowed to bring her other five children - Enas, 13, Aisha, 15, Ahmad, 17, Moayed, 18, and Mohammad, 20.

The mother, who says she has lost three nephews in the war, is also wracked with worry as she waits. "My children are going through hell and I'm terrified I'm going to be told I've lost them," she said. She added her son, who has been deeply depressed, could not heal properly without his siblings.

was looking into the matter. Jarrar, the wife of a leading Hamas figure in Jenin, was arrested on May 21 and subsequently placed in administrative detention, which allows for detention without charge for an extended period. According to the Palestinian Prisoners' Club, a watchdog and advocacy group, Jarrar was released nine days after her arrest, despite being under administrative detention. Following her release, she was taken to hospital where she remained unconscious until her death Monday morning.

Amani Sarahneh, spokeswoman for the Prisoners' Club, told AFP Jarrar "died and her story was buried with her, as we don't know exactly how she was wounded" while in detention. The Commission and the Club both said in an obituary statement that the Zionist entity had committed a "crime" against Jarrar that led to the amputation of her



Raja Abdulkareem Abu Mhadi and her son Asef, whose leg was amputated after being injured in Zionist bombardment, pose in Vincennes, on the outskirts of Paris, on July 19, 2024. — AFP photos

The French foreign ministry says it has evacuated almost 300 people from Gaza since the war started, including 15 wounded Palestinian children and their chaperones. But it added that, if some family members have not been able to come to France, it was not linked to asylum requests. It was "either because they have not been allowed to by the (Zionist) authorities" or because the Rafah border crossing from Gaza into Egypt "has been closed since May", it said.

### 'No longer shocked'

Majed Abu Shamla, 26, was abroad when the war broke out, and watched horrified in the early months of the war as his family tried to escape the conflict. He, his mother, seven brothers and three-year-old niece have now been reunited in France.

But a Zionist air strike on the southern town of Rafah on December 13 killed his father Ahmed Abu Shamla, a consular employee at the Gaza French Institute. A video of the aftermath, which Abu Shamla shared with AFP but cannot bring himself to watch,

shows frantic men carrying his father's unconscious body out of the wreckage, a gash visible on his head.

He had been granted permission to leave Gaza with part of the family the previous month, but had stayed behind waiting for his last four sons to be allowed out too. All four, including two who were wounded in the same strike, were finally able to leave in late December.

The family today live together in the Paris region, but Abu Shamla says moving on is very hard. "They're glued to the news all day. There's still family over there," the software engineer told AFP at a cafe in Paris.

He says he has lost an uncle and three cousins in the war, while his paternal grandmother died a few weeks ago due to a lack of medicine in the besieged territory. Abu Shamla says he has lost touch with most of his school and university friends, and believes around 20 have been killed. "Today people are no longer shocked that someone is dead, but that they survived. That's how bad it's become," he said. — AFP



RENNES: Tareq Abu Eita poses next to his son Fares in Rennes, western France, on July 17, 2024.

He and another son, 14-year-old Fares, are among just a handful of Palestinians wounded in the war who have been flown over to France for specialized medical treatment.

The Zionist entity's offensive on Gaza has killed at least 39,550 people, according to health authorities in the territory. The ten-month assault came after Hamas-led militants attacked southern communities in the Zionist entity, which resulted in the deaths of 1,197 people, according to an AFP tally of Zionist figures.

## Palestinian woman dies of wounds sustained in Zionist detention

JENIN: A Palestinian woman died on Monday of wounds inflicted while she was held by Zionist forces two months ago, authorities in the occupied West Bank said. "Former prisoner Wafaa Jarrar, 50, from Jenin ... died Monday morning in Ibn Sina hospital in Jenin as a result of a very serious injury she sustained during her arrest," the Palestinian Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs said.

Approached by AFP, the Zionist military said it



DOHA: Children take part in an activity at the Thumama Complex, designated to accommodate displaced Palestinians from Gaza. — AFP photos

## In Qatar, traumatized Gaza children cope with lost limbs, homes

DOHA: Wheeling herself around Doha's Thumama complex for medical evacuees from Gaza, Maryam Ahmed wears a look of determination, breaking into a smile when she sees someone she knows. The six-year-old was evacuated to Qatar from Gaza in February after her home was hit by a Zionist strike which killed her mother, father and brother, and took her right leg.

Sitting in her new wheelchair, Maryam hitches up the skirt of her colorful, floral patterned dress to reveal what remains of her limb, amputated above the knee. Her missing lower leg is "in heaven", like her family, she says. Maryam's aunt Fatima Farajallah, 20, travelled with her niece to Qatar, and describes her as "psychologically better now".

They are among roughly 2,000 residents at the Thumama complex who are now trying to adapt to life away from the battlefields of Gaza. Both carry the memory of the morning the home they shared was destroyed by two Zionist missiles.

Maryam was mistaken for dead in the chaotic aftermath of the strike and her body placed with those of her dead relatives. "She did not move or make a sound. Then suddenly I heard a voice," Farajallah said, recalling

the moment her niece cried out. After her evacuation, Maryam spent two months in hospital in Doha, most of it at the Hamad General, and required three operations to complete the amputation of her leg.

### Culture shock

Adapting to life in the wealthy Gulf emirate after the horrors of war-devastated Gaza has been confusing. "At night she asks a lot" of questions, Farajallah said. Even for Farajallah, the change has been disorientating. "Here, everything is available," she said. "Why is Gaza not like the other countries? Why is it occupied?" she asked. Maryam is among the lucky ones who were evacuated via Egypt for medical treatment before Zionist troops closed the Rafah border crossing from Gaza in earlier May. By the end of June, a total of 2,000 Gaza children had had one or both legs amputated following Zionist military action, the equivalent of around 10 a day, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) said at the end of June.

The head of Hamad Medical Corporation's special education department, Mousa Mohammad, runs group therapy clinics at the Thumama complex for 190 children aged between three and six. He said that the sessions, which include social skills and art therapy, are an "important pillar" for rehabilitation. Three months ago, Mohammad explained, the children could not sit still, and were prone to violent outbursts, with some "hitting the doors, hitting people, hitting the children beside them". Progress in the sessions has been painstaking but over time the children have become more coop-

legs above the knees. The Prisoners' Club said its lawyer had requested that Zionist authorities return her amputated legs and send her medical reports but had not received a response. It alleged that one of her legs had been amputated without the consent of her family.

Wafaa Jarrar was married to Hamas figure Abdul Jabbar Jarrar, who has also been under administrative detention for more than six months. Thousands of Palestinians have been detained in Gaza, the West Bank and the Zionist entity since the start of the Zionist war, the United Nations human rights office said late last month. They have mostly been held in secret and in some cases subjected to treatment that may amount to torture, the OHCHR said in a report. The Zionist military has said its detention conditions are in line with international law. — AFP



A boy with a half-amputated leg on a bicycle plays with other children, some of them displaced from Gaza due to the Zionist assault on the territory.

erative. "Their behavior changed from aggressiveness, refusing the routines we are trying to build ... now they want to come every day."

### Personality change

The Thumama complex was originally built as accommodation for visiting football fans watching the 2022 World Cup. Now it accommodates 1,000 medical evacuees from Gaza, accompanied by caretakers, around 300 of them amputees. At dusk, when the sun sets over the complex's identikit sugar-white apartment blocks, the scorching summer heat eases and residents venture outside. Many are missing limbs.

Karim Al-Shayyah, 10, rides his bike around the complex despite losing his left leg. It was amputated below the knee after he was hit with shrapnel while playing in the family garden in Gaza. "Things were good. We were having fun outside when they bombed a restaurant near us and shrapnel flew," he said. His mother, Sabrine Al-Shayyah, said "the injury changed Karim's personality". He became nervous and often locked himself in his room. But after nearly four months of group sessions and counselling, Karim's outlook is improving. "The interaction with children here is very positive," his mother said. Speaking in the apartment they now call home, Karim said that he misses his friends back in Gaza, one of whom was recently killed. "Here we are comfortable, they take care of us and make us play," Karim said, adding he still wants to "return to Gaza if the war stops". — AFP

## Rocket attack on Iraq base injures US personnel

BAGHDAD: A rocket attack on a base in Iraq wounded multiple US personnel, officials said, adding to already heightened regional tensions over an expected Iranian counterattack on the Zionist entity.

The rocket fire on Monday was the latest in a series of attacks targeting Ain al-Assad base, which hosts American troops as well as personnel from the US-led coalition against the Islamic State jihadist group. "There was a suspected rocket attack today against US and coalition forces" at the site in western Iraq, a US defense spokesperson said. "Initial indications are that several US personnel were injured." "Base personnel are conducting a post-attack damage assessment" and updates will be provided as more information becomes available, the spokesperson added.

US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris were briefed on the attack, the White House said. "They discussed the steps we are taking to defend our forces and respond to any attack against our personnel in a manner and place of our choosing," it said in a statement. The Iraqi authorities said Tuesday that two rockets were fired at the base. Security forces seized a truck with eight rockets ready for launch and were pursuing the perpetrators of the attack, the government's security media unit said. Earlier, an Iraqi military source spoke of multiple rockets, while a commander in a pro-Iran armed group told AFP that at least two rockets targeted the base, without saying who was responsible. Such attacks were frequent early in the Zionist war in Gaza but since then have largely halted.

### Series of attacks

The killings are among the most serious series of tit-for-tat attacks that have heightened fears of a regional conflagration stemming from the Gaza war. The Iran-aligned "Axis of Resistance" against the Zionist entity, which also includes Iraqi groups and Yemen's Houthis, has already been drawn into the nearly 10-month war. Monday's rocket attack occurred after US forces carried out a strike last week on combatants who were attempting to launch drones that were deemed a threat to American and allied troops, a US official said. The strike, which Iraqi sources said left four killed, was the first by American forces in Iraq since February.

The Iraqi security media unit reiterated the "strong objection to any aggression, whether from inside or outside Iraq, on Iraqi territories, interests and targets." "We reject all reckless actions against Iraqi bases, diplomatic missions, and locations of the international coalition advisors, as well as anything that could escalate tension in the region or drag Iraq into dangerous situations," it added. Iraqi territory must not be used for "settling scores" that would lead to war, it said. There have been two recent attacks targeting bases hosting US and allied forces in Iraq - on July 16 and 25. Prior to that, US troops in Iraq and Syria had not been targeted since April. — AFP

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7, 2024

# Saudi Aramco CEO sees bullish outlook for global oil demand

## Oil giant's quarterly profit dips as output stays low

**RIYADH:** Saudi oil giant Aramco on Tuesday reported net profit of \$29.07 billion in the second quarter, a slight drop from the same period last year as output remained subdued. The decrease of 3.4 percent "mainly reflects the impact of lower crude oil volumes sold and weakening refining margins", the company said in a statement posted to the Saudi stock exchange.

Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest crude exporter, is currently producing roughly nine million barrels per day (bpd), well below its capacity of 12 million bpd. Production averaged 8.8 million bpd in June, Riyadh-based firm Jadwa Investment said last week. The relatively low figure reflects cuts dating back to October 2022, when the OPEC+ bloc of oil producers that Riyadh co-leads with Moscow announced it would reduce output by two million bpd to boost prices. In April 2023, several OPEC+ members announced they would further slash production by more than one million bpd, and in June 2023, Riyadh announced an additional voluntary cut of one million bpd.

"Output will remain at similar levels until at least October", at which point an OPEC+ agreement announced in June 2024 will allow "for gradual monthly increases", Jadwa said. Aramco is the jewel of the Saudi economy and the main source of revenue for Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 reform agenda, which aims to set the Gulf kingdom up for a prosperous post-oil future.

The firm's profits help allow Saudi Arabia to finance flagship projects including NEOM, the futuristic mega-city being built in the desert, a giant airport in Riyadh and major tourism and leisure developments. The IMF said in April that, at current production levels, Saudi Arabia's fiscal break-even oil price would be \$96.2 per barrel in 2024.

Brent, the international benchmark, was trading at \$76.43 per barrel on Tuesday after Monday's global

stock market rout fuelled by US recession fears. Yet Aramco chief executive Amin Nasser told reporters that Aramco was still "positive about the outlook for global oil demand", pointing to "strong" demand from China. "The market in my view is overreacting and the fundamentals do not support the drop in prices that we are witnessing today," Nasser said. "I think the market is reading too much into the short-term responses to the news coming from the US with regards to the number of jobs."

The government's stake in Aramco, one of the world's biggest companies by market capitalization, is around 81.5 percent. Aramco's initial public offering in 2019, the biggest flotation in history, raised \$29.4 billion, and a secondary offering this year of nearly 1.7 billion shares fetched \$12.35 billion. Aramco announced last year it would start paying a performance-based dividend in addition to its base dividend. In May, the firm announced base dividend payouts for the first quarter totalling \$20.3 billion and a performance-linked dividend distribution of \$10.8 billion to be paid in the second quarter.

Those payments will be extended for another quarter and Aramco "expects to declare industry-leading dividends of \$124.2 billion in 2024", Tuesday's statement said. "We have delivered market-leading performance once again, with strong earnings and cash flows in the first half of the year," Nasser said.

"Leveraging those strong earnings, we continued to deliver a base dividend that is sustainable and progressive," Aramco reported record profits in 2022 after Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent oil prices soaring, allowing Saudi Arabia to record its first budget surplus in nearly a decade.

But the cash cow saw its profits drop by a quarter last year because of lower oil prices and production cuts, and profits in the first quarter of this year



**JEDDAH:** This picture taken November 24, 2020 shows fuel trucks parked near silos at the Saudi Aramco oil facility in Saudi Arabia's Red Sea city of Jeddah. — AFP

were down 14.5 percent. In January, Aramco said it had been instructed to abandon a plan to increase production capacity to 13 million barrels per day, up from its current level of 12 million bpd. Analysts said the surprise announcement could reflect a lack of confidence in demand, although Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said it was motivated by the transition to cleaner fuels.

Saudi Arabia has pledged to achieve net zero car-

bon emissions by 2060, a statement that has drawn intense skepticism from environmental activists. Aramco has vowed to achieve "operational net-zero" carbon emissions by 2050, which does not include the emissions from customers burning its products.

Nasser told reporters on Tuesday that oil and gas demand "will not peak any time soon given the vital role that hydrocarbons continue to play in the global economy". — AFP

## Google has illegal monopoly on search: US judge

**WASHINGTON:** A US judge ruled on Monday that Google violated antitrust law, spending billions of dollars to create an illegal monopoly and become the world's default search engine, the first big win for federal authorities taking on Big Tech's market dominance. The ruling paves the way for a second trial to determine potential fixes, possibly including a breakup of Google parent Alphabet, which would change the landscape of the online advertising world that Google has dominated for years.

It is also a green light to aggressive US antitrust enforcers prosecuting Big Tech, a sector that has been under fire from across the political spectrum. "The court reaches the following conclusion: Google is a monopolist, and it has acted as one to maintain its monopoly," US District Judge Amit Mehta, Washington, DC, wrote. Google controls about 90 percent of the online search market and 95 percent on smartphones.

The "remedy" phase could be lengthy, followed by potential appeals to the US Court of Appeals, District of Columbia Circuit and the US Supreme Court. The legal wrangling could play out into next year, or even 2026. Shares of Alphabet fell 4.5 percent on Monday amid a broad decline in tech shares as the wider stock market cratered on recession fears. Google advertising was 77 percent of Alphabet's total sales in 2023. Alphabet said it plans to appeal Mehta's ruling. "This decision recognizes that Google offers the best search engine, but concludes that we shouldn't be allowed to make it easily available,"



**FRANKFURT:** This illustration photograph shows the logo of US multinational technology and internet-related services company Google displayed on a smartphone screen in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany. — AFP

Google said in a statement.

US Attorney General Merrick Garland called the ruling "a historic win for the American people," adding that "no company - no matter how large or influential - is above the law." White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the "pro-competition ruling is a victory for the American people," adding that "Americans deserve an internet that is free, fair, and open for competition."

Mehta noted that Google had paid \$26.3 billion in 2021 alone to ensure that its search engine is the default on smartphones and browsers, and to keep its dominant market share. "The default is extremely valuable real estate," Mehta wrote. "Even if a new entrant were positioned from a quality standpoint to bid for the default when an agreement expires, such

a firm could compete only if it were prepared to pay partners upwards of billions of dollars in revenue share and make them whole for any revenue shortfalls resulting from the change."

He added, "Google, of course, recognizes that losing defaults would dramatically impact its bottom line. For instance, Google has projected that losing the Safari default would result in a significant drop in queries and billions of dollars in lost revenues." The ruling is the first major decision in a series of cases taking on alleged monopolies in Big Tech. This case, filed by the Trump administration, went before a judge from September to November of last year. "A forced divestiture of the search business would sever Alphabet from its largest source of revenue. But even losing its capacity to strike exclusive default agreements could be detrimental for Google," said Emarketer senior analyst Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf, who said a drawn-out legal process would delay any immediate effects for consumers.

In the past four years, federal antitrust regulators have also sued Meta Platforms, Amazon.com and Apple, claiming the companies have illegally maintained monopolies. Those cases all began under the administration of former President Donald Trump.

Senator Amy Klobuchar, a Democrat who chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee's antitrust subcommittee, said the fact that the case spanned administrations shows strong bipartisan support for antitrust enforcement. "It's a huge victory for the American people that antitrust enforcement is alive and well when it comes to competition," she said. "Google is a rampant monopolist." When it was filed in 2020, the Google search case was the first time in a generation that the US government accused a major corporation of an illegal monopoly. Microsoft settled with the Justice Department in 2004 over claims that it forced its Internet Explorer Web browser on Windows users. — Reuters

## Japan seeks to calm market's nerves after global selloff

**TOKYO:** Japanese leaders rushed on Tuesday to assuage concerns about the sharp swings in the country's financial markets, with the prime minister urging calm and senior finance officials convening an emergency meeting to discuss the global stock market sell-off. The executives from Japan's Ministry of Finance, the Financial Services Agency and the Bank of Japan (BOJ) held the trilateral meeting on Tuesday afternoon, said Atsushi Mimura, the country's top currency diplomat, emphasizing close coordination between the government and the central bank.

"The government and the BOJ agreed that it is important to monitor developments in economic and financial markets domestic and abroad with a sense of urgency while calmly assessing what is happening," Mimura told reporters after the meeting. The gathering is typically held in times of market turbulence, partly as a gesture that authorities are willing to act. A similar meeting was last held on March 27 this year following a sharp decline in the value of the yen.

Stocks tumbled across the world on Monday as a sell-off that began last week picked up momentum, only to recover some ground on Tuesday, leaving bruised investors feeling whip-lashed.

The Nikkei stock index soared on Tuesday in a relief rally after plummeting 12.4 percent on Monday, its biggest percentage drop since the 1987 Black Monday crash. It ended Tuesday's trade up 10.2 percent at 34,675.46.

Mimura declined to comment on factors driving the stock plunge but said the three parties shared a view that the Japanese economy will continue to gradually recover. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida urged caution, saying it was important to make calm judgments about the market. He offered an optimistic outlook for the world's fourth largest economy, citing factors such as the first rise in inflation-adjusted real wages in more than two years in June.

"We recognize the Japanese economy continues to make a strong transition to a new stage," Kishida told reporters in Hiroshima earlier on Tuesday. Japanese Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki said the government would monitor and analyze financial market moves and work closely with relevant authorities, including the BOJ. "It's important to realize resilient economic growth while responding to changes in front of us," Suzuki said. — Reuters

## Wall St regains some ground after big stocks rout

**NEW YORK:** Wall Street's main indexes rose in volatile trading on Tuesday, as investors looked for bargains after a rout in the previous session, while dovish rate commentary from Federal Reserve officials also lifted the mood. Most megacap and growth stocks, which together lost \$200 billion in market value on Monday, gained as Nvidia bounced back 2.3 percent.

Apple slipped 1.9 percent, extending a nearly 5 percent drop on Monday after Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway cut its stake in the iPhone maker by half. Both the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq Composite posted losses of at least 3 percent each in the previous session after weak economic data raised worries of a US recession and the unwinding of sharp positions of carry trades that fund high-yielding assets. Goldman Sachs in a note said investors typically profit when they buy after a 5 percent selloff in the S&P 500 index.

"We're getting a relief rally specifically because the yen depreciated

a little bit overnight and that would remove the pressure for margin calls, so the selling pressure has abated, which provides an opportunity for the market to rise with some buyers coming to the table," said David Waddell, CEO and chief investment strategist at Waddell & Associates.

US central bank policymakers pushed back on Monday against the notion that weaker-than-expected July jobs data means the economy is in recessionary freefall, but also warned that the Fed will need to cut rates to avoid such an outcome. Traders currently see an about 75 percent chance of a 50-basis-point rate cut in September, down from 85 percent on Monday and expect the year-end rates at 4.25 percent-4.50 percent, according to CME's FedWatch Tool. A closely watched gap between the two- and 10-year benchmark yields turned positive on Monday, which typically indicates that the economy is heading into a downturn.

At 09.35 am ET, the Dow Jones



**NEW YORK:** The Berkshire Hathaway Inc. company logo is displayed on a screen at the New York Stock Exchange during morning trading on August 06, 2024 in New York City. — AFP

Industrial Average rose 31.52 points, or 0.08 percent, to 38,734.79, the S&P 500 gained 23.82 points, or 0.46 percent, to 5,210.15 and the Nasdaq Composite gained 79.95

points, or 0.49 percent, to 16,280.03. Ten of the 11 major S&P 500 sectors were trading higher, with consumer staples and information technology leading the gains. — Reuters



## Business

## NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

# Kuwait's business and household credit growth relatively low in Q2

## Lower rates in Kuwait could support credit growth

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's domestic credit growth was relatively decent 1.1 percent in Q2, resulting in a 2 percent YTD increase (+2.9 percent y/y). However, growth in Q2 was mainly driven by lending to banks/financial institutions (+9.2 percent q/q) and for securities purchase (+2.8 percent), not by business/household lending. Business credit growth, after a solid Q1, weakened to 0.5 percent q/q, pushing the YTD increase to 2.2 percent. Business lending needs to be robust in Q3 for it to finish 2024 at a meaningful increase, given that Q4 is usually the weakest. A faster roll-out of projects and some long-awaited laws, given the new political backdrop, is a tailwind for credit growth going forward.

Within business lending, "construction" remains in the lead, in line with 2022-2023, up 4.4 percent q/q and 12 percent YTD while "trade" is a distant second (+4.8 percent YTD). In contrast, the oil/gas sector remains the main laggard, falling by 6 percent YTD, following a steep 8 percent drop in 2023. The dominant "real estate", although soft in Q2, is up by 2.3 percent YTD, easily exceeding the 1.3 percent growth seen in full-2023. After a very weak start for 2024 in terms of project awards, there has been a major pick-up recently, with awards climbing to around KD 1 billion YTD through July, marginally lower than the same period last year, noting that 2023 was

Table 1: Credit growth

Credit	Jun-2024	% growth			
	KD billions	q/q	YTD	y/y	2023
<b>Business</b>	<b>23.7</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
of which Real Estate	9.8	0.4	2.3	2.6	1.3
<b>Household</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>1.5</b>
Securities	3.6	2.8	3.9	12.3	6.9
Banks & financial instit.	2.4	9.2	7.0	10.3	4.2
<b>Total domestic credit</b>	<b>48.6</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>1.7</b>
Non-resident credit	7.2	11.6	21.8	25.0	5.7
<b>Total credit</b>	<b>55.8</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>2.1</b>

Source: Central Bank of Kuwait

strong, witnessing the highest level of awards since 2017. This robust level of awards, if sustained, should eventually support business credit growth. On the other hand, household credit growth, while remaining broadly lackluster (+0.9 percent YTD), picked up to 0.6 percent q/q from 0.3 percent in Q1.

It remains to be seen whether H2 will show a further incremental improvement, similar to last year, when household credit expanded by 1.5 percent in

Table 2: Deposit growth

Deposits	Jun-2024	% growth			
	KD billions	q/q	YTD	y/y	2023
<b>Private sector</b>	<b>38.5</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.1</b>
of which Time dep.	21.7	2.7	5.1	7.4	12.0
of which CASA dep.	14.9	-1.1	0.5	-6.3	-11.0
Public institutions	5.9	-14.7	-13.4	-1.0	2.2
Government	5.0	6.5	6.9	20.4	37.2
<b>Total resident dep.</b>	<b>49.3</b>	<b>-0.7</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.9</b>
Non-resident deposits	3.4	-13.7	-19.7	-13.4	-0.7
<b>Total deposits</b>	<b>52.7</b>	<b>-1.6</b>	<b>-0.5</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>3.5</b>

Source: Central Bank of Kuwait

the second half of the year. Meanwhile, we note that credit for non-residents (13 percent of total credit) continued to expand strongly, bringing its YTD increase to a whopping 22 percent, which results in an overall solid credit (domestic plus non-resident) growth of 4.2 percent YTD. Lending to banks/financial institutions accounted for as much as 47 percent of the YTD increase in non-resident credit, "public services" 37 percent, and "other services" 15 percent.

### Modest recovery in private sector deposits

Driven by a plunge in public-institution deposits (KD 1 billion, -15 percent q/q), resident deposits inched down in Q2, resulting in a 1.2 percent YTD increase (+3 percent y/y). Private-sector deposits (78 percent of total deposits) continued their modest recovery following a weak 2023, growing by 3.1 percent YTD. Government deposits continued to power ahead, up for the sixth straight quarter with YTD growth at 6.9 percent. Within private-sector KD deposits, after a good Q1, CASA lost steam in Q2, although remained slightly positive YTD (+0.5 percent). Time deposits, while still drifting upward (+5.1 percent YTD), continued to exhibit weakening y/y trends with growth falling to around 7 percent from a peak of 26 percent in mid-2023.

### Rate cut expectations

Given progress on dis-inflation in the US in Q2 coupled with recent warning signals from the US job market, the current market pricing of cuts in US rates has been pushed again higher to a cumulative 100 bps cut before year-end. A minimum 25 bps cut in September is now assumed with 100 percent probability. While this dynamic will be evolving, any rate cuts by the CBK will be supportive for credit growth, especially household.

## Australian central bank rules out near term rate cut

**SYDNEY:** Australia's central bank held interest rates steady at a 12-year high Tuesday and warned that a cut is "not on the agenda" as it battles stubbornly high inflation. The Reserve Bank of Australia, which left the key rate at 4.35 percent, had even considered raising rates, governor Michele Bullock warned. "A rate cut is not on the agenda in the near term given what we know," she told a news conference, saying high prices might lead rates to stay "higher for longer".

"I know this is not what people want to hear," Bullock said. The central bank's board could still raise interest rates if needed to curb inflation, she said. Australia's annual inflation rate eased a little to 3.8 percent in June but remains well above the RBA's target range of 2.0-3.0 percent.

The central bank is closely watching world stock market ructions, she said, blaming the volatility in part on a reaction to economic news at a time of "considerable uncertainty" about the outlook. World markets have been roiled over the past few trading days following a weaker-than-expected US jobs report and a Japanese interest rate rise that caught many investors by surprise. Bullock said markets had already "settled down a bit" on Tuesday, as Tokyo stocks shot up more than 10 percent after a record sell-off the day before.

"I think we just need to have a little bit of caution and a little bit of calm," she said. Treasurer Jim Chalmers welcomed the bank's decision to leave rates unchanged, saying Australians were already "doing it tough". "The last thing they needed today was more cost of living pressure," he said. Chalmers pointed to "very substantial global economic uncertainty that we are seeing play out in markets around the world", blaming weak US jobs growth and tech earnings, as well as the rise in Japanese interest rates.

"This is a really important warning against complacency, the fact that we've seen this kind of volatility in international markets, and also the fact that we saw a much weaker jobs outcome in the US in the first place," Chalmers told reporters. "And so we are confident, but not complacent, about Australia's economic prospects." — AFP

## Aftershocks of carry trade at heart of market rout still felt

**NEW YORK:** Investors said the aftershocks of a massive carry trade that has reverberated through global financial markets wasn't done yet, with more unwinding in the days ahead raising the risk of shake-outs to other assets. The Nasdaq Composite and the S&P 500 trimmed losses by the close on Monday, capping off a brutal three-day selloff while Tokyo markets rebounded from a similar rout in trading on Tuesday.

The massive selloffs had come after a higher-than-expected US unemployment rate on Friday sparked worries the US economy was heading for a recession. Concerns about the markets were exacerbated by investors winding down yen-funded trades that had been used to finance the acquisition of stocks for years after a surprise Bank of Japan rate hike last week. The so-called 'carry trade' is commonly used in currency markets where investors borrow money from economies with low interest rates such as Japan or Switzerland, to fund investments in higher-yielding assets - this time stocks - elsewhere.

Despite the easing off in selling, investors were worried about more volatility ahead. "We expect the sell-off to continue for maybe a few more days as usually



**YONGIN, REPUBLIC OF KOREA:** A white-handed gibbon sits on a mound of bananas, watched by South Korean children, at the Everland amusement and animal park in Yongin, south of Seoul. — AFP

## As temperatures rise, S Korean farmers try out tropical bananas

**SEOUL:** South Korean farmer Ma Myung-sun had low expectations for the crop of subtropical bananas he planted in a community farm in Seoul, but warmer temperatures due to climate change have produced a welcome surprise in the form of flowers and fruit. Ma, 73, still has to use a greenhouse for part of the year to shield the plants from South Korea's cold winters, and is among a growing number of farmers experimenting with crops usually more suited to a warmer climate.

South Korea's cultivated area of subtropical crops has jumped from about 295 hectares (730 acres) in 2021 to 3,306 hectares in 2023, with 67 banana farms in the south, according to the Rural Development Administration, a state agricultural organization. "I want to try growing other tropical crops too. So, as you can see here, I have planted these papaya trees as well," said Ma, pointing to a shrub growing next to the banana trees.

these... trades are pretty large," said Zhe Shen, head of diversifying strategies at TIF Investment Management. "People said 'wait, we're losing too much money from unwinding. Let's just hold and we'll unwind some more tomorrow.' The complete unwind of this yen-funded trade is likely to take days, potentially extending the market rout, Zhe said. "There's tons and tons of yen carry trades that still have to be closed out," said Ulf Lindahl, CEO at institutional investors advisory firm Currency Research Associates.

Investors are still scrambling to figure out the size of those trades and how much of the cheap funding was deployed in equities. Calculations made by hedge fund research firm PivotalPath show that hedge fund strategies most affected by a yen rally are global macro quantitative and managed futures, as they have short exposure to the Japanese currency. A spike in the yen this month indicates a loss of between 1.5 percent and 2.5 percent in August for those funds' indexes, according to the firm's exposure model.

"It's very, very hard to know what the actual size of those positions are and how much is hedged and how much isn't hedged, and therefore how much pressure is on," said Kathy Jones, chief fixed income strategist at Schwab. "When you get hedge funds that are leveraged, and maybe there are derivatives involved, you get a pretty sizable reaction."

Some money managers or trading strategies had already been reducing risk in the past few days. "Momentum certainly has been unwinding quite a bit in the past few days, and that's cutting across all asset classes," said Mike Gleason, director of equity alternative strate-

gies at Acadian. "So, you have this response mechanism of multiple asset classes responding in kind." Steve Sosnick, head trader at IBKR Securities Services, said trading Sunday night and on Monday's open "had the feel of forced selling." "There was a certain 'get me out' quality to the pre-market and opening trades that since have subsided," said Sosnick.

Hedge funds started unwinding risk roughly two weeks ago, when stocks started to fall. Morgan Stanley estimated on June 25 that macro hedge funds could sell \$110 billion in the coming weeks if markets further deteriorated. For some investors, the fact that the Nasdaq

## Struggling Thames Water faces \$133m fine over sewage spills

**LONDON:** Britain's water regulator plans to fine debt-laden Thames Water 104 million pounds (\$133 million), close to the maximum penalty allowed, after an investigation into historic sewage spills. Thames Water, the country's biggest supplier, is at the centre of a crisis over sewage flowing into rivers and seas which has fouled the environment, prompting public outrage and forcing the government to promise to clean-up the industry.

Industry regulator Ofwat said on Tuesday that the fines it was proposing, which include a 47 million pound penalty for Yorkshire Water and a 17 million pound fine for Northumbrian Water, would now be subject to a consultation. The fines relate to an investigation Ofwat started two years ago into water companies' performance in terms of sewage treatment over the 2017-2022 period.

The fine for Thames Water equated to 9 percent of its relevant turnover, just below the 10 percent top penalty Ofwat can impose. Such a fine would further pressure heavily indebted Thames Water, which is battling to raise new equity and has warned that without new investment it could run out of money next May, putting renationalization on the cards. Responding to the proposed penalty, Thames Water, which supplies about a quarter of British households, said it took the sewage spills "very seriously" and would continue to cooperate with Ofwat's investigation process.

"We are encouraged that Ofwat recognizes that in order to resolve the issues identified, any redress needs to be deliverable, affordable and financeable," a Thames Water spokesperson said.

Northumbrian Water said in response to the proposed fine that it didn't recognize some of Ofwat's standards of compliance, while Yorkshire Water said its waste water treatment performance had improved over the last two years. Ofwat said the companies had failed to ensure that untreated waste water spilled into rivers only in exceptional circumstances, and that waste water treatment works had not been properly maintained. "The level of penalties we intend to impose signals both the severity of the failings and our determination to take action to ensure water companies do more to deliver cleaner rivers and seas," Ofwat Chief Executive David Black said in a statement. — Reuters



**NEW YORK:** A trader works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) ahead of the closing bell in New York City. — AFP

gies at Acadian. "So, you have this response mechanism of multiple asset classes responding in kind."

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fell 10 percent below its record of 18,647.45 points on July 10 poses another challenge for a quick and sustainable bounce back.

"Most of the people haven't unwound anything yet because they think it's just a regular correction," Currency Research Associates' Lindahl said. "This is a serious thing, it's not just the regular correction. You don't have gap openings for 4 percent or 5 percent in major indexes, and then they recover. There's a serious collapse that's coming." On Monday evening, US indexes futures opened in the black, pointing to investors taking advantage of lower valuations. — Reuters

## Business

# Iraqi farmers innovate modern methods to save rice production

## Amid relentless drought, farmers use tougher seeds, water-saving techniques

**NAJAF, Iraq:** After seeing his once-lush rice field shrink in recent years due to relentless drought, Iraqi farmer Muntazer Al-Joufi fought back using tougher seeds and water-saving irrigation techniques. "It's the first time we're using modern techniques that consume less water" to cultivate rice, Joufi, 40, said as he surveyed his land in the central province of Najaf.

"There is a huge difference" compared to flooding the field, Joufi added, referring to a traditional method by which the land must stay submerged all summer. But four consecutive years of drought and declining rainfall have strangled rice production in Iraq, which is still recovering from years of war and chaos, and where rice and bread are a staple of the diet.

The United Nations says Iraq is one of the world's five most climate-vulnerable nations. Joufi is among farmers receiving support from the agriculture ministry, whose experts have been developing innovative methods to save Iraq's rice production.

Their work involves pairing resilient rice seeds with modern irrigation systems to replace the flooding method in a country hit by water scarcity, heatwaves and dwindling rivers. Under Iraq's scorching sun, with temperature soaring towards 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit), Joufi trudged across the muddy field, pausing to tend malfunctioning sprinklers spread out on his one hectare (2.5 acres) of land.

Iraq's rice crop usually requires between 10 and 12 billion cubic meters of water during the five-month growing period. However, experts say new methods using sprinklers and drip irrigation use 70 percent less water than the traditional flooding practice, when workers had to ensure fields were totally covered with water. Now, Joufi said, it takes just "one person to turn on the sprinklers... and water reaches every patch of the land".

### New seeds

Agriculture ministry experts say that during the years of drought, the area planted with rice has shrunk from more than 30,000 hectares to just 5,000. "Because of the drought and water scarcity, we must use modern irrigation techniques and new seeds," said Abdel Kazem Jawad Moussa, who leads a team of such experts.

They have been experimenting with different types of sprinklers, drip irrigation, and five different kinds of seeds that withstand drought and consume less water in the hope of finding the best combination. "We want to learn which seed genotypes respond well" to irrigation using sprinklers instead of flooding, Moussa said. Last year, Al-Ghari — a genotype derived from Iraq's prized amber rice — and South Asian jasmine seeds yielded good results when cultivated with small sprinklers, so experts offered the combination to farmers like Joufi, hoping for the best. "At the end of the season, we will come up with recommendations," Moussa said, adding that he also hoped to introduce three new types of seeds next year with a shorter planting season.

In addition to drought, the authorities blame upstream dams built by Iraq's powerful neighbors Iran and Turkey for dramatically lowering water levels in the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which have irrigated Iraq for millennia.

### 'The last good year'

Water scarcity has forced many farmers to abandon their plots, and authorities have drastically reduced farm activity to ensure sufficient drinking water for Iraq's 43 million people. In 2022, authorities limited the rice crop areas to 1,000 hectares in Najaf and the southern province of Diwaniyah, the heart-



**AL-MISHKHAB, Iraq:** Farmers work in a rice field in Mishkhab in Iraq's Najaf province as four consecutive years of drought and declining rainfall have strangled rice production in the country. — AFP

lands of planting amber rice. Recently, farmers in Diwaniyah protested, urging the government to allow them to farm their lands after a two-year halt.

But despite bountiful rains this winter that helped ease water shortages, authorities have only permitted them to cultivate rice on 30 percent of their lands. "The last good year was 2020," said farmer Fayed Al-Yassiri in his field in Diwaniyah where he hopes to forge on growing amber and jasmine rice.

Iraq is the second-largest oil producer in the OPEC cartel, but despite having immense oil and gas reserves, it remains dependent on imports to meet its energy needs and faces chronic power outages.

Yassiri urged the authorities to help, specifically by providing farmers with electricity and pesticides. His cousin Bassem Yassiri was less hopeful. "Water shortages have ended agriculture in this region," he said. — AFP

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Indian gold industry forms body

**MUMBAI:** India's gold industry, with the support of the World Gold Council (WGC), has established a self-regulatory organization in a bid to increase consumer confidence and restore trust, the WGC said on Tuesday. The newly-formed Indian Association for Gold Excellence and Standards (IAGES) aims to promote fair, transparent and sustainable practices in the bullion industry, along with regulatory compliance, a code of conduct, and an audit framework, said Sachin Jain, CEO of WGC's Indian operations. India is the world's second-biggest gold consumer after China, but the industry has a trust deficit with consumers and even the government due to poor practices by a small section of the business, he said. — Reuters

#### Sri Lanka mulls Indonesia trade deal

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka's cabinet has approved the signing of a trade agreement with Indonesia in March, a government official said on Tuesday, as the island seeks to revive its crisis-hit economy following a severe foreign exchange crunch in 2022. Talks between the countries on the preferential trade agreement started earlier this year and will conclude in December, said cabinet spokesperson and Transport Minister Bandula Gunawardana. Sri Lanka signed a free trade agreement with Thailand earlier this year and is in talks with Malaysia, India and Vietnam to set up fresh trade deals. — Reuters

#### Carbon credits fail benchmark test

**LONDON:** Around third of existing carbon credits have failed to meet criteria for a new standard that aims to serve as the global benchmark for the voluntary carbon market, its board said on Tuesday. In the voluntary market, companies can buy credits from projects such as wind farms or reforestation schemes across the world and use them to meet their internal carbon-cutting targets. All the credits that fell short of the benchmark in the latest assessment were linked to renewable energy. Demand for offsets stalled last year following widespread doubts that credits served to reduce emissions. — Reuters

#### LATAM Airlines to invest \$2bn in Brazil

**SAO PAULO:** LATAM Airlines on Monday said that it would invest \$2 billion in Brazil, Latin America's largest economy, within the next two years. The Chile-based airline said in a statement it would focus the funding on products, technologies and services for passengers and on aircraft maintenance. LATAM said it had also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Brazil's labor ministry over training workers in specialty skills and hiring them mainly at its Sao Carlos facility in Sao Paulo state. In the statement, LATAM said the facility — the largest aircraft maintenance center in South America — had the potential to become "a true Brazilian aerospace hub." — Reuters

#### Bayer posts unexpected loss

**FRANKFURT:** German chemicals giant Bayer, long weighed down by woes related to its glyphosate-based weedkillers, reported an unexpected second-quarter loss Tuesday driven by a poor performance in its agrochemicals division. While group sales rose by 3.1 percent to 11.1 billion euros (\$12.1 billion), earnings were down "mainly due to an unfavorable product mix", the group said in a statement. The loss of 34 million euros puts the German giant back in the red after two profitable quarters. Analysts surveyed by financial data firm FactSet had forecast a profit of 71 million euros. — AFP

## US to award Hynix \$450m for chips packaging plant

**WASHINGTON:** The US Commerce Department said on Tuesday it plans to award SK Hynix up to \$450 million in grants to help fund an advanced packaging plant and research and development facility for artificial intelligence products in Indiana.

In April, SK Hynix, the world's second-largest memory chip maker, said it would invest around \$3.87 billion to build the facility that will include an advanced chip production line to mass-produce next-generation high bandwidth memory chips, currently used in graphic processing units that train artificial intelligence systems,

the Nvidia supplier said. The department also plans to make available \$500 million in government loans for the SK Hynix project, which is expected to qualify for a 25 percent investment tax credit. The memory packaging plant for artificial intelligence products and an advanced packaging R&D facility will create 1,000 jobs and fill a key gap in the US semiconductor supply chain, the department said. Congress in August 2022 approved a \$39 billion subsidy program for US semiconductor manufacturing and related components along with \$75 billion in government lending authority.

Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said the department has announced term sheets with 15 companies offering about \$30 billion in funding that "will unlock another \$300 billion of private capital." The United States now has major commitments from all five major leading edge semiconductor chip manufacturers — TSMC, Intel, Samsung Electronics, Micron and SK Hynix.

"It means we in the United States will have the most

secure and diverse supply chain in the world for the advanced semiconductors that power artificial intelligence," Raimondo told reporters. The department added no other economy in the world "has more than two of these companies producing leading-edge chips on its shores." SK Hynix's West Lafayette, Indiana facility will be home to an advanced semiconductor packaging line mass producing next-generation high-bandwidth memory chips that are key components of graphics processing units that train AI systems.

SK Hynix CEO Kwak Noh-Jung said in a statement the company deeply appreciates "the US Department of Commerce's support and are excited to collaborate in seeing this transformational project fully realized." Commerce in May said it planned to award \$75 million to Absolics for constructing a facility in Georgia to supply advanced materials to the country's semiconductor industry. The planned award is to an affiliate of SKC Co, which in turn is part of South Korea's second-largest conglomerate SK Group, as is SK Hynix. — Reuters

## Cryptoverse: Trump's bitcoin stockpile plan stirs debate

**NEW YORK:** "Never sell your bitcoin," Donald Trump told a cheering crowd at a crypto convention in Nashville, Tennessee in late July. The Republican presidential candidate's speech was the latest overture in his effort to court crypto-focused voters ahead of November's election and offered a bevy of campaign promises, including a plan for a state bitcoin reserve. "If elected, it will be the policy of my administration to keep 100 percent of all the bitcoin the US government currently holds or acquires into the future," Trump said, adding the funds would serve as the "core of the strategic national bitcoin stockpile."

Indeed, Trump isn't the only one with such a proposal. US Senator Cynthia Lummis has introduced legislation that would see the US government purchase one million bitcoin, around 5 percent of total supply, while independent candidate Robert F Kennedy Jr has suggested a government stockpile of four million bitcoin. A strategic reserve would be one use for the massive amount of bitcoin held by the US government. The jury's out on what it would be used for, whether it's feasible, or if it's even welcome for the broader crypto market, though. The US government holds a bumper cache of crypto: around \$11.1 billion worth which includes 203,239 bitcoin tokens, according to data firm Arkham Intelligence which said the pile came from criminal seizures, including from on-



**NASHVILLE, Tennessee:** Former President and 2024 Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump gestures while giving a keynote speech on the third day of the Bitcoin 2024 conference at Music City Center in Nashville, Tennessee. — AFP

line marketplace Silk Road, which was shut down in 2013. At current levels, the US holds about 1 percent of overall global bitcoin supply — which stands at about 19.7 million tokens, according to Blockchain.com. Bitcoin's total supply is capped at 21 million coins.

To compare against big non-state investors, Michael Saylor's Microstrategy holds about 226,500 bitcoin tokens, as per second-quarter results. BlackRock's iShares Bitcoin Trust and Grayscale Bitcoin Trust hold 344,070 and 240,140 tokens respectively, according to data site BitcoinTreasuries.

A government bitcoin stockpile could shore up bitcoin's price. "It would have a positive impact on price. It

would have to because we've never had such a limited supply commodity, albeit digital, assume a new state of a reserve asset," said Mark Connors, head of global macro at Onramp Bitcoin.

Yet such a reserve also means fewer tokens for crypto investors to trade with and could leave them exposed if the government ever sold part of its reserves. "RFK talked about having 19 percent of bitcoin, the same amount of the gold supply — I can't imagine a single bitcoiner would be happy about that," Connors added. Governments besides the United States also boast bumper hoards of bitcoin, with BitcoinTreasuries reporting China is the second largest government holder, with 190,000 coins.

While the prospect of a national bitcoin reserve is uncertain, crypto watchers are nonetheless pondering what form it could take. Connors suggested the Federal Reserve could manage the reserves for the Treasury Department, as it does with gold. On the other hand, the stockpile could be more akin to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, where both the president and Congress have varying amounts of control, according to Frank Kelly, senior political strategist at asset manager DWS Group.

"There's a lot to parse and figure out there," Kelly said. There's also an irony that jars with many true bitcoin believers: the digital asset intended to be decentralized and free of government control becoming part of a state reserve. Regardless of what happens with a bitcoin stockpile, many market players are happy enough to see crypto becoming a significant campaign talking point.

"There's a general view in the industry that both parties are paying much more attention to digital assets," said Raoul Mewawalla, CEO of Mawson Infrastructure Group which operates data centers for bitcoin mining. "The expectation is that will continue post November." — Reuters

## Migrants struggle to cope with housing crisis in Portugal

**LISBON:** Seeking a more comfortable life, 50-year-old carpenter Andreia Costa moved to Portugal from Brazil in 2022, but within months her hopes were dashed, as the country's housing crisis left her unable to afford accommodation and forced to live in a tent. On a site on the outskirts of Lisbon she was joined by other migrants and some locals, priced out of a city where rents have soared 94 percent since 2015 and house prices have risen 186 percent, according to housing data specialists Confidencial Imobiliario.

Meanwhile, Portugal remains one of western Europe's poorest nations with the region's lowest average wages. The housing crisis is rooted in a chronic shortage of affordable housing, aggravated by the arrival of wealthy foreigners lured by residency rights linked for some years to property investment and tax breaks offered by the state.

A tourism boom has seen a surge in short-term holiday lets, further squeezing the housing market.

Costa arrived legally with just 600 euros and could only find cleaning jobs paying the then national minimum wage of 760 euros a month. Rent of 400 euros a month for a small room quickly became unaffordable. "I shouldn't have to pay more than 50 percent of my salary for a room," she said. "Renting really suffocates people's lives."

Costa bought a small tent and set it up on a nearly empty plot on the outskirts of Lisbon. As months passed, more people moved in before they eventually had to leave the plot for another site as it was privately owned. Life was hard. She had to fetch water from beach showers nearby, use portable cooking devices and walk home in complete darkness as there was no street lighting.

Migrants are particularly vulnerable amid the housing crisis, as they are more likely to have precarious jobs and lower salaries, according to the Migration Observatory (OM).

Portugal's foreign population stood at more than one million in 2023, more than double 2018's figure of 480,000. Brazilians make up the biggest migrant community but an increasing number are arriving from Southeast Asia to work in agriculture, hospitality, ride-hailing or delivery. "There are two extremes: migrants who are so-called poor... and a 'rich' migration of investors, pensioners and highly qualified professionals," said



**Protestors take part in a demonstration for better housing in Lisbon in this January 27, 2024 file photo. — AFP**

housing researcher Simone Tulumello.

"This development model, heavily focused on real estate and tourism, is causing this explosion in housing prices, which impacts everyone." Researcher Marina Carreiras said migrants often face discrimination in accessing housing and have less information on how to seek support.

Even those who speak Portuguese, such as Brazilians, face discrimination due to their accents. One migrant cited in a recent study by migration association Casa do Brasil spoke of a rental notice saying they don't rent to Brazilians. — Reuters

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7, 2024

# MASK FESTIVAL brings 'buzz and beauty' to Benin's capital



Spectators poured into Benin's capital for a new festival celebrating traditional masks over the weekend as the West African country seeks to attract visitors and showcase its cultural heritage. The three-day Porto Novo Mask Festival drew participants from across Benin as well as neighboring Togo and Burkina Faso. There was excitement in the crowd as spectators caught sight of some masked and costumed figures rarely seen outside their respective regions.

The main street hummed with traditional music while officials and members of the public watched displays of

acrobatics and stilt-walkers perched on eight-meter (26-foot) poles. Benin's government and city authorities launched the event to replace the Porto Novo International Festival, usually held in January, and there were both secular and religious masks on show. Vodoo, known locally as Vodun, is widely practiced in Benin. It worships gods and natural spirits while showing respect to revered ancestors.

"I'm very moved — I saw masks I'd never had the chance to see before," said Vodun religious dignitary Severin Alode, 43. "I've never seen such a buzz. It's a first." The festival's main attractions were

Gonouko, towering masked figures from Porto Novo, alongside an array of other masks and appearances from Zangbeto, traditional Vodun guardians of the night. Even the rare Hounve mask was on display, as Vodun dignitary Adanklounon Ado Setondji explained. "Our parents knew how to hide the Hounve, but as we are in the mindset of promotion, we have to take the masks out and show them to the public," he said. Before the festival, rituals took place away from spectators. Bale Atchade, a 65-year-old Vodun dignitary, said there were ceremonies centred on resolving social problems and others linked to infertility.

## 'Source of pride'

Ayaba Collete Dossou, a member of the national Vodun rites committee, said the Porto Novo festival showed "the beauty of our culture and our wealth." The city's mayor Charlemagne Yankoty said the event "puts Porto Novo in the spotlight." "The mask festival will enhance Benin's culture and reveal its full value in terms of heritage and culture," he said.

Earlier this year, the government revamped another of Benin's cultural celebrations — its famous Vodoo festival — in a bid to attract more visitors. "Vodun is of economic interest to us, since

tourism is an important sector," said President Patrice Talon at the festival in January. He said he hoped that event would help explain "what Vodun is and how it is practiced" to domestic as well as foreign tourists. There were signs his wishes were being fulfilled at the mask festival in Porto Novo, too. Frederica Nzamba, a 30-year-old visitor with Beninese roots, told AFP she came to "better discover and understand Benin's culture" after 16 years living abroad. The festival, she said, was a "source of pride." — AFP



Zangbeto masks parade during the grand procession of traditional masks in Porto-Novo on August 4, 2024. — AFP photos



Masks from Burkina Faso parade during the grand procession of traditional masks in Porto-Novo.



Visitors pose with an egungun, a character wearing a Yoruba costume and mask, during the grand procession of traditional masks in Porto-Novo.

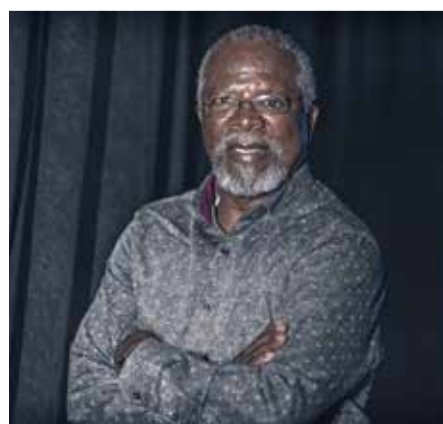
## Iconic S African actor John Kani awarded an OBE

The South African government congratulated Monday actor John Kani, a legend of protest theatre and also known for roles in US blockbusters, for his award of the prestigious Order of the British Empire. King Charles III honored the 80-year-old actor, director and playwright for his services to drama, it said. Kani received the award last week, the British High Commissioner said on X. Kani launched his acting career in the 1960s, during the era of white-minority rule in South Africa.

He and playwright Athol Fugard defied apartheid-era racial segregation laws by meeting in secret and staging rehearsals in classrooms and garages, under the harassment of police. In 1975 Kani won a Tony award with fellow performer Winston Ntshona for their New York performance of Fugard's 1972 play "Sizwe Banzi is Dead". More recently, Kani voiced the wise mandrill Rafiki in the 2019 remake of "The Lion King". He played T'Chaka in the Marvel studios superhero films "Captain America: Civil

War" (2016) and "Black Panther" (2018).

"His career, spanning decades, has not only shaped the landscape of South African theatre but has also brought the richness of our cultural heritage to the world," the government said in a statement. "Government and the people of South Africa celebrate this achievement with Dr Kani as his contribution has not only enriched the South African culture but has also resonated with audiences worldwide." — AFP



South African stage and movie actor John Kani (79), who is also an author, director and play-writer, pose for a portrait in the backstage of the Johannesburg Theatre in Johannesburg. — AFP

## Filmmaker David Lynch clarifies he will not retire despite illness

"Twin Peaks" creator David Lynch said on Monday he is filled with happiness and will never retire despite an emphysema diagnosis, clarifying comments he made earlier to magazine Sight and Sound that he would most likely have to stop working. The 78-year-old American filmmaker posted on social media platform X that he appreciated everyone that has voiced concern over his health condition, noting that his past as a smoker caused his emphysema, a lung disease with no known cure.

"Yes, I have emphysema from my many years of smoking. I have to say that I enjoyed smoking very much, and I do love tobacco - the smell of it, lighting cigarettes on fire, smoking them," he wrote, gaining 1.3 million likes. "But there is a price to pay for this enjoyment, and the price for me is emphysema. I have now quit smoking for over two years. Recently I had many tests and the good news is that I am in excellent shape except for emphysema,"

he added. He also said in the interview for the Sight and Sound's September cover story that he was no longer able to leave his home, as he was afraid of contracting COVID-19, which would threaten his health even further.

"I've gotten emphysema from smoking for so long, and so I'm homebound whether I like it or not ... And now, because of COVID, it would be very bad for me to get sick, even with a cold," Lynch told the British magazine. The "Eraserhead" and "The Elephant Man" filmmaker also mentioned he could only walk a short distance before he ran out of oxygen. A representative for Lynch did not respond to a request for comment. For Lynch, it is unlikely that he will ever direct in-person again, but he mentioned the possibility of directing remotely. "I would really hate that," he added, admitting that directing virtually would not be desirable for the Oscar-nominated director. — AFP



David Lynch speaks onstage during the Academy Of Motion Picture Arts And Sciences' 11th Annual Governors Awards at The Ray Dolby Ballroom at Hollywood & Highland Center on October 27, 2019 in Hollywood, California. - AFP

Lifestyle



A fan poses for photos with a poster of trot singer Lim Young-woong.



Trot singer Park Sung-on (center) poses for photos with fans before a concert at a venue in Seoul.



Trot singer Park Sung-on (left) receives a gift from a fan during a concert at a venue in Seoul.



Trot singer Park Sung-on poses for a photo during an interview in Seoul.



Trot singer Park Sung-on performs on stage during a concert at a venue in Seoul.



A fan poses for photos with posters of trot singer Lim Young-woong.



Aliya poses next to a cutout of Lim.



Shin Ji-min dances to a song by Lim inside a sky-blue cafe named "Woong's Tree".



Fans arrive for trot singer Lim Young-woong's 'IM HERO - THE STADIUM' concert at the Seoul World Cup Stadium in Seoul. - AFP photos

Trotting ahead of K-pop? South Korean crooner rivals BTS

Lim Young-woong may not have as many fans as BTS, but the trot singer is rivaling the global superstars, showing there's more to South Korean music than K-pop with his billions of streams and a sold-out stadium tour. Once dismissed and widely ridiculed as music for pensioners, trot blends traditional Korean music with elements of Western jazz, swing and Japanese Enka. But 33-year-old Lim is one of a fresh crop of younger artists breathing new life into the genre, with its melodramatic ballads and upbeat tunes finding massive audiences in the South, helped by a wave of reality television shows.

The original and most successful of these, "Mr Trot" was won by Lim in 2020, with more than a third of all South Korean viewers watching the final — and his victory turned him into a nationwide sensation. His songs now have a record-breaking 10 billion streams on Melon, the South's largest music platform; his official fan club has more than 200,000 members; and his stadium tours sell out in minutes.

Lim is also South Korea's most loved singer, according to a June Gallup poll, beating out BTS, who were ranked third favorite at home. He also out-earns BTS members — individually, not as a group — with ticket sales for his recent tour raking in about \$22 million, industry data shows. "Domestically, articles about him generate more traffic and gain more likes than BTS," veteran entertainment journalist Seo Byung-ki told AFP, adding this was known as "Lim Young-woong syndrome". The star's moving back story — "losing his father at a young age, growing up with the care of his grandmother, barely making a living, then winning a television show" — coupled with his "perfect" vocals make him a surefire public hit, Seo said.

Although he's largely unknown internationally, his fame has spread to the isolated North, where music from the South is banned, but activists routinely send USB sticks full of his songs by balloons across the border. Defectors have reported he's popular.

Elderly fans

At a recent concert in Seoul, tens of thousands of fans, all dressed in

sky blue and waving glowing electronic wands, wept as Lim appeared on stage. His fans are mostly elderly, and for many, this is their first celebrity obsession. Baek Soon-ok, 87, had never watched a YouTube video of a celebrity or attended a concert before she discovered Lim. "He's such a kind person, good to his

mother, and most of all, a great singer," she said, wearing a sky-blue T-shirt with Lim's face. "I never imagined I would like an artist as much as him," she added. In Lim's hometown of Pocheon city, a sky-blue cafe named "Woong's Tree" doubles as a shrine to the singer. Outside, the walls and windows are adorned with photographs of Lim. Inside, an extensive collection of his merchandise is on display, alongside life-size, smiling cutouts.

Lim "saved her life", cafe owner Chun he performed, and along the way, she met fellow super fans — known as Hero Generation, as his name means "hero" in Korean — and opened the cafe to create a space for them to gather and celebrate Lim. "He's my strength, my happiness," said another fan and cafe regular, 60-year-old Lee Bu-duk.

Trot prodigy

Although K-pop still dominates South Korea's musical exports with artists like NewJeans topping US charts,

fits the sentiment of what Koreans feel," Park told AFP of the genre.

He appeared on a later version of the "Mr Trot" show and finished in the top 10. Now hailed as a budding "trot genius", Park released his debut single in March 2023. "I don't think I'm a star. I had to work hard to get here," he said. But Park says he hopes to dedicate his life to trot. "I think of it as a lifelong partner." — AFP

Chun Eun-kyung holds a sign reading 'Young-woong you make Noona go crazy' as she sits next to cutouts of Lim.



Chun Eun-kyung holds a sign reading 'Young-woong you make Noona go crazy' as she sits next to cutouts of Lim.



A fan of South Korean trot singer Lim Young-woong poses under illustrations of Lim at a sky-blue cafe named "Woong's Tree", which stands as a shrine to the singer, in his hometown of Pocheon city.



Soft toys depicting South Korean trot singer Lim Young-woong, are displayed along with other memorabilia and photos inside a sky-blue cafe named "Woong's Tree".



# CHILL-SEEKING: JAPAN'S HAUNTED HOUSE SUMMER TRADITION

Halloween may not be for months, but it's already peak haunted house season in Japan, where seeking a bone-chilling fright is a long-established summer tradition. Kimono-clad ghosts with bloody eyes convulse in agony and lurch towards visitors at one spooky establishment in Tokyo, roaming around groaning like zombies. Summer is closely associated with the dead in Japan, because it is believed that ancestral souls return to their household altars during the mid-August "obon" holiday. So a visit to a haunted house is seen as a refreshing respite from the season's often stultifying heat and humidity - thanks to both modern air-conditioning and the less tangible chills sent down one's spine.

Emerging from the dimly lit attraction at the indoor theme park Namjatown, 18-year-old Misato Naruse told AFP she had come there with her friend Himari Shimada "to get cool". "I broke out in a cold sweat without even realizing. That's how scared I was, I guess," the university student said beside a drained and speechless Shimada, also



18. Japanese summers are getting harder to bear, partly because of climate change. "Last year it was very hot but this year it feels even hotter. And I wonder how much hotter it will be in a few years' time," Naruse said.

This year, Japan sweltered through its hottest July since records began 126 years ago, with temperatures in the country 2.16 degree Celsius higher than average. In central Tokyo alone,

123 people died of heatstroke last month, when extreme heatwaves fueled by climate change saw a record number of ambulances mobilized in the capital, according to local authorities.

### 'Chilling the liver'

Many haunted houses in Japan play up to their refreshing reputation by using slogans such as "a shudder that blows away the summer heat". The

idea can perhaps be traced back to the Japanese traditional theatre form of kabuki, according to Hirofumi Gomi, who has worked behind-the-scenes as a producer of haunted house experiences for three decades.

Lore has it that a few centuries ago, kabuki theatres struggled to lure spectators in summer because many loathed being crammed inside without air-conditioning. But that changed when performers swapped sentimental human drama for full-on horror - aided by various tricks and contraptions, similar to a modern-day haunted house. "For patrons wilting under the heat, dazzling visual effects and gripping ghost tales were more bearable than the subtleties of human-interest stories," Gomi said. "So maybe haunted houses don't so much cool you down as make you forget the heat momentarily."

At the Namjatown haunted house, which is meant to evoke an abandoned, spirit-infested town, organizers are confident about the scary tricks up their sleeves. "In Japanese, we say 'kimo ga hieru', or literally 'chilling the

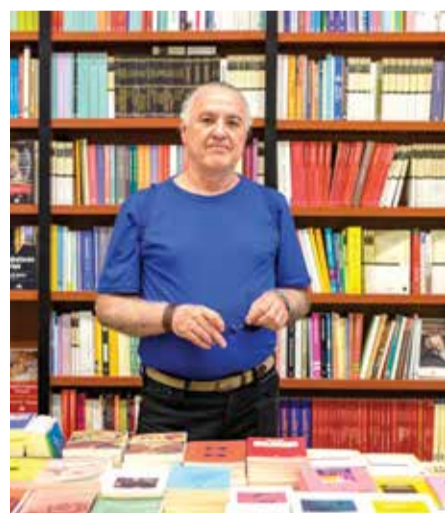


A zombie performer greeting visitors at a haunted house of the Namjatown indoor theme park in Tokyo.

liver' - a reference to the sensation of getting goosebumps," Hiroki Matsubara, of operator Bandai Namco Amusement, told AFP. "We believe visitors can experience the feeling of being scared, surprised or 'chilled to the liver', which will hopefully help them enjoy a cool feeling in summer." — AFP



Visitors watching a kimono-clad performer roaming around while groaning like a zombie at a haunted house of the Namjatown indoor theme park in Tokyo. - AFP photos



Yigit Bener, author and translator of Louis-Ferdinand Celine, poses during an interview with AFP in Istanbul. - AFP photos



## Turkish duo pen bestselling novel through prison bars

A jailed Kurdish leader and a Turkish writer on the other side of the bars have used their penpal exchanges to write one of Turkey's highest-selling books. The crime novel "Duet in Purgatory", which features a retired left-wing lawyer and a bitter ageing general with a tortuous past, has been a roaring success. The two writers developed the story, which spans the last 40 years of Turkey's tumultuous history and the long-standing Kurdish conflict, without ever discussing the plot.

"It was a risky gamble to try and write a novel like you'd play chess, move by move, without agreeing on the plot, the characters or the style — nothing," Selahattin Demirtas told a literary critic in an interview from prison. The writing of the story began when author and translator Yigit Bener sent the jailed Kurdish leader Demirtas, who is serving a 42-year sentence, a copy of Louis-Ferdinand Celine's classic novel "Journey to the End of the Night". He also put a note inside — "the expression of my solidarity".

Demirtas, who is 51 and a former co-president of the third largest political party in Turkey's parliament was jailed in 2016 with the European Court of Human Rights later condemning his detention as political and calling for his release. "I couldn't accept that this man for whom, like six million others, I had voted for, and

whose ideas I share, found himself behind bars while I am free," said Bener.

### 'A lot of fun'

Bener, who lived in exile in the 1980s, had praised Demirtas' collection of short stories "Dawn", and the two began corresponding via the politician's lawyer. The re-election of Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in May 2023 killed Demirtas' hope of an early release, so Bener pitched the idea of taking their cor-

respondence further. "What if we wrote a novel, both of us?" Bener suggested, although he had not thought about a plot or characters and hadn't intended it as a serious project.

While the idea originally sought to keep the prisoner busy, the duo soon wrapped 13 chapters. Bener refused to say who wrote first, but said that the pair took turns to write. "We had a lot of fun but we had to finish," said Bener. "We put it aside for two months before

we had a few friends read it." Demirtas' publishing house Dipnot, which has put out his previous novels and short stories, initially printed 55,000 copies last month, with more to come in September. "Our personal stories, mine and Yigit's trajectories contributed to shaping the novel. He motivated me when I needed it," said the Kurdish political leader. The secret behind the novel's success is its timely relevance, said Bener.

"The book poses the question of reconciliation through two characters from the same generation of losers who share the same feeling of defeat," said Bener. "The idea speaks to today's Turkey which is more polarized than ever." Bener was "extremely emotional" when he finally got permission to meet Demirtas in Edirne prison in northwest Turkey on the day of the book's release, as the opposition leader is in isolation and only allowed weekly visits from his lawyer or family.

Exceptionally, he was let out of the small cell where he has been locked up for eight years, which he shares with a former mayor of the Kurdish city of Diyarbakir, Adnan Selcuk Mizrakli. Critics have praised the "funny, fast-paced and spirited narrative", with readers rushing to see the free half of the writing duo as he tours bookshops. — AFP



A detail of the book co-written by Kurdish leader Selahattin Demirtas, who has been detained since 2016 and was sentenced to 42 years in prison in May in Istanbul.

## Sports

PARIS 2024



# France set up Olympic men's football final against Spain

## 'You don't want to be the team who don't win a medal'

**LYON:** Jean-Philippe Mateta scored twice as hosts France came from behind to beat Egypt 3-1 after extra time on Monday and set up an Olympic men's football final showdown with Spain, who edged Morocco 2-1.

Thierry Henry's France looked to be heading for defeat in their semi-final in Lyon after Mahmoud Saber put Egypt ahead against the run of play just after the hour mark. But Crystal Palace striker Mateta levelled late on to force extra time, in which he headed France in front after Egypt's Omar Fayed was sent off.

Michael Olise then sealed the win on 108 minutes and France, looking for their second Olympic men's football gold medal and first since 1984, will now face Spain at the Parc des Princes in Paris on Friday. "When you see France picking up medals all over the place, you say to yourself it is up to us now to not let everyone down," said France coach Henry.

"You don't want to be the team who don't win a medal so at least that is done. Now we will see what colour we get, but honestly I am living a dream here and I don't want to wake up." France hit the woodwork through Loic Bade late in the first half and were caught out by a sucker punch when Saber fired Egypt ahead against the run of play on 62 minutes.

The hosts then pushed frantically for an equalizer and struck the woodwork twice in a matter of seconds, captain Alexandre Lacazette heading off a post and Bade nodding the follow-up against the bar.

The leveller arrived in the 83rd minute, with new Bayern Munich signing Olise the creator as he cut

through the middle on a driving run before playing in Mateta to finish. France hoped to find a winner before extra time, but a penalty appeal after Fayed blocked a Bade header with his hand was dismissed after a long VAR review.

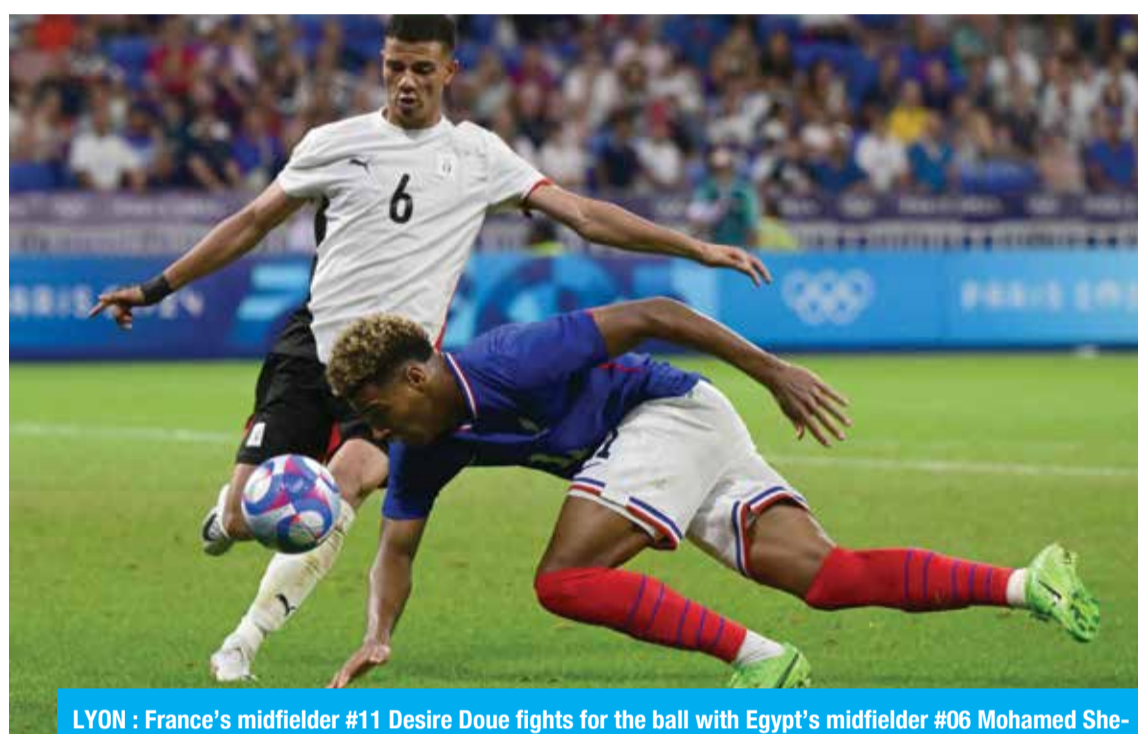
Egypt were quickly reduced to 10 men in extra time when Fayed — already booked for arguing against the penalty call — saw yellow again for chopping down Desire Doue. France went ahead in the 99th minute when Kiliann Sildillia headed Olise's delivery back across goal for Mateta to head in his fourth goal of the tournament.

### Egypt and Morocco to fight for bronze

The excellent Olise fired in the third at the start of the second half of extra time after a clearance struck Doue and fell into his path and France celebrated wildly at full-time. Earlier, substitute Juanlu Sanchez struck a late winner for Spain as they fought back to beat Morocco in the first semi-final in Marseille.

Morocco had led through a Soufiane Rahimi penalty towards the end of the first half, a sixth goal at the Olympics for the tournament's top scorer, and his fourth to come from the spot. That sent the large Moroccan support at the Stade Velodrome wild, but Spain kept their cool to equalize through their own star man in the 66th minute.

Fermin Lopez, a member of Spain's triumphant Euro 2024 squad, who scored twice in the Olympic quarter-final against Japan, pounced in the 66th minute when the ball broke loose in the box and fired low into the net to make it 1-1.



LYON : France's midfielder #11 Desire Doue fights for the ball with Egypt's midfielder #06 Mohamed Shehata during the men's semi-final football match between France and Egypt during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Lyon Stadium in Lyon. — AFP

With the prospect of extra time looming, Spain won it in the 85th minute as Lopez found Sanchez bounding into the area, and he sent a shot low into

the far corner. Morocco now go to Nantes for the bronze medal match on Thursday against their North African rivals Egypt. — AFP

## Taiwan threatens legal action over boxing gender row

**TAIPEI:** Taiwanese sports officials threatened the International Boxing Association with legal action on Tuesday after the organization claimed a Taiwanese fighter in the Paris Olympics women's competition was "a man".

Taiwan's Lin Yu-ting and Algeria's Imane Khelif, both of whom are guaranteed a medal after reaching the semi-finals, are at the centre of a major gender row. The IBA disqualified them from its world championships in 2023, but boxing in Paris is run by the International Olympic Committee, which cleared them to compete.

The two organizations have been in open dispute and the IOC took over the sport at the Games because of financial, governance and ethical concerns at the IBA. The Russian-led IBA attempted to clarify the situation surrounding Lin and Khelif but a chaotic press conference on Monday only muddied the waters further, with IBA officials making a series of contradictory statements.

Its president, Kremlin-linked oligarch Umar Kremlev, claimed that both fighters had "genetic testing that shows that these are men". Talking via video call, Kremlev also claimed that testing showed the duo "have men's level of testosterone". In response, Taiwan's Sports Administration said it had filed "a solemn protest against the IBA". It accused the IBA, which has effectively been expelled from the Olympic movement, of "continuing to publish false information to mislead the public and attempt to interfere with the Games".

"The Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee (Taiwan) has retained a lawyer to send a letter of warning to the IBA, and reserves the right to pursue legal action and file a lawsuit if necessary," the sports administration added. — AFP

## Korda hoping to bounce back at Olympics

**PARIS:** Nelly Korda will start her Olympic women's golf title defence on Wednesday as the gold-medal favourite despite her brilliant season threatening to come off the rails in recent months.

The world number one arrives at Le Golf National hoping to arrest a sudden downturn in form after smashing records earlier in the year with a run of six wins in seven events. Korda became the first LPGA Tour player to win six times in a single season since 2016 Olympic champion Park In-bee in 2013 with victory at the Americas Open in May.

The American had previously won five successive titles, including her second major triumph at the Chevron Championship. But a disaster at the US Open, the lowlight a 10 on a par-three hole, was the first of three straight missed cuts and she could only finish tied-26th at the Evian Championship in July.

"The game of golf is a funny game," she told reporters on Monday. "Sometimes you feel on top of the world and in a matter of a couple seconds, you just feel like you're on the bottom of the sea."

"So it definitely makes you appreciate the good golf that you play, but you have to have a mix of everything in there and everything can't always go well." Korda edged out Japan's Mone Inami and Lydia Ko to win gold by one shot at the Tokyo Games three years ago.

She and sister Jessica followed in the footsteps of their mother, former Czech tennis player Regina Rajchrtova, in becoming Olympians. Their father Petr Korda, the 1998 Australian Open tennis champion, never played in the Olympics.

Tennis-playing brother Sebastian opted not to compete in Paris and instead won the ATP title in Washington last weekend to reach a career-high ranking of world number 18. "We always make fun of the boys because we say that the girls in the Korda family are the only ones that are the Olympians and the boys are not," Nelly Korda said. "So we have that



Nelly Korda

above them in the family." Korda will play alongside South Korean star Ko Jin-young and Chinese world number five Yin Ruoning in the first two rounds.

### Ko eyes complete set

New Zealander Lydia Ko is the only golfer in history with multiple individual Olympic medals, after finishing second to Park in Rio and winning bronze in Tokyo. She has shown signs of form this season, winning her 20th LPGA Tour title in January.

"I've got the most medals both in the women's and men's side in golf, so that's a pretty cool thing to have," said the former world number one. "If I can leave Paris with another medal, that will be very special to me because you just never know what's going to happen in the future."

Ko said her sister has her silver medal and her father the bronze, but she will take them back if she can get on the top step of the podium this weekend. "If I win the gold, I'm definitely taking all of them back and I'm going to find a way to kind of present all three," she added.

French hopes will be pinned on 2023 Evian champion Celine Boutier, although she has slipped from third to seventh in the world rankings after a run of 11 tournaments without a top-10 finish. "I think it's going to be huge for France and huge for golf in France," said Boutier.

"Personally I don't really think about inspiring people yet. I'm just trying to get to hopefully Wednesday, and then just one day at a time." — AFP

## 'Ferrari' Will Jordan returns to rev up All Blacks

**WELLINGTON:** Try-scoring "Ferrari" Will Jordan is set to rev up the All Blacks attack as he returns from shoulder surgery for Saturday's home clash against Argentina in Wellington.

Fleet-footed Jordan, 26, has touched down 31 times in as many Tests since his debut in 2020 and scored a hat-trick against the Pumas in a 44-6 victory in the World Cup semi-final last year. Fullback Jordan went under the knife earlier this year and has not played for New Zealand since being on the losing side against South Africa in the World Cup final.

"Will's looking great in training." All Blacks fly-half Damian McKenzie told reporters Tuesday ahead of the Rugby Championship opener. "He's like a Ferrari — bring him out of the garage at the right time and he's ready to go. "It's been a long time coming since the World Cup, so we're excited to have him back." Alongside Jordan, former captain Sam Cane could play his first Test since the World Cup after a neck injury.

It is Cane's last season in the All Blacks jersey, having announced he will retire from international rugby by after the 2024 campaign and take up a three-year contract at a Japan club. "Sammy's had a massive career with New Zealand and will want to go out on a high note," McKenzie said.

"He's been great to have back in the squad. Just to have his experience and leadership, you can't put a price on that." New Zealand have won each of their last three Tests against Argentina by more than 40 points. But the All Blacks are wary of the South Americans after suffering a shock 25-18 defeat two years ago in Christchurch, Argentina's first win on New Zealand soil. "Both teams are different since then, but it's obviously a rock under the pillow," McKenzie added. — AFP

## Alvarez set to join Atletico in 95m euro deal

**MANCHESTER:** Julian Alvarez is set to depart Manchester City for Atletico Madrid according to widespread reports on Tuesday with the English champions set to bank a huge profit on the Argentine in a deal worth up to 95 million euros (£81 million, \$104 million).

The 24-year-old cost City just £14 million when he signed from River Plate in January 2022 and has since enjoyed a meteoric rise, helping Argentina to World Cup and Copa America glory, as well as winning two Premier League titles and the Champions League at club level.

After initially returning to River on loan for six months, Alvarez scored 36 times in two seasons at City as Pep Guardiola's men became the first side ever to win four consecutive English top-flight titles. However, he still had to play second fiddle to Erling Haaland for the majority of his time in Manchester.

City will be compensated by a club record sale but may now be forced into the market in the final three weeks of the transfer window to find back-up to the Norwegian striker. The departure of Spain captain Alvaro Morata to AC Milan ensures Alvarez will have no such problems being the main man in the Spanish capital, where he will have the chance to play under compatriot Diego Simeone. — AFP

## Feinberg-Mngomezulu makes first Springbok start against Wallabies

**BRISBANE:** Stormers fly-half Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu will make his first Test start for South Africa after coach Rassie Erasmus named him ahead of Handre Pollard on Tuesday for the Rugby Championship opener against Australia in Brisbane.

Bulls number eight Elrigh Louw will also line up for the first time from the off at the Suncoast Stadium on Saturday in a side that otherwise relies on the core of players that won last year's World Cup and drew a two-Test series with Ireland last month.

Both Feinberg-Mngomezulu, 22, and Louw, 24, have made four previous appearances as replacements for the Boks. "Sacha has made a notable impact off the bench in all four Tests he has played so far, and he's slotted into the system with ease, so we are excited to see what dynamic he adds to the team as a starter," said Erasmus.

"His goal-kicking has also been impressive, and we know that against teams like Australia, New Zealand, and Argentina the margins are very small, so every point will count. "We're also keen to see what Elrigh brings to the game, given his consistently strong performances for the Bulls in the last few seasons."

"With Pieter-Steph (du Toit) and Siya (Kolisi) alongside him, he'll have good guidance to play to his strengths and do what he does best." The match-day 23 features just three changes from the group that faced the Irish with Louw, two-time World Cup-winning scrumhalf Cobus Reinach, and replacement utility forward Ben-Jason Dixon the only additions.

Regular scrumhalf Faf de Klerk is nursing a niggle while the experienced Pollard is just one of two specialist backs on the bench along



Feinberg-Mngomezulu

with Grant Williams, who serves as back-up at scrumhalf and wing. "One of the big talking points for us as a team from the beginning of the season was that we need to get the balance right between selecting teams featuring youth and experience as we build towards the 2027 Rugby World Cup,"

said Erasmus.

"We're pleased with the way we've been able to integrate some of the young players into the squad this season and give them game time against top opposition. "We're excited to see what they have to offer against a team such as Australia." — AFP

Sports

PARIS 2024



# Duplantis soars to Olympic pole vault gold, Hodgkinson wins 800m

American Sam Kendrick won silver, Greece's Emmanouil Karalis takes bronze

PARIS: Armand Duplantis soared over his rivals in clinching back-to-back Olympic pole vault crowns on Monday with a new world record as Keely Hodgkinson won Britain's first gold of the Paris Games on the track with a sensational 800m final victory.

Swedish star Duplantis cemented his status as the greatest pole vaulter in history with a superb display, blowing the roof off the Stade de France with a world record-breaking final leap of 6.25 metres. The 24-year-old Duplantis, popularly known as "Mondo", is the first man to win consecutive Olympic pole vault golds since the USA's Bob Richards, who achieved the feat with victories in 1952 and 1956. In perfect, warm conditions in Paris, defending champion Duplantis never looked like being threatened by his rivals as he clinched victory. The only suspense in a dominant performance was whether the US-born Swede could break his own world record to crown victory.

He duly delivered with his third and final attempt, beating his previous best of 6.24m to deafening roars of appreciation from the Parisian crowd. American Sam Kendrick won silver with a best of 5.95m, Greece's Emmanouil Karalis taking bronze (5.90). "What can I say? I just broke a world record at the Olympics, biggest possible stage for a pole vaulter," Duplantis said after his incredible performance. "The biggest dream since a kid was to break the world record at the Olympics, and I've been able to do that in front of the most ridiculous crowd I've ever competed in front of."

Duplantis's gold was one of four titles up for grabs at the Stade de France on Monday. On the track, British middle distance runner Hodgkinson finally ended her long wait to capture a major global championship title with gold in the 800m. Hodgkinson, who had claimed three consecutive silver medals at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and the World Championships in 2022 and 2023, led from start-to-finish to win in 1min 56.72sec. Ethiopia's Tsige Dugema claimed silver in 1:57.15 and Kenya's Mary Moraa took bronze (1:57.42).

"I have worked really hard for the last year and I



SAINT-DENIS: Sweden's Armand Duplantis competes in the men's pole vault final of the athletics event at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at Stade de France in Saint-Denis, north of Paris. - AFP

think you can see how much it meant to me when I crossed the line. I can't believe I have finally done it," Hodgkinson, 22, told the BBC after her triumph.

### Chebet ends Hassan dream

In the women's 5,000m Kenya's "smiling assassin" Beatrice Chebet dethroned the Netherlands' defending champion Sifan Hassan with a tactical masterclass. The pre-race hype had focused on the Ethiopian-born Hassan's attempt to win an improbable treble of 5,000m, 10,000m and marathon golds at the same Olympics.

But Hassan's dream of emulating Czech great Emil Zatopek — who completed the same triple at the 1952 Helsinki Games — was put to bed ruthlessly by Chebet. The 24-year-old 10,000m world record holder bided her time before accelerating past compatriot Faith Kipyegon down the home straight to win in 14min 28.56sec. Kipyegon, the reigning 5,000m world

champion, crossed the finish line in second place but was initially disqualified for a shove on Ethiopia's Gudaf Tsegay with two laps to go. However she was reinstated on appeal, leaving Hassan with bronze. In the women's discus, American Valarie Allman defended her Olympic crown comfortably with a throw of 69.50m. China's Feng Bin won silver with a best effort of 67.51m and Croatia's Sandra Elkasevic took bronze. Elsewhere on Monday, newly-crowned 100m champion Noah Lyles sailed through the opening heats of the 200m to remain on course for a hat-trick of Olympic golds in Paris. Lyles, who is aiming to add the 200m and 4x100m titles to his 100m crown won in thrilling fashion on Sunday, romped home in his heat in 20.19sec. "I spent years working on the 100m, but the 200 is where it's at," Lyles said. "This is where I get to show my speed and endurance and my top-end speed. "This is where I get to show I'm stronger than everybody else." - AFP

## Olympics sees 40-plus COVID cases as global infections rise: WHO

GENEVA: More than 40 athletes at the Paris Olympics have tested positive for COVID-19, highlighting a new global rise in cases as vaccination coverage plunges, the World Health Organization said Tuesday. The WHO said the virus behind the COVID-19 pandemic was still circulating—and countries need to sharpen up their response systems and get jabbing those most at risk.

Several high profile athletes have suffered from COVID-19 at the 2024 Paris Games. British swimmer Adam Peaty tested positive a day after winning silver in the 100m breaststroke when he had not felt well, his team said. Australian medal hope Lani Pallister pulled out of the women's 1500m freestyle after falling ill.

"COVID-19 is still very much with us. The virus is circulating in all countries," said Maria Van Kerkhove, the WHO's epidemic and pandemic preparedness and prevention director. Data from 84 countries shows that the percentage of positive tests for SARS-CoV-2 - the virus that causes COVID-19 disease - "has been rising for several weeks", she told a media briefing.

Furthermore, wastewater surveillance — which tends to give a two-to-three-week advance indication on hospitalizations — suggests SARS-CoV-2 circulation is "two to 20 times higher than what is currently being reported", she said.

"This is significant because the virus continues to evolve and change, which puts us all at risk of a potentially more severe virus that could evade our detection and/or our medical interventions, including vaccination."

### Paris cases no surprise

Worldwide, the test positivity rate is above 10 percent, but in Europe, the figure is over 20 percent.

Van Kerkhove said the high circulation was not typical for respiratory viruses which tend to circulate more in the colder months.

However, "in recent months, regardless of season, many countries have experienced surges of COVID-19, including at the Olympics, currently, where at least 40 athletes have tested positive," she said. "It's not surprising to see athletes being infected, because as I said before, the virus is circulating quite rampantly in other countries." Van Kerkhove said the Paris 2024 chiefs and the WHO had worked together to prevent disease circulation at the Games and the right measures were being taken. "We have observed more people wearing masks at the Olympics — and I think that is to take into consideration the circulation of SARS-CoV-2," she said.

### 'Alarming decline' in vaccination

The cases at the Olympics underline the current circulation of the virus, with the WHO concerned about how vaccination against developing severe COVID disease has dropped off. "Over the last two years, we have seen an alarming decline in vaccine coverage, especially among health workers and people over 60 - two of the most at-risk groups. This urgently needs to be turned around," said Van Kerkhove, branding their current coverage rates "abysmal".

The UN health agency urged people to ensure they had received a COVID-19 vaccination dose in the last 12 months — especially those at higher risk. It recommended administering COVID jabs alongside seasonal influenza vaccines as a way to boost coverage.

"Our worry is... with such low coverage and with such large circulation, if we were to have a variant that would be more severe, then the susceptibility of the at-risk populations to develop severe disease is huge," Van Kerkhove explained.

Furthermore, about six percent of symptomatic cases go on to develop post-COVID conditions, or Long COVID, causing a "massive burden" for health services. Post-pandemic, "the perception that COVID is gone is real... but the virus isn't gone," Van Kerkhove stressed. - AFP

Olympics Gallery



MARSEILLE: Brazil's duo Henrique Duarte Haddad and Isabel Swan compete in race 8 of the mixed 470 double-handed dinghy event.



PARIS: Australia's Arisa Trew reacts after competing in the women's park skateboarding prelims.



VILLENEUVE-D'ASCO: France's fans react before the women's quarter-final handball match between France and Germany.



PARIS: Brazil's players celebrate after winning the volleyball women's quarter-final match between Brazil and Dominican Republic.



VERSAILLES: Netherlands' Maikel Van Der Vleuten with horse Beauville Z competes in the equestrian's jumping individual final. - AFP photos



SAINT-DENIS: US' Valarie Allman competes in the women's discus throw final of the athletics event at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at Stade de France in Saint-Denis. - AFP

## Olympic discus champ takes aim at new 'track' circuit

PARIS: Newly crowned Olympic discus champion Valarie Allman has hit out at Michael Johnson's lucrative new athletics circuit being launched in 2025, which will only feature track events. The 29-year-old American sealed back-to-back golds at the Stade de France on Monday after an absorbing battle with China's Feng Bin and Croatia's two-time Olympic champion Sandra Elkasevic.

Afterwards Allman said the competition had demonstrated that throwing disciplines were an integral part of track and field, and should be embraced more enthusiastically. It was a clear reference to the new Grand Slam Track series announced by US Olympic legend Johnson in June, which will involve four meetings next year with total prize money of around \$12 million (11 million euros). Johnson has defended the decision to exclude field events from the circuit, saying time constraints do not allow it. However, Allman launched a staunch defence of her craft after clinching her gold medal, adamant that there is untapped potential in her sport if marketed properly. - AFP

# Classifieds

### 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
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

#### Hospitals

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

### Change of Name

I, **Harriet Peter**, holder of Indian Passport No.W0775615, do hereby change my name to Harriet Dayal for all purposes. I will henceforth be known by the name Harriet Dayal and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#5911, 07/08/2024)

I **Zahra Murtaza**, Passport No. X5374261, do hereby change my name to Zahra Murtaza (as given name) Khanji (as surname) for all

purpose. I will henceforth be known as in the name of Zahra Murtaza Khanji and I also undertake to carryout this name change in all documents . V/P Najampura Sagwara. (#5643, 07/08/2024)

I have changed my name from **Rashida**, Passport No. Z5185067 in future I am know from this name Rashida Kutbuddin Seth V/P Najampura Sagwara Dist, Dungarpur (Raj.).

PARIS 2024 

## Alfred targets Olympic sprint double as 'vicious' 1500m battle looms

First athlete from tiny Caribbean island of Saint Lucia to win an Olympic medal



SAINT-DENIS: Saint Lucia's Julien Alfred (C) crosses the finish line ahead of France's Gemima Joseph (L), Kazakhstan's Olga Safronova (2R) and Switzerland's Leonie Pointet (R) in the women's 200m heat of the athletics event at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. — AFP

### Germany beat Greece to reach Olympic basketball semis

PARIS: World Cup champions Germany reached the Olympic men's basketball semi-finals for the first time Tuesday, coming from behind to beat Greece 76-63 and dumping two-time NBA MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo out of the Games.

Trailing by as many as 12 in the first quarter, Germany had drawn level at 36-36 by halftime and after a tense third quarter roared away in the fourth to book a meeting with either host nation France or Canada for a place in the final.

NBA star Antetokounmpo scored 22 points but 18 points in reply from Franz Wagner was enough for Germany to maintain their four-game unbeaten record. Wagner said the whole German team pulled together to slow Antetokounmpo.

"It was more than half of the scouting report, so a big part of our preparation," he said of the need to contain the Greek superstar. "It takes all five on the court to try to stop him, but I thought we did a good job, especially in the second half, of at least trying to contain him."

Greece started strongly and Antetokounmpo brought their fans to their feet with a dunk that gave them a 16-4 lead with five minutes remaining in the first quarter. Nick Calathes found Antetokounmpo for an alley-oop dunk less than a minute later, following up with a three-pointer that gave Greece a 12-point lead with less than a minute left in the first.

But Germany slowly turned the tide, Franz Wagner and Moritz Wagner scoring six first-half points apiece, and tied the scores up at half-time, Dennis Schroder opened the third with a three-pointer that gave Germany their first lead of the game.

And after a back-and-forth battle, Isaac Bonga's three-pointer at the buzzer to end the third sent the Germans into the final period with a 59-52 lead. Johannes Thiemann finished with 10 points, six rebounds and a steal and Schroder had 13 points and assists coming off the bench.

"We struggled with their physicality, but I thought our second group came in and did an outstanding job in that end of the first quarter and really kind of gave us the energy and physicality to get back in the game," Germany coach Gordie Herbert said. "We made a couple of changes with the defensive game plan and that's all we did really." — AFP

PARIS: Saint Lucia's Julien Alfred targets an Olympic sprint double on Tuesday as Jakob Ingebrigtsen and Josh Kerr go head-to-head in a 1500m grudge match that promises fireworks. But there was frustration after Paris Games organizers cancelled training for open water swimming in the River Seine due to pollution levels — the fifth time such a decision has been made.

The women's 200m headlines action at the Stade de France, with Alfred seeking to emulate Jamaica's Elaine Thompson-Herah, who did the 100m-200m double at the Rio 2016 Games and at the COVID-delayed Tokyo Olympics.

Alfred, the first athlete from the tiny Caribbean island of Saint Lucia to win an Olympic medal, won her semi-final on Monday in 21.98 seconds but was pipped in the overall times by US sprinter Gabrielle Thomas, who crossed the line in 21.86. Jamaica's world champion Shericka Jackson withdrew before her heat on Sunday. Thomas, looking to upgrade from bronze in Tokyo, has the fastest time in the world this year with 21.78sec and has made no secret of the fact that a gold medal is in her sights.

#### 'Vicious' 1500m

The clash at the Stade de France between Norway's Ingebrigtsen and his British rival Kerr in the men's 1500m will not be for the faint-hearted. The 26-year-old Kerr finished second behind In-

gebrigtsen in Sunday's semi-final, with the two eye-balling each other for the final 20 metres.

The Norwegian has had several digs at Kerr since the Briton edged him in last year's final at the world championships, claiming he often skips events. Kerr says he is always at the major championships and has predicted the final will be one of the "most vicious and hardest" people have ever seen.

The British runner, who took bronze behind 23-year-old Ingebrigtsen in Tokyo, said he wanted to do his talking on the track. "I'm ready to go after it, I think we all are, there's been a lot of talking over the last kind of 12 months, even two years, so I'm just looking to settle that a little bit on Tuesday and give it my best performance."

#### Seine pollution

The decision of organizers to cancel a "familiarization session" for marathon swimmers on Tuesday has raised questions as to why triathletes were allowed to swim in the Seine the previous day. Organizers said Tuesday they were "very confident" that the women's and men's 10-kilometre swimming events, scheduled for Thursday and Friday, would take place in the river.

The first boxing gold is up for grabs at Roland Garros, the home of French tennis, but all eyes will be on Algeria's Imane Khelif, at the centre of a gen-

der controversy. Khelif, who faces Janjaem Suwanapheng of Thailand in the semi-finals of the 66-kilogram division, is guaranteed at least bronze in Paris.

The International Boxing Association disqualified Khelif and another boxer, Taiwan's Lin Yu-ting, from last year's world championships after failing gender eligibility tests. The boxing competition in the French capital is run by the International Olympic Committee because of financial, governance and ethical concerns at the IBA.

The IOC cleared the two boxers to fight and Lin is also guaranteed a medal. In the women's football competition, World Cup holders Spain and four-time gold medalists the United States are on course for a showdown in Saturday's final.

Led by reigning Ballon d'Or winner Aitana Bonmati, Spain face surprise semi-finalists Brazil in Marseille, while a rejuvenated USA under new coach Emma Hayes meet Germany in Lyon. Before Paris woke up on Tuesday, two gold medals had been decided in the surfing competition nearly 16,000 kilometres (9,950 miles) away in Tahiti. France's Kauli Vaast won the men's competition while America's Caroline Marks claimed gold in the women's event. The United States are level with China on 21 golds but are top of the table by virtue of winning more silver and bronze medals. — AFP

### France's Vaast, USA's Marks win surfing gold

TEAHUPO'O: France's Kauli Vaast won men's surfing Olympic gold Monday on his Tahitian home waves at Teahupo'o, while the United States' Caroline Marks claimed gold in the women's event in a thrilling final that went down to the wire. Vaast, who grew up nearby, beat Australian silver medalist Jack Robinson to claim France's first Olympic surfing gold after taking the two best waves of a high-level match.

Three-time world champion Gabriel Medina of Brazil, who went into the Games a widely tipped favourite, took the men's bronze, beating out Alonso Correa with a score of 15.54 to the Peruvian's 12.43

An AFP photograph of Medina celebrating after kicking out of a wave last week following a ride that earned a record Olympic score became a global sensation, and a defining image of the sport and the Paris

Games. Local prodigy Vaast took the lead against Robinson from the start, scoring a 9.50 on his first wave, and racking up a total of 17.67 against 7.83 for the Australian, who conceded in the final moments.

"The mana was with me today," Vaast said after the win, referring to a supernatural force in Polynesian culture. "From the beginning, every day I felt it, it was there." Winning on his home turf of Teahupo'o was "the cherry on the cake", he added. "For all of France, for all of Polynesia it's incredible."

Speaking 15,000 kilometres from the epicentre of the Paris Games, Vaast said he was unsure whether he could make it to the French capital to celebrate, noting he had another competition starting soon, "but I haven't decided yet — we'll see". In the women's final, Marks pipped Brazil's Tatiana Weston-Webb by just 0.17 points to become the second American Olympic surfing champion after Carissa Moore in 2021.

France's Johanne Defay took the women's bronze, scoring 12.66 to Costa Rican Brisa Hennessy's 4.93. In an evenly matched final that was only decided in the final few minutes, the 22-year-old world champion Marks scored 10.50 with her best two waves, just enough to edge the Brazilian, who managed 10.33. — AFP



TEAHUPO'O: Silver medalist Australia's Jack Robinson (L), gold medalist France's Kauli Vaast (C), and bronze medalist Brazil's Gabriel Medina pose in the men's surfing podium ceremony, during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, in Teahupo'o. — AFP