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## Zionist terror hits West Bank

10 killed in deadly Zionist attacks • Gaza war drags on • US 'sanctions' settlers



(Left) A Palestinian boy raises his arm into the air as Zionist soldiers inspect what he is carrying during a raid in Jenin in the occupied West Bank on Aug 28, 2024. (Right) Palestinian children hold placards during a protest calling for an end of the Gaza conflict and a return to school ahead of the new academic year, next to a damaged school building in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on Aug 28, 2024. — AFP photos



**JENIN/GAZA:** The Zionist entity launched a large-scale military operation Wednesday in the occupied West Bank, where the army said it killed nine Palestinians, while the nearly 11-month Gaza war showed no signs of abating. Violence has surged in the West Bank amid the Gaza war that has killed at least 40,534 people, mostly women and children. It has also caused widespread destruction, displaced nearly all of Gaza's 2.4 million people at least once and triggered a humanitarian crisis.

In the West Bank in the early hours of Wednesday, the Zionist military launched a series of coordinated raids across four cities — Jenin, Nablus, Tubas and Tulkarem. Columns of Zionist armored vehicles entered two refugee camps, in Tulkarem and Tubas, as well as Jenin. By midday, they were blocking entrances to the towns and camps. AFP photographers said, with soldiers firing at the camps from which gunfire and explosions were heard.

Zionist bulldozers dug up the asphalt from the streets, with the army saying it was looking for roadside bombs.

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### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Libya oil blockade widens

**BENGAZI:** Libya's oil blockade widened on Wednesday with eastern leaders demanding western authorities back down over the replacement of the central bank governor. On Wednesday, two oil engineers said the Sarir field had almost completely halted its 209,000 barrel per day output after disruption this week at the El Feel, Amal, Nafoora and Abu Attifel fields. Eastern factions have vowed to keep Libya's oil output shuttered until the internationally recognized government in Tripoli, in the west, returns veteran central bank governor Sadiq Al-Kabir to his post. — Reuters (See Page 8)

#### Iran charges filmmaker, actress

**TEHRAN:** Iranian authorities on Wednesday indicted a leading woman filmmaker and her actress daughter with violating the Islamic dress code by appearing in public without the veil, the judiciary said. "The Tehran prosecutor charged filmmaker Rakhshan Banietemad and her daughter, the actress Baran Kosari, after they removed their hijab in public," the judiciary's Mizan Online website reported. On Tuesday, pictures of the two without the mandatory head scarf at a film event were posted online and immediately went viral. — AFP

#### Telegram founder sent to court

**PARIS:** Telegram boss Pavel Durov was being transferred on Wednesday to see the French investigative judge who was due to decide whether to place him under formal investigation following his arrest as part of a probe into organized crime on the messaging app, a judicial source said. The investigating judge on Wednesday decided to conclude the initial police questioning and see Durov, in police custody since his arrest, to decide whether to take the probe further. Durov is a citizen of Russia, France and the United Arab Emirates, where Telegram is based. — Reuters

### Yemen flash floods spark cholera crisis

**HAIS, Yemen:** A clinic in western Yemen has been inundated with suspected cholera patients after heavy rains and flooding sparked fears of a major outbreak in the impoverished and war-ravaged country. With hundreds of suspected cases overwhelming the facility in Hais, medical staff are stretched to the limit as they battle the outbreak in a region already hit by nearly a decade of war.

Women and children lie attached to intravenous drips to combat diarrhea, a

symptom of what medics fear is cholera. "The influx of patients has increased due to the floods and rains in Hais," said Bakil Al-Hadrami, a doctor at a diarrhea treatment center in the town, about 120 km south of the Red Sea port city of Hodeida. "The staff on duty are overburdened" and services could collapse "at any moment", he told AFP from the clinic, warning of a "medical crisis" if the authorities do not intervene.

Flash floods triggered by torrential rainfall have killed at least 12 people and left more than 20 others missing in rebel-held areas of Yemen, the Houthi-run Al-Masirah television reported on Wednesday. The overnight floods in Al-Mahwit, a province west of the capital Sanaa ruled by the Iran-backed Houthis, triggered

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HAIS, Yemen: A dog looks on as children fill up a jerrycan from a water puddle left by recent heavy flooding south of Hodeidah province on Aug 28, 2024. — AFP

### Sweden charges Quran burners with hate crime

**STOCKHOLM:** Swedish prosecutors on Wednesday charged two men with inciting ethnic hatred over several protests involving the burning of Holy Qurans in 2023, which sparked widespread outrage in Muslim countries. Salwan Momika, a Christian Iraqi who burned Holy Qurans at a slew of protests, and co-protester Salwan Najem were charged with "ag-

itation against an ethnic group" on four occasions in the summer of 2023.

"Both men are prosecuted for having on these four occasions made statements and treated the Quran in a manner intended to express contempt for Muslims because of their faith," senior prosecutor Anna Hankkio said in a statement. According to the charge sheet, the duo desecrated the Holy Quran, including burning it, while making derogatory remarks about Muslims — in one case outside a Stockholm mosque.

"In my opinion, the men's statements and actions fall under the provisions on agitation against an ethnic or national group and it is important that this matter

is tried in court," the prosecutor added. Relations between Sweden and several Middle Eastern countries were strained by the pair's protests. Iraqi protesters stormed the Swedish embassy in Baghdad twice in July 2023, starting fires within the compound on the second occasion.

In August last year, Sweden's intelligence service Sapó raised its threat level to four on a scale of five after the Holy Quran burnings had made the country a "prioritized target". The Swedish government condemned the desecrations while noting the country's constitutionally protected freedom of speech and assembly laws.

Earlier this month, prosecutors

charged Swedish-Danish right-wing activist Rasmus Paludan with the same crime over a 2022 protest in the southern city of Malmo, which also included burning the Holy Quran. In October 2023, a Swedish court convicted a man of inciting ethnic hatred with a 2020 Holy Quran burning, the first time the country's court system had tried the charge for desecrating Islam's holy book.

Prosecutors have previously said that under Swedish law, the burning of a Holy Quran can be protected under free speech. However, depending on the context and statements made at the time, it can also be considered "agitation against an ethnic group". — AFP

### Tens of millions bake in extreme heat in US east

**WASHINGTON:** Nearly 60 million people were sweltering under heat alerts on Wednesday as a late-summer surge of extreme temperatures blanketed much of the eastern half of the United States. Record heat was expected to impact the mid-Atlantic states with temperature highs of around 37.8 Celsius in and around the capital Washington, the National Weather Service said, though the heat wave was expected to be short-lived as a cooler and damper front moves in from Canada.

"However, much of the Ohio and

Tennessee Valleys will feel a couple more days of high temperatures topping into the upper 90s at the hottest locations," added NWS. In Baltimore, the mayor's office issued a "code red extreme heat alert" and posted on X the locations of five cooling centers opened to support the city's homeless population. Authorities were also distributing cold water to those without shelter.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advised people who are outdoors in regions where the heat threat is considered "major" to stay in the shade, take breaks, and confine their activities to the coolest parts of the day or evening. It was also important to carry a bottle of water, limit intake of caffeine, and monitor urine color for signs of dehydration, the agency advised.

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WASHINGTON: People pass an ice cream truck on the National Mall during a hot summer day on Aug 28, 2024. — AFP



## Local

# Kuwait-Egypt labor committee discusses consular issues, ties

## Officials review mechanism to evaluate skills of Egyptian workers, licenses

CAIRO: The second session of the Kuwaiti-Egyptian labor committee was held in Cairo to discuss issues pertaining to bilateral cooperation. The session was chaired by Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Consulate Affairs Ambassador Aziz Al-Daihani and Egyptian Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs Dr Mohammad Al-Badri. Speaking to KUNA, Ambassador Al-Daihani said that the meeting had touched on issues of mutual interest, including the status of Egyptian laborers in Kuwait.

He affirmed that there was an understanding between the two sides on issues pertaining to the excellent bilateral ties and the best ways to move them forward. Ambassador Al-Daihani pointed out that the Egyptian side had provided a briefing on the mechanism to evaluate the skills of Egyptian workers and licenses given to allow them to pursue work. The Kuwaiti delegation consisted of representatives from the Interior and Health Ministries in addition to the Public Authority of Manpower. The session

is part of a series of sessions preparing for the Kuwaiti-Egyptian High Committee meeting to be headed by Foreign Ministers of both countries next month.

Al-Daihani affirmed the importance of developing action with Egypt to provide full and ongoing care for the citizens of both countries. He made the statement to KUNA after holding the 5th session of the Kuwaiti-Egyptian joint consular committee. This session comes in completion of the previous ones and preparation for the next meeting of the joint high committee to be co-chaired by the foreign ministers of both countries in September. Al-Daihani added.

Holding the session boosts the relations and cooperation between Kuwait and Egypt and shows their desire to develop consular action and its mechanism in implementation of the directives of the two countries' political leaderships, he noted. The meeting discussed a number of consular issues, in addition to health and judicial cooperative ties, he pointed out. It concluded on a consensus on



Kuwaiti-Egyptian labor committee is chaired by Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Consulate Affairs Ambassador Aziz Al-Daihani and Egyptian Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs Dr Mohammad Al-Badri. — KUNA photos



several issues of mutual interest to meet the aspirations of both Egyptians and Kuwaitis, Al-Daihani elaborated.

The two sides agreed on communication between the ministries of

health in the countries to activate the Memorandum of Understanding in this field, he said. He underscored the significance of holding the committee due to its effective role in meeting aspira-

tions of both Egyptians and Kuwaitis and the deep-rooted ties between the two sides. Al-Daihani is leading a delegation from the Ministries of Interior, Health, and Manpower. — KUNA



Ministry of Oil

## Project aims to document employees' achievements

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Oil announced on Wednesday that it has been selected by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) among government agencies that will participate in the pilot project (Employee Achievement Record) with the aim of documenting employees' achievements and ensuring priority for distinguished employees. The Ministry of Oil said in a press statement that its selection to participate in the project is considered a source of trust and appreciation from the CSC and a culmination of the efforts it has made over the past years in implementing full digital transformation projects and applying the latest technological means to carry out internal work.

It expressed its readiness to start implementing the project as it will create an electronic file for each employee to record all tasks and work that he/she will perform inside it on a regular basis in addition to automatic documentation according to the employee's civil number for all transactions and correspondence he/she carried out. Regarding the advantages of the project, the Ministry of Oil said that it guarantees the employee's right to document his tasks and achievements and gives distinguished employees priority in obtaining financial rewards, training courses, and nominations for supervisory positions.

It affirmed its adoption of the latest digital technologies and their application in various aspects of work through implementing a series of initiatives and projects that aim to improve operational efficiency and enhance transparency in administrative procedures. Six government agencies are participating in the Employee Achievement Record project: the Ministry of Defense, the Civil Service Bureau, the Central Agency for Public Tenders, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Public Authority for Minors Affairs, and the Ministry of Oil. — KUNA



Kuwait Relief Society and Al-Nouri Charity officials collaborate to help Sudan. — KUNA photos

## Kuwait's 8th aid-loaded plane departs to Sudan

KUWAIT: Kuwait's eighth relief aid plane departed for Sudan on Wednesday carrying on board 33 tons of food, medicine, and tents, organized by the Kuwaiti Relief Society and Sheikh Abdullah Nouri Charity, to help those affected by war and floods. In remarks to KUNA, the General Director of Kuwait Relief Society, Abdulaziz Al-Obaid, said that this aid plane is part of the Kuwaiti air bridge to help Sudan in cooperation with member associations of Kuwait Relief Society's Board of

## Education Ministry integrates modern technology

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education affirmed on Wednesday its keenness to integrate modern technology in line with the rapid digital developments and investment in the future of education, opening new doors to enhance students' digital skills. The Ministry stated on its official account on the social networking platform (X) that as part

of its preparations for the new academic year 2024-2025, 5,125 interactive screens have been introduced in various educational stages to provide a more attractive and interactive educational environment that enhances innovation and creativity among teachers and learners.

It explained that 294 screens have been introduced in computer labs for the elementary stage, 472 in computer labs for the intermediate stage, and 4,359 in computer labs and classrooms for the secondary stage. It indicated that the introduction of interactive screens aims to stimulate interaction and activity in the classroom, in addition to improving the clarity of educational materials and encouraging teamwork and cooperation, in addition to providing diverse educational resources, enhancing technology skills, sharing educational materials, and supporting distance education. — KUNA

Directors, including the Kuwait Charity, Revival of Islamic Heritage, Nama Charity, Al-Najat Charity, Abdullah Al-Nouri, Direct Aid, and others.

This flight includes 33 tons of urgent and critical needs for those affected, as it consists of 30 tons of food supplies, 3 tons of medical supplies to meet the basic health needs of the displaced, as well as 99 tents for sheltering the displaced, Al-Obaid added. He emphasized the dismal situation in Sudan due to the ongoing internal conflicts, widespread displacement, and lack of security and stability, which led to an increased demand for humanitarian needs such as food, medicine, and tents due to the floods and torments that struck northern Sudan.

The General Director of the Al-Nouri Charity, Waleed Al-Saif, told KUNA that the continued flights through Kuwaiti Air Bridge alongside the



maritime ships for aiding Sudanese would help increase the chances of survival for the affected ones. Al-Saif expressed his gratitude for dispatching relief aid via Kuwaiti Air Bridge, as he praised the efforts of the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Social Affairs, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their role in this humanitarian work. — KUNA



## Kuwait, Turkey charities ink \$2.105m agreement

KUWAIT: Kuwait Relief Society (KRS) on Wednesday signed an executive contract worth \$2.105 million with the Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) to operate a relief ship to support and provide relief to those affected by natural disasters and armed conflicts in Sudan. Director General of KRS Abdulaziz Al-Obaid told KUNA that the association's operation of the "Sudan Ship" confirms the depth of Kuwaiti feelings towards the Sudanese people and demonstrates Kuwait's continued presence, through its official and charitable institutions, in leading the humanitarian work there.

Al-Obaid explained that the relief ship is scheduled to depart from Turkish ports towards Port Sudan in northeastern Sudan at the end of September and will arrive in Sudanese ports by September 15, where it will be unloaded with KRS and then handed over to the Sudanese Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC).

The Director General of the Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) and its representative, Durmus Aydin, said in a similar statement to KUNA that the terms of the contract stipulated that the Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation would undertake the purchase, supply, preparation, and packaging of goods and humanitarian aid according to the quantities specified in the terms of the contract, provided that they are valid for at least one year, then load them onto the ship at Turkish ports and deliver them to the Sudanese port of Port Sudan.

Aydin added that the Turkish Foundation (IHH) is also committed, according to the terms of the contract, to bear the cost and trouble of carrying out all

procedures and obtaining the necessary permits for the entire shipment. He explained that the Foundation is committed to facilitating the tasks of monitoring the company and facilitating the work of media professionals and providing KRS with detailed interim and final media reports for all stages of preparation, loading, and dispatch, as well as its moral commitment to quickly complete the relief shipment.

For his part, the Ambassador of the Republic of Sudan to Kuwait, Awad Al-Karim Al-Rayeh Balla, noted after the signing the solidarity of the official bodies, Kuwaiti charitable societies and organizations, and the Kuwaiti people to assist those affected by the recent events in Sudan and to work diligently to overcome the humanitarian crisis there. Ambassador Al-Rayeh Balla added that the Kuwaiti aid has been providing relief aid like food, medicine, tents, and others.

He expressed his thanks for the humanitarian efforts of the Kuwaiti government and people and the charitable societies and organizations for their efforts that highlight the pioneering humanitarian role of Kuwait. Ambassador of Turkey to Kuwait Tuba Sonmez confirmed that the agreements unify the responsibility and feelings that unite Turkey and Kuwait towards those affected by natural disasters and conflicts in Sudan.

Sonmez added that the coming days will witness more cooperation between the two countries in broader humanitarian horizons, for the good and relief of those affected by disasters and crises everywhere. In turn, the representative of the Kuwait Relief Society, Eng Jamal Al-Nouri, said that the contract comes within the framework of the Kuwaiti government's support for the current humanitarian conditions in Sudan, given the suffering of displaced families from natural disasters and conflicts that have caused the spread of poverty and homelessness, in addition to diseases and epidemics.



Officials pose for a group photo. — KUNA

Al-Nouri explained that the society will bear half the cost of preparing the cargo of the Sudan Ship, which includes about 150 containers with a total weight of 2,500 tons of various relief materials, especially food, cleaning materials, and various shelter supplies. He indicated that the society will bear the cost of preparing 75 of these containers, while the Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) will bear the cost of preparing the remaining 75 containers.

He pointed out that about 83 containers were allocated for food supplies and parcels, including rice, wheat, lentils, flour, sugar, oil, tomato paste, and other food essentials, while 27 containers were allocated for mattresses, sponges, blankets, shelter supplies, tents, and waterproof plastic bags. The

Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) is one of the world's leading relief organizations that reaches war zones, conflicts, and natural disasters around the world to provide relief materials to victims and oppressed people and provide assistance to the needy and displaced.

It is one of the institutions that Kuwait Relief sought to contract with to operate a number of relief ships to the Gaza Strip and Sudan during the current year. The Kuwait Relief Society was established on April 30, 2008, and was registered by the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2012. It is a charitable relief organization based in Kuwait that works to provide relief to areas affected by conflicts or natural disasters in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and many countries around the world. — KUNA

## Local

# 17th female minister marks significant milestone in Kuwait's political history

## Appointment reflects vital role women play in driving the nation's development

**KUWAIT:** An Amiri decree was issued appointing Nora Al-Fassam as Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs, making her the 17th female Kuwaiti minister. This marks a significant milestone in Kuwait's history, reflecting the leadership's recognition of the pivotal role Kuwaiti women play in driving the nation's development.

Over the past decade, Kuwaiti women have risen to prominent leadership positions, serving as ministers, university presidents, ambassadors, and even elected members of the National Assembly, making their influence extend beyond the public sector, with many holding significant roles in the private sector at both local and international levels. Dr Massouma Al-Mubarak made history as the first Kuwaiti female minister when she was appointed as Minister of Planning and Minister of Administrative Development on June 14, 2005.

She continued to serve in various capacities, including Minister of Communications in 2006 and Minister of Health in 2007. Kuwait's first government to include two female ministers was formed on March 25, 2007, with Nouria Al-Sabeeh as Minister of Education and Higher Education, alongside Dr Al-Mubarak as Minister of Health. Since then, Kuwaiti women have continued to play active and impactful roles, achieving significant accomplishments across various ministries, and their contributions have left a lasting impact on the country's legislative, political,

and social frameworks.

On May 28, 2008, Dr Moudhi Al-Humoud was appointed as Minister of State for Housing Affairs, with Nouria Al-Sabeeh continuing as Minister of Education and Higher Education. Dr Amani Bouresli was appointed as Minister of Commerce and Industry on May 8, 2011, and on December 13 of the same year, she was appointed as Minister of State for Planning. Dr Rola Dashti was appointed as Minister of State for Planning and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs on July 19, 2012, and later took on additional roles, including Minister of Social Affairs in 2013.

Hind Al-Sabeeh served as Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs from December 2016, with Dr Jenan Bushehri following as Minister of State for Housing Affairs in December 2017. On December 17, 2019, three female ministers were appointed for the first time: Mariam Al-Aqeel as Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs, Dr Rana Al-Fares as Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs, and Dr Ghadeer Asiri as Minister of Social Affairs.

Dr Rana Al-Fares has continued to hold various positions, including Minister of Public Works, Minister of State for Municipality Affairs, and later Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology. In 2022, she was joined by Huda Al-Shaiji, who was appointed as Minister of Social



Affairs and Minister of State for Women and Childhood Affairs. Dr Amani Bogammaz was appointed Minister of Public Works and Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy on October 16, 2022, with Mai Al-Baghli as Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Women and Childhood Affairs.

In 2024, Dr Noura Al-Mashaan was appointed Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for

Municipality Affairs on January 17, 2024. On May 12, 2024, Dr Al-Mashaan was reappointed, alongside Dr Amthah Al-Huwailah, who was appointed Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, Family and Childhood Affairs, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs. This latest appointment reinforces the growing influence of Kuwaiti women, highlighting their crucial role in shaping the nation's future and driving its development agenda. — KUNA

## The hidden cost of fast fashion

By Passant Hisham

**KUWAIT:** As a fashion-conscious population heavily influenced by the latest styles from celebrities and social media influencers, Kuwait may be a major contributor to the rise of the fast fashion industry. However, as a wealthy country, if it were to strictly support ethical trade policies and regulations, it could drive substantial transformation within the industry, according to Dr Esraa Al-Shatti, a Kuwaiti professor of luxury management and an advocate for sustainable and ethical shopping practices.



Dr. Esraa Al-Shatti

Dr Al-Shatti defines fast fashion as "the rapid production of a high volume of affordable clothing that replicates luxury styles," a model unfortunately embraced by most brands available today online or in shopping malls. While the model may seem appealing to many, she brings one to question, what are the hidden costs behind these privileges?

In favor of maximizing profits and attracting as many consumers as possible, Dr Al-Shatti warns that fast fashion often disregards labor rights protections and environmental responsibilities. "Workers in the fast fashion supply chain often endure dangerous conditions. Many textile factories, especially in low-wage countries, subject workers to unsafe environments, low pay, and poor working conditions," Dr Al-Shatti said.

### Quality over quantity

Environmentally, she noted that the rapid production cycles and low-cost strategies of fast fashion lead to the quick degradation of clothing, which accounts for approximately 10 percent of global carbon emissions, according to a March 2023 report by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). This, in turn, results in excessive waste generation. In addition, the industry's extensive use of water and harmful chemicals causes severe pollution of water sources and depletes natural resources.

Instead of blindly following trends and falling for the allure of low-cost clothing, Dr Al-Shatti believes it's important to "take the time to think and reflect on purchases, rather than making impulsive decisions." She advised prioritizing quality over quantity, by investing in durable, well-made items supporting a more sustainable model, which can be achieved by choosing retailers with transparent and ethical supply chains.



Another option that Dr Al-Shatti brought to table is to support local brands, as many of them adhere to proper ethical regulations and prioritize high-quality, sustainable practices. "While these options may come at a slightly higher price, purchasing from ethical sources is a far better choice than buying in bulk from fast fashion brands," she said.

Founder of Ecotistical, a sustainable fashion brand in Kuwait collaborating with around 25 international small businesses that support ethical and sustainable practices, Aisha Almuneefi stated that the higher costs associated with her ethical practices are unavoidable. "When you do things the right way, it's going to cost more," she said. Dreaming of a future where "all clothing is sustainable", she added that higher pricing should not deter people from supporting local brands, as they should recognize that "the low cost of clothing is often achieved at the expense of others, including exploited labor and the use of harmful materials."

In contrast, she supports brands that use recycled, upcycled, and organic certified materials, ensuring their manufacturing processes are as eco-friendly as possible by minimizing energy and water consumption. They adhere to vegan and cruelty-free standards, with non-toxic dyes and no harm to animals. Also, they prioritize fair wages and ethical working conditions, providing their staff with living wages, healthy work environments, and reasonable hours.

Encouraging people to connect their purchasing decisions with their broader impact on the world, Al-Muneefi dreams of a future where the distinction between sustainable and non-sustainable clothing no longer exists. She envisions a world where "all clothing is sustainable." "There's no business operating on a dead planet. If we, as business owners, don't pre-

serve the planet and advocate for human rights, we are ultimately harming ourselves and others," she said.

Nadia Salem, a fashion enthusiast and mindful shopper in Kuwait, has adopted a thoughtful approach to her wardrobe for several years. "My philosophy is to buy only what you need and be mindful of how it fits into your style and the pieces you already own," she said. This approach leads her to limit her purchases to just two or three new pieces each season.

### Shop your closet

Before shopping at the mall or ordering online, Salem engages in what she calls "shopping her closet." "Every few weeks, I spend some time looking at the pieces I have and try to create new combinations or style them differently to match the trendy aesthetic," she said. When she decides to add something new to her wardrobe, she chooses items that can be worn in multiple ways and that align with her personal style. "I don't buy something just because I saw it on a fashion blogger or celebrity," she said.

To minimize clothing degradation and reduce the environmental impact she tries to pick materials that are of good quality and take care of her pieces to make them last as long as possible. "I have some items that I've been wearing on and off for 15 years, and they still look brand new and relevant," she added. Even though it's not her responsibility to regulate clothing production standards, she believes in her role to make a difference, which aligns with Muneefi's philosophy. "Consumers should understand that they have an impact. If they stopped purchasing clothes that don't align with their values, perhaps fast fashion brands would stop selling or producing items that don't reflect those values," she said.

## Endowments Affairs Council reviews and approves reports

**KUWAIT:** The General Secretariat of Endowments announced on Wednesday that the Endowments Affairs Council held its 103rd meeting, chaired by Minister of Justice and Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs Dr Mohammad Al-Wasmi, at the Secretariat's headquarters in Dasma.

The Secretary of the Endowments Affairs Council and Director of the Planning and Follow-up Department at the General Secretariat, Jassim Bugaith, said in a press statement that the Council discussed many topics, reviewed, and approved several reports, namely the report on the achievements of the work units of the General Secretariat of Endowments for the year 2023, the annual achievement report of the Sharia Committee for the year 2023, the annual endowment projects committee for the year 2023, in addition to the annual audit committee report for the year 2023.

Bugaith added that the report on what was accomplished in the preparatory year 2022 was reviewed and approved in the document of the strategic plan of the General Secretariat of Endowments for the years 2023-2028, in implementation of Endowments Affairs Council Resolution No. 99. Bugaith explained that the Council meets at least four times a year or



Jassim Bugaith



Endowments Affairs Council holds its 103rd meeting, chaired by Minister of Justice and Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs Dr Mohammad Al-Wasmi, at the Secretariat's headquarters.

when needed, and it is the Supreme Authority supervising endowment affairs that makes the necessary decisions and achieves the purposes for which the Secretariat was established.

He explained that the Council is concerned with drawing up the general policy for managing and investing endowment funds, setting systems and regulations that ensure the development of endowment revenues and their regular collection, and maintaining and preserving endowment assets, in addition to approving the internal organization of the Secretariat.

The Council's responsibilities also include approving the annual revenues and expenditures of endowment funds and their final accounts, selecting the Secretariat's audit office, reviewing the periodic reports submitted by the Secretary-General on the progress of work in the Secretariat, and reviewing all matters related to the Secretariat's activity that the Chairman of the Council deems necessary to present.

It is noteworthy that the Endowment Affairs Council, headed by the Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, includes in its membership the Secretary-General of the General Secretariat of Endowments, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, the Director-General of the Social Insurance Institution, the Director-General of the Zakat House, a representative of the Ministry of Finance, and a representative of the Public Investment Authority, in addition to three members with experience and expertise. — KUNA

## Committee seeks unified procedures for joining army, MoI, NG

**KUWAIT:** The Joint Central Committee, headed by Assistant Chief of Staff for Administration and Human Resources Major General Faras Adel, held a meeting on Wednesday to set unified procedures for receiving applications from those wishing to join the honorable military and security service. The Chief of Staff said in a press statement that the meeting was held at Ali Al-Sabah Military College in the presence of representatives from the military bodies (Kuwaiti Army, Ministry of Interior, National Guard and Kuwait Fire Force). The meeting aims to set a mechanism for procedures for receiving applications from those wishing to join the honorable military service by establishing a center for registration and unified acceptance for military colleges and institutes, and organizing and developing conditions and controls for the four military bodies. — KUNA





Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) supports the reconstruction and restoration of the center in the northern Gaza Strip. – KUNA photos

## Kuwait denounces Balochistan attack

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait has strongly denounced the terrorist attacks that took place in the Balochistan province in southwestern Pakistan, which claimed the lives of dozens of innocent people. In a statement on Wednesday, the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry expressed the position of Kuwait rejecting violence and terrorism in all its forms, affirming its support for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in all measures it takes to preserve its security and stability. The ministry also expressed Kuwait's sympathy and condolences to the government of Pakistan and the families of the victims, wishing the injured a speedy recovery.

Meanwhile, Pakistani forces are searching for separatist militants who killed dozens when they pulled passengers off buses, blew up a bridge and stormed a hotel a day earlier. Militants in Balochistan province took control of a highway and shot dead 23 people, mostly laborers from neighboring Punjab, and attacked the hotel and a railway bridge that connects Balochistan to the rest of Pakistan. Security forces have been battling sectarian, ethnic and separatist violence for decades in impoverished Balochistan, but the coordinated attacks that took place in several districts throughout the province were one of the worst in the region's history.

The sites hit were cordoned off as the search for assailants went on. "But no arrests have been made so far, and no additional militants have been killed," provincial government spokesman Shahid Rind said. The death toll includes 34 civilians and 15 members of the security forces, while the military said troops killed 21 militants. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the attacks were "deplorable". "In Balochistan, the doors for negotiation are always open to those who believe in Pakistan and accept its constitution and flag," he said Tuesday as he addressed a cabinet meeting.

The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), the most active militant separatist group in the province, said it was responsible for the attacks. The BLA has in the past also targeted Chinese investment interests in the province. Sharif said their "sole aim is to halt Pakistan's progress, sabotage the development projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and create divisions between Pakistan and China." The BLA is waging a war of independence against the state, which it accuses of unfair exploitation of resources by outsiders in the mineral-rich region. Pakistan's close ally Saudi Arabia, which hosts a massive Pakistani migrant population, issued a statement condemning the attacks "in the strongest terms." — Agencies

# KRCS supports reconstruction of Dialysis Center in northern Gaza

## Five out of seven dialysis centers destroyed

**GAZA:** Noura Al-Kaabi Dialysis Center in northern Gaza commenced Wednesday a reconstruction project with the support of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS). The Center completely stopped operation after it was destroyed by Zionist occupation, Center Director Dr Marwan Al-Sultan stated, adding that re-operation is imperative to save the lives of thousands of kidney failure patients in the Gaza Strip.

More than 180 patients in the strip suffer from kidney failure and are in need of dialysis three times a week, not to mention more than 1,000 patients with kidney failure in the entirety of the strip, he explained. According to Palestinian health authorities, patients with kidney failure in the Gaza Strip are suf-

fering from dire circumstances due to the destruction of five out of seven dialysis centers.

Noura Al-Kaabi Kidney Dialysis Center management announced Sunday that the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) is supporting the project to rehabilitate, maintain, and equip the Center. The center, which has been rehabilitated, is located on an area of about 700 square meters and consists of three floors. It operates with a capacity of about 42 dialysis machines, including about 36 chairs and a dialysis machine.

Dr Al-Sultan stressed the need to re-operate the center, which stopped working completely after being subjected to aggression and storming by the occupation forces, indicating the importance of its role

in saving the lives of thousands of kidney patients in the Gaza Strip. He expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to Kuwait, H.H. the Amir, the government, and its people for supporting Gazans and alleviating their suffering, praising the role of the Kuwait Red Crescent in providing humanitarian aid.

Since the beginning of the aggression on the Gaza Strip last October, Kuwait has taken the initiative to send thousands of tons of relief, humanitarian, and medical aid to the Strip, while the Kuwaiti Relief Air Bridge is still ongoing. The Kuwait Red Crescent Society has also taken the initiative to implement qualitative relief projects in the Strip, including sending dozens of ambulances and establishing a field hospital to treat the wounded. — KUNA



Kuwait Red Crescent Society distributes school bags to children of needy families. – KUNA photos

## KRCS distributes 2,200 school bags to children

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) on Wednesday started distributing school bags with complete school materials to children of needy families who registered with the society to start their educational journey. KRCS's Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors, Anwar Al-Hasawi, told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the school

bag project aims to distribute approximately 2,200 school bags, expressing his deep thanks to the banks and companies that supported the project.

The school bags, stationery, pens, and tools will help the students in their academic activities. He stated that the success of the educational process undoubtedly depends on providing the basic needs required by the students. He stressed the association's keenness on this initiative at the beginning of each academic year, believing that education is one of the most important rights that must be provided to children of needy families. — KUNA



## Arabs discuss ways to tackle IT crimes

**TUNIS:** The first conference of officials responsible for combating information technology crimes in Arab interior ministries kicked off Wednesday in the Tunisian capital with the participation of Kuwait. Secretary-General of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers, Dr Mohammad Koman, called in his opening speech for enhancing cooperation among Arab countries in combating cybercrimes by exchanging information immediately.

Koman said that the interest of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers in cybersecurity and combating information system crimes began in the early nineties of the last century; "therefore, the General Secretariat is keen to work on developing practical frameworks to confront this type of crime." He added that a set of measures were taken, including the approval of the Arab Guiding Strategy for Combating Information Technology Crimes in 2014 and the establishment of a unit specialized in electronic security.

This is within the scope of the Arab Office for Combating Terrorism (in 2020), which was entrusted with enhancing cooperation among Arab countries in the field of combating cybercrimes and exchanging information. He pointed out that the Council of

Arab Interior Ministers adopted the Arab Strategy for Combating Information Technology Crimes in 2022 as a tool to organize inter-Arab and international cooperation in combating cybercrime, in addition to a first three-year executive plan to translate this strategy into practical programs.



The Kuwaiti Interior Ministry delegation is represented by Colonel Ahmed Al-Hamoud and Major Thanyan Ruh Al-Din. The conference, which aims to develop an Arab plan to confront crimes committed using artificial intelligence, is attended by representatives of the interior ministries in Arab countries, the Arab League, the United Nations Regional Center for Combating Cybercrime, in addition to the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences and the General Secretariat of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers. — KUNA



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Mass arrests leave Venezuelans in fear

## Trump hit with revised election interference charges

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JERUSALEM: A nurse entertains Palestinian triplets of Gaza-native Hanane Bayouk, (from left) Najmeh, Najoua (C) and Noor, at the children's ward of the Al-Maqased Hospital in east Jerusalem on July 31, 2024. — AFP

# Zionist war separates Gaza mothers from newborns

## Zionist entity has stopped issuing travel permits to Gaza mothers, slashed West Bank permits

JERUSALEM: Now one year old, the triplets that Gaza-native Hanane Bayouk gave birth to in Jerusalem before the war have seen their mother just once, and she fears she will "die without them". The 26-year-old had to return to the Palestinian territory alone after giving birth to Najoua, Noor and Najmeh on August 24, 2023, because her Zionist travel permit had expired.

Bayouk received a permit to exit Gaza and give birth in annexed east Jerusalem's Al-Maqased hospital after seven years of painful IVF procedures. She caught a glimpse of her children in their incubators, "barely an hour and a half", before driving back to Gaza after her permit "expired and the hospital told me to leave". Bayouk was supposed to return in early October after her daughters had spent several weeks in incubators, which were in short supply in hospitals in Gaza even before the Zionist war on Gaza.

### 'Far from the war'

Two days after she applied for a new exit permit on October 5, Hamas-led militants carried out an attack in the Zionist entity that left 1,199 people dead. The Zionist retaliatory military campaign has killed

at least 40,476 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the territory's health ministry. The UN rights office says most of the dead have been women or children.

Like Bayouk, Heba Idriss found herself unable to return to Jerusalem to get her only daughter, Saida, born prematurely at the Maqased two months earlier. The 27-year-old had hoped to bring her newborn back to her husband Saleh at their home in Shujaiya, in the northern Gaza Strip. Instead, the couple has been displaced nine times by Zionist air strikes or evacuation orders and her husband Saleh has only seen pictures of Saida. "I want to see my daughter, I suffer so much from being separated from her", she said in tears.

Hanane Bayouk too has been forced from her home and now lives in a displacement persons' camp in the south, sharing a tent with seven of her in-laws. "It drives me crazy. It took me so long to get pregnant, and now I'm crying all the time," she told AFP on one of the rare days she was able to get through on Gaza's struggling phone network. "Sometimes, I think I'd like for my daughters to return to Gaza before I die because I have never kissed them, but then I get a hold of myself and tell myself it's better

for them to be safe far from the war," she said. Back at the Maqased, neonatal intensive care unit director Hatem Khammach says that in normal times, there would not have been space to keep Noor, Najmeh, and Najoua for so long.

### 'I cry every time'

But the number of births at the hospital has fallen sharply as the Zionist entity has stopped issuing travel permits to mothers from Gaza and slashed the number given to mothers from the occupied West Bank. With more checkpoints closed more often, even those with a permit struggle to access specialist treatment in Jerusalem. "Before the war, we had seven or eight Gaza babies in our department, which can host 30 at a time," Khammach said.

Since October, none have come, "and many sick people from the West Bank can't reach us". But the hospital's health workers keep busy, like those who call Bayouk to let her speak on the phone to her three daughters. "My husband can't do it, I do it and I cry every time we hang up. I'm afraid my daughters will grow up without knowing me," Bayouk said. — AFP

## Gaza teen recalls nightmare of losing arms in Zionist strike

GAZA: Teenager Diaa Al-Adini was one of the few Palestinians who found a functioning hospital in war-ravaged Gaza after he was wounded by a Zionist strike. But he did not have much time to recuperate after doctors amputated both of his arms. Adini, 15, suddenly had to flee the overwhelmed medical facility after the Zionist military ordered people to leave before an attack in its war against the Palestinian militant group Hamas. He made it to an American field hospital.

Many Palestinians have been displaced during the conflict, moving up and down across the Gaza Strip seeking safe shelter. They are unlucky most of the time. Scrambling to save your life is especially difficult for Palestinians like Adini, who require urgent medical care but get caught up in the chaos of the war.

Memories of better days provide limited relief from reality in Gaza. Zionist strikes have reduced most of one of the most crowded places on earth to rubble as rows and rows of homes are destroyed. "We used to swim, challenge each other, and sleep, me and my friend Mohammed Al-Serei. We used to jump in the water and float on it," said Adini, who walked on a beach with his sister Aya recalling the few distractions from before. His sister placed a towel over the place where his arms used to be and wiped his mouth.

### 'I cannot replace my aunt'

The strike hit when he was in a makeshift coffee house. The teenager, who spent 12 days in hospital before he was displaced also lost his aunt, her children and grandchildren in the war. "As for my arms, I can get other ones fitted but I cannot replace my aunt," he said.

The Zionist military offensive, which it launched after a Hamas attack left nearly 2,000 people dead, has killed at least 40,500 people and wounded 93,778 others, according to Gaza health authorities. The Zionist entity says it goes out of its way to avoid civilian casualties and has accused Hamas of using human shields, an allegation it denies.

The suffering is unlikely to end anytime soon unless mediation by the United States, Egypt and Qatar secures a ceasefire. And even then, there is a possibility hostilities will resume. So all Palestinians can do is hope for treatment at the few functional hospitals as they face a humanitarian crisis — severe shortages of food, fuel, power and medicine, as raw sewage increases the chance of disease.

"God willing, I will continue my treatment in the American hospital, and get limbs," said Adini. He dreams of being like other children one day: to live a good life, get an education, drive cars and have fun. His sister Aya hopes that he can go back to his camera and iPad. — Reuters

## Indian rape protests spiral into political street clashes

KOLKATA: Thousands of protesters clashed in India's eastern city of Kolkata on Wednesday, where demonstrations seeking justice for a murdered doctor spiraled into violent street skirmishes between political rivals. The discovery of the 31-year-old doctor's bloodied body at a state-run hospital in Kolkata on August 9 stoked nationwide anger at the chronic issue of violence against women.

That sparked strikes by medics and rallies backed by thousands of ordinary citizens across India, although many doctors have since returned to work. But repeated protests in West Bengal state capital Kolkata have transformed into clashes between the state's ruling All India Trinamool Congress (AITMC) and the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The Hindu-nationalist BJP is the party of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and holds power nationally, but sits in opposition in West Bengal. "We want justice", BJP supporters chanted, referring to the murdered doctor, then demanding the resignation of AITMC leader Mamata Banerjee, the chief minister. "Go back! Go back!" AITMC supporters shouted in return.

Banerjee accused the BJP of "dirty politics" and exploiting the doctor's death, speaking at a rally of party loyalists. On Tuesday, police clashed with protesters, firing tear gas canisters and water cannons, and arresting at least 245 people. That prompted BJP supporters on Wednesday to launch a day-long shutdown of Kolkata, with skirmishes against AITMC supporters in the morning.

### 'Horrific'

Protesters erected barricades to close roads and



KOLKATA: Activists of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) shout slogans after being detained by police during a protest rally, in Kolkata on August 28, 2024. — AFP

railway lines, with police reporting clashes between rival workers across the city and in adjoining districts. Arjun Singh, a former BJP lawmaker, alleged his party loyalists were attacked by supporters of Banerjee's AITMC, and two people were injured. AITMC "activists blocked the roads to prevent BJP supporters from marching", Singh told AFP. "Train services were disrupted as protestors squatted on railway tracks," Kousik Mitra, a senior railways official told AFP.

Police later enforced an uneasy peace between them and their rivals. Doctors, in a separate protest,

are expected to hold a rally in memory of their murdered colleague later on Wednesday. Banerjee also said she wanted to pass "anti-rape" laws to try and execute those guilty of sexual assault "within seven days of the crime", without giving further details.

One man has been detained for the murder, but West Bengal's government has faced public criticism for the handling of the investigation. India's Supreme Court has ordered a national task force to examine how to bolster security for healthcare workers, saying the "horrific" killing had "shocked the conscience of the nation". — AFP

## International

# Trump hit with revised election interference charges

## Reworked indictment removes charges affected by presidential immunity ruling

WASHINGTON, United States: Prosecutors on Tuesday pressed ahead with bombshell charges that he tried to overturn the 2020 US election after losing to Joe Biden. The new indictment of the 78-year-old Republican White House candidate is 36 pages long, down from 45 pages previously, and removes material affected by the immunity ruling from the conservative-dominated top court. It retains the same core, stating that Trump lost in 2020 but "was determined to remain in power" and attempted to subvert the results.

"The illegally appointed 'Special Counsel' Deranged Jack Smith, has brought a ridiculous new Indictment against me, which has all the problems of the old Indictment, and should be dismissed IMMEDIATELY," he posted on his Truth Social platform. The new indictment came three days before Special Counsel Jack Smith, who brought the charges against Trump, and lawyers for

the former president had been set to file a schedule for pre-trial proceedings. Judge Tanya Chutkan, who is presiding over the case, had also scheduled a status hearing for September 5. Trump's lawyers have been seeking to delay a trial until after November's election between Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic presidential candidate. Trump is accused of conspiracy to defraud the United States.

### 'Private capacity'

It will be up to Chutkan, an appointee of former Democratic president Barack Obama, to decide which of Trump's actions regarding the 2020 election were official acts and which were unofficial acts subject to potential prosecution.

The new indictment drops references to Jeffrey Clark, a former senior Justice Department official who was one of six co-conspirators listed in the original indict-

ment allegedly enlisted by Trump to press his false claims of election fraud.

The remaining co-conspirators, who include Trump's former personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani, "were acting in a private capacity," the indictment said, "to assist him in his criminal efforts to overturn the legitimate results of the 2020 presidential election and retain power." Regarding the ruling on Trump's immunity, Supreme Court Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson said that she was "concerned" about the July verdict, according to an interview released by CBS news on Tuesday.

"I was concerned about a system that appeared to provide immunity for one individual under one set of circumstances, when we have a criminal justice system that ordinarily treats everyone the same," she said. Jackson was among three justices to dissent from the court's ruling.

Sentencing has been scheduled for Sep-



WASHINGTON: Special Counsel Jack Smith (left) and former US President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump are seen in this combination photo. — AFP

tember 18, but Trump's lawyers have asked for his conviction to be tossed, citing the Supreme Court immunity ruling, and sentencing to be delayed. The judge presiding over the documents

case, Aileen Cannon, a Trump appointee, dismissed the charges on the grounds that Smith, the special counsel, was unlawfully appointed. Smith has appealed Cannon's ruling. — AFP

## 'Missing' Ukrainian children prepare to join Polish schools

WARSAW: Children returning to school in Poland next week will find a new group of classmates — Ukrainian children now living in the country who were not previously enrolled in the Polish education system. A new law-making education compulsory for refugee families is coming into force but nobody knows exactly how many children will enroll, with estimates ranging from 20,000 to 80,000. "We are still in limbo," said Maryna Rud, the mother of 12-year-old Nadia, who left Ukraine at the outset of the Russian invasion in 2022.

Rud enrolled her daughter in a Polish school but said she suffered months of bullying and she eventually took her out. "They laughed at her incorrect pronunciation. She would tell me: 'I say a word, they laugh, I say a word, they laugh'," Maryna recounted. Nadia spent the last year studying online in a Ukrainian school, a solution still relied on by many refugee families.

### 'Missing in Poland'

Exactly how many children are unaccounted for in the Polish education system "is a great unknown," said Jędrzej Witkowski, head of the Centre for Citizenship Education, a nonprofit group. In the weeks after Moscow launched its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Poland opened its borders to shelter refugees and the European Union granted them the

right to move freely across the bloc. "It's very hard to monitor," Witkowski said. "We are unable to say exactly how many schoolchildren, or more broadly, how many Ukrainian citizens, have taken refuge in Poland and how many still remain in our country."

Around 134,000 Ukrainian children attended Polish schools before the summer holidays. The Centre for Citizenship Education estimated that 20,000 to 80,000 children have so far been outside the education system. In the "best case scenario", Witkowski said, the children have been following lessons remotely.

That was the case for Ivan, a 12-year-old who moved to Poland with his mother, Nataliya Khotinivska, right after the invasion. Ivan has been learning Polish during the summer, but for now, his mother chose to send him to a private Ukrainian school, a solution she calls "a soft transition period". "We have no friends here, no one to communicate with," Khotinivska told AFP. "It's also hard for mothers ... Sometimes you hesitate between the result of learning and the child's peace of mind," Khotinivska said.

### Fly swatters

Her son participated in a series of language courses and integration activities run by the Catholic Intelligentsia Club (KIK) in Warsaw. The project, called "Trampoline", is designed to help Ukrainian children — and their parents — with the transition. The courses show "how to respond to bullying, to teach parents how to act," said Olesya Kolisnyk, one of the organizers. "Ninety-nine percent have problems with bullying," Kolisnyk told AFP, echoing experts' warnings that it is one of two major problems for Ukrainian



WARSAW: Ivan, a 12-year-old school student from Ukraine, climbs up the children's slide in a park in Warsaw on August 21, 2024. — AFP photos

children, alongside the language barrier.

To help with the latter, Homo Faber, a nonprofit from the city of Lublin, began offering language courses for Ukrainians who start learning in Polish schools. Sitting around a table, a group of seven children meticulously practice tracing the letter "c" before being handed fly swatters to tap cards depicting objects starting with that letter.

Paulina Skrzypek, teacher of the seven to nine-year-olds age group, said that Polish and Ukrainian bear similarities, but that does not necessarily work in refugee children's favor. "We have those so-called 'false friends', and kids think that in Polish something sounds the same as in Ukrainian, but it turns out it doesn't," she said.

To Danuta Kozakiewicz, headmistress of a Warsaw primary school, language plays a crucial role in



LUBLIN: Paulina Skrzypek runs classes for seven to nine-year-old Ukrainian children in Lublin, on August 6, 2024.

how Ukrainian children get along with their Polish peers. Kozakiewicz also organizes various integration events, from football tournaments to school trips. "During a football match, one kid is shouting in Polish, the other in Ukrainian, but they somehow know what's going on — and they play for the same team," she said, laughing.

But problems remain, especially when the Ukrainian children suddenly disappear when their parents decided to return to Ukraine or relocate to another country without notifying the school. Returning home is what many Ukrainian schoolchildren in Poland still yearn for. "They check social media every day and see what's going on. 'What's the news, has Putin died?'" Maryna Rud said. "They are constantly waiting, every day, for that moment of coming back home." — AFP

## Zionist terror hits West Bank...

### Continued from Page 1

The Palestinian Red Crescent said Zionist forces killed at least 10 people — two in Jenin, four in a nearby village and another two in the refugee camp near Tubas. Fifteen others were wounded. The Palestinian health ministry said troops had surrounded Jenin's main hospital, blocking off access with earth mounds — a measure the military said was intended to stop fighters seeking refuge. Masoud Naaja, the father of two young men killed in a Zionist strike in the town of Far'a near Tubas in the Jordan Valley, said he was giving water to some men who asked for a drink when he was wounded. "In seconds, very fast, we felt like something came down on us from the sky and there was an explosion," he said. "When I put my hand on my chest, it was full of shrapnel and blood."

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas cut short a visit to Saudi Arabia and headed home to "follow up on the latest developments in light of the (Zionist) aggression on the northern West Bank," Palestinian official media said. Foreign Minister Israel Katz had a different take, however, saying the military was "operating in full force since last night" in a bid to "dismantle Iranian-Islamic terror infrastructure".

In a post on X, he accused Iran, the Zionist entity's main foe in the region, of seeking to "establish an eastern front against (the Zionist entity)" based on the "model" for Gaza and Lebanon, where it backs Hamas and Hezbollah, respectively. "We must address this threat with the same determination used against terror infrastructures in Gaza, including temporary evacuation of residents and any necessary measures," he said. "This is a war, and we must win it."

Since Oct 7, Zionist troops or settlers have killed more than 650 Palestinians in the West Bank, according to an AFP tally based on Palestinian health ministry figures. But while Zionist military operations have become a daily occurrence in the West Bank, occupied by the Zionist entity since 1967, it is rare for them to be carried out in multiple cities simultaneously. In recent weeks, Zionist operations in the West Bank have focused on the north of the territory, where armed groups fighting against the Zionist entity are particularly active.

Islamic Jihad, a Palestinian Islamist movement allied with Hamas which has a strong presence in the north of the West Bank, issued a statement early Wednesday denouncing an "open war" by the Zionist entity. "With this aggression, which aims to transfer the weight of the conflict to the occupied West Bank, the occupier wants to impose a new

state of affairs on the ground to annex the West Bank," the statement said.

Hamas, whose popularity has soared in the West Bank since the start of the Gaza war, late Tuesday reiterated its call for Palestinians in the territory to "rise up". Its statement came in response to comments by far-right Zionist National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, who said this week he would build a synagogue at Jerusalem's flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque compound if he could. Ben Gvir, a settler himself, has openly called for the annexation of the West Bank.

In Gaza, families in distress continued to move according to the Zionist army's evacuation orders. One of the latest targeted the area around Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Hospital in Deir el-Balah in central Gaza, from which "nearly 650 patients have fled", Doctors Without Borders said. The medical charity has, instead, "anticipated the opening of a field hospital now that the Al-Aqsa hospital was 'almost totally empty'". Gaza's civil defense agency reported at least 12 dead, including at least one child and a woman, in new Zionist strikes.

The United States on Wednesday announced new sanctions on Zionist settlers in the West Bank over violence against Palestinians, urging its ally the Zionist entity to bring greater accountability. "Extremist settler violence in the West Bank causes intense human suffering, harms (the Zionist entity's) security and undermines the prospect for peace and stability in the region," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said in a statement.

"It is critical that the government of (the Zionist entity) hold accountable any individuals and entities responsible for violence against civilians in the West Bank," he said. The latest sanction targets included Hashomer Yesh, a Zionist group that has supported the unauthorized settler outpost of Meitarim Farm in the south Hebron Hills. Volunteers from the group earlier this year fenced off a village whose 250 Palestinian residents had all been forced to leave, the State Department said. The State Department also imposed sanctions against Yitzhak Levi Filant, who was accused of leading armed settlers in setting up roadblocks and patrols with a goal of attacking Palestinians. The US has repeatedly voiced concern to Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about settler violence and about the expansion of settlements championed by far-right members of his government.

US sanctions generally bar targets from the US financial system, leading Zionist banks to restrict dealings with sanctioned individuals for fear of repercussions. But the Biden administration has held off on imposing sanctions on government ministers leading the settlement policy. — Agencies

## Yemen flash floods spark..

### Continued from Page 1

landslides that swept through several homes, according to Al-Masirah. Twelve bodies were retrieved in the province's Melhan district and at least 21 people remain missing, Al-Masirah said citing civil defense teams.

The mountains of western Yemen are prone to heavy seasonal rainfall. Since late July, flash flooding has killed 60 people and affected 268,000 across Yemen, according to the United Nations. Western and central provinces have been warned of worse to come. "In the coming months, increased rainfall is forecast, with the central highlands, Red Sea coastal areas and portions of the southern uplands expected to receive unprecedented levels in excess of 300 millimeters," the World Health Organization warned on Monday.

There are nearly 164,000 suspected cholera cases across Yemen, a figure that could climb to 250,000 in the coming weeks if the response is not bolstered, according to the United Nations. Hais, controlled by Yemen's internationally recognized government, was hard hit by flooding. Devastated by the war that has ravaged medical infrastructure, Hais is now bracing for a new crisis after the floods which can carry water-borne diseases.

"The recent (cholera) wave... has been exacerbated by heavy rains and subsequent flooding, increasing the risk of water contamination," the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said in a recent report. The Hais clinic received 530 suspected cholera cases between August 1 and 18, Hadrami said. Authorities have only been able to confirm three positive cases after samples were sent to a lab in nearby Taiz, he said, amid limited testing capabilities. "This is evidence that the cholera epidemic is present and spreading within Hais," Hadrami said. "The situation will only get worse and worse."

Cholera, caused by contaminated water or food, is endemic to Yemen, which has been gripped by conflict since 2014 between Iran-backed Houthi rebels and the government which is supported by Saudi Arabia. Severe water shortages, dilapidated healthcare infrastructure and rising malnutrition have contributed to a cholera spike since late last year. The latest flooding only added to challenges facing relief efforts in a country where aid workers risk abduction by the Houthis and more than half the population needs humanitarian assistance.

In Hais, the flooding has also dislodged landmines, increasing the risks for those trying to reach needy communities, according to

the IOM. Among those requiring assistance is Abdullah Al-Shmairi who fears his entire family may now have cholera after his son tested positive. "A week ago, my son was infected with cholera and the test was sent to Taiz and it turned out" positive, the 46-year-old father of four told AFP from the Hais clinic.

"Our whole household is now suffering from diarrhea... but we were unable to get the treatments here and sometimes we have to bring them in from outside," the bakery worker said. "Cholera is widespread in and around Hais." Yemen, facing one of the world's worst humanitarian tragedies, had 2.5 million suspected cases during the last cholera outbreak from 2016 to 2022, according to the IOM. It was "the largest ever reported cholera outbreak in recent history", with more than 4,000 deaths, the IOM said.

Another cholera spike late last year went largely underreported because of limited access and information. As of Aug 10, 163,944 suspected cases have been reported with 647 associated deaths nationwide in 2024, a spokesperson for the United Nations children's fund UNICEF told AFP. Most cases have been in rebel-held areas, the spokesperson said.

The UN's cholera response plan for the country initially estimated 60,000 cases between April and September 2024, said Lisa Doughten, Director of Financing and Partnerships at the UN humanitarian office OCHA. But the latest figures have swelled beyond estimates, with current funding only enough to address a quarter of cases, she told the UN Security Council on Aug 15. "Unless these response efforts are immediately bolstered, the number of suspected cases could further increase, potentially reaching more than 250,000 in just a few weeks." — AFP

## Tens of millions bake in extreme...

### Continued from Page 1

Climate change has been extending the heat season across much of the United States, increasing both the frequency and intensity of heat waves. Heat is the leading weather-related killer in the US, even though heat-related illnesses and deaths are largely preventable through outreach and intervention, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

A report published this week in the Journal of the American Medical Association found heat-related mortality rates in the United States increased between 1999 and 2023, especially during the last seven years. But the true number of heat-related deaths is probably still being underestimated, the authors wrote, due to potential misclassification of causes of death and a lack of data on vulnerable populations. — AFP

## International

# Mass arrests leave Venezuelans in fear

## More than 2,400 people arrested since Maduro's reelection, at least 100 teenagers

CARACAS, Venezuela: Edward Ocariz was cooking lunch at his home in a Caracas slum when police stormed in. "You're coming with us," officers said, as angry neighbors screamed. "Damn you!" Ocariz is one of the 2,400 people detained since Nicolas Maduro's disputed reelection in Venezuela. Police, with no arrest warrant, whisked Ocariz away a week after the July 28 election that sparked protests across the country, even in the usually pro-government areas. The violence left 27 dead and nearly 200 injured. Edward Ocariz was taken to Tocuyito prison, one of two maximum security facilities where protesters are being held.

Ocariz, 53, who lived in the poor Coche neighborhood on the west side of the capital, had complained previously about the abuse of power in the government. He was charged with crimes including terrorism and inciting hatred and taken to a maximum security prison. It's unfair," his sister Sol, 65, told AFP. "I can't let my brother, who is innocent, be imprisoned. He was a human rights activist. All he did was denounce irregularities." Sol showed AFP videos of her brother's arrest: wearing flip-flops, a T-shirt and shorts, he was handcuffed and roughly taken by four hooded officers. "They're taking him away!" someone can be heard saying on the recording. "Damn them! One day they're going to pay!" angry neighbors shouted from their balconies.

"This is terrible, but you have to do something," said Sol. She said she wasn't afraid to speak out about her brother's case — making her a rare

exception among the often panicky friends and relatives of detainees. Among them is Jose, who asked that his real name not be used because he was "terrified." Two of his friends are in custody, brothers aged 23 and 27 whom he called Luis and Carlos (not their real names). "You really don't know what to say, who to talk to" because of the risk that an informer might turn him into police, Jose said. Luis and Carlos protested on July 29 on a central avenue in the capital, which was full of people waving flags and burning tires. "They wanted to defend the right to vote in a peaceful way," said Jose, 31. The brothers were arrested after police broke into their apartment in the working-class neighborhood of La Candelaria, leaving their mother in "permanent anguish." Jose then took up the cause. Maduro has claimed that those arrested had been recruited by the opposition to stir up violence in the South American country.

The protest was quickly put down through more than 700 arrests on the first day alone. The government urged people to report suspicious activities in what was called "Operation Tun Tun" which is the sound of the knock on the door when officers arrive. More than 2,400 people have been arrested, some on terror charges, and more than 100 of them teenagers. Dozens of people have gathered outside jails seeking news of their loved ones. Visits are limited and most detainees end up with public defenders. "Forced disappearances and arbitrary detentions have become the new normal," the human rights NGO Provea



CARACAS: Opponents of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro attend a demonstration called by opposition leader Maria Corina Machado over the presidential election disputed results in this file photo. — AFP

has charged. "We have gone from a period of selective prosecution to one of massive persecution" It reported an average of 150 arrests per day over two weeks as Maduro claims he is the guarantor of peace and

has appealed for cooperation between civilians, the military and the police.

"This is really distressing. It's so hard to smile," said the mother of Adrian, a 16-year-old boy detained by soldiers in

the street. Sol, who was able to visit her brother in jail, said she asked him, "How do you want us to handle this?" "Give it your all," he replied grimly. "And here I am," she said. "We're not playing. — AFP

## Afghan women sing in online protest of ban on their voices

KABUL: An Afghan woman sings in a video showing just a sliver of her face, one of dozens of women taking part in an online protest against a law that bans women from raising their voices in public. Taleban authorities last week announced the law, which includes rules that women's faces, bodies and voices should be "covered" outside the home, among 35 articles dictating behavior and lifestyle.

In response, Afghan women inside and outside the country have posted videos on social media of them singing, along with hashtags such as "My voice is not forbidden" and "No to Taleban". Former policewoman Zala Zazai, who currently lives in Poland, shared a video of herself singing a song by well-known artist Aryana Sayeed about the resilience of Afghan women. She told AFP the restrictions on Afghan women were "unacceptable". "Afghan women have come to understand that misogynists can no longer deny our human rights in the name of religion and culture. And our voices calling for our rights will never be silenced," she said.

In another video, reportedly shot inside Afghanistan, a woman is shown singing while dressed head to toe in black, with a long veil over her face. "You have silenced my voice for the foreseeable future ... you have imprisoned me in my home for the crime of being a woman," she says. Groups of women activists posted videos raising their fists or tearing photos of the Taleban supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada, who rules by decree from the southern city of Kandahar. "A woman's voice is the voice of justice," an activist group chants in another video.

The law on the "Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice" formalizes many rules already in place since the Taleban swept to power in 2021, implementing a strict interpretation of Islamic law. It says women must not sing or recite aloud in public or let their voices carry beyond the walls of their homes. "When an adult woman has to leave her home out of necessity, she is required to cover her face, body and voice," it says.

The law refers to women's voices as "aurat" — an Arabic term for the intimate parts of a man or woman that must be covered. Chief Taleban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid has said criticism of the law exposes "arrogance" and misunderstanding of sharia. Women have borne the brunt of restrictions, including on access to education, public spaces and certain jobs, that the United Nations has labelled "gender apartheid". The UN and other international bodies have condemned the new law, saying it further squeezes women's rights.

On Tuesday, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called for the law to be repealed, calling it "utterly intolerable". The law "cements policies that completely erase women's presence in public — silencing their voices, and depriving them of their individual autonomy, effectively attempting to render them into faceless, voiceless shadows", said spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani. — AFP

## Venezuelan opposition to march against Maduro election 'fraud'

CARACAS, Venezuela: Venezuela's opposition called for mass rallies Wednesday to press for recognition of its election "victory", one month after a presidential vote it claims was stolen by incumbent Nicolas Maduro. It will be the fourth round of organized demonstrations held since the July 28 vote, which saw both sides claim victory but Maduro declared the winner by the National Electoral Council (CNE), which is staffed mainly by his allies.

"Today, one month after our glorious victory on July 28, Venezuelans are uniting, inside and outside our country ... Let's take to the streets with our family and our flag!" opposition leader Maria Corina Machado wrote on the X social network on Wednesday. A pro-Maduro rally is also due to take place in Caracas to "celebrate" his victory, and several avenues were closed off from early in the morning, with riot police present.

## Report: South Asia air pollution fell in 2022, but remains major killer

BANGKOK: A surprise improvement in air quality in South Asia in 2022 drove a decline in global pollution, with favorable weather a likely factor, a new report said Wednesday. But the region continues to breathe the world's most-polluted air, with its residents losing more than 3.5 years of life expectancy on average, the annual Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) warned.

And globally, most countries have either no pollution standards or are failing to meet what they have set, subjecting their citizens to air quality that causes a broad range of health problems. For two decades, air pollution has increased annually in South Asia, but satellite data for 2022 — the most recent year available — showed a surprise 18 percent fall.

The declines were recorded in every country in the region apart from Sri Lanka, according to the report, produced by the University of Chicago's Energy Policy Institute (EPI). "While it is difficult to conclusively determine what reduced PM2.5 levels across South Asia, it is safe to posit that favorable meteorological conditions may have played a part," the report said, referring to tiny particulates that can travel deep into the body.

## Bangladesh investigates enforced disappearance by security forces

DHAKA: Bangladesh's new authorities on Wednesday opened an investigation into hundreds of enforced disappearances by security forces during the rule of ousted premier Sheikh Hasina, the government said. It includes the notorious Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) paramilitary force, accused of numerous rights abuses, and which was sanctioned by the United States for its role in extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances.

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. Many of those detained were

Several Latin American countries, the United States and the European Union have called on the CNE to release polling station data to verify the election outcome, which the council said it could not do due to a computer hack. Observers have said there was no evidence of the claim. Machado and presidential candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia have been mostly in hiding since the vote, with Maduro calling for the duo to be arrested.

Spontaneous protests erupted in the hours after he was declared the winner of the poll, with at least 25 civilians killed and more than 2,400 arrests carried out. Machado came out of hiding for the last two organized opposition rallies on August 3 and 17 in Caracas. She also attended the first, on July 30, where Gonzalez Urrutia was seen in public for the last time. "Everyone to the ... street!" Machado appealed in a post on X on Monday. "We'll see each other at 11:00am (1500 GMT) in Caracas, in the rest of the country and also in several cities around the world. We will not rest, let's go to the end!!"

### 'Harassment'

The CNE, with most of its members loyal to 61-year-old Maduro, declared him the winner hours after the vote closed. The opposition has published its own vot-

ing station records, which it says show that Gonzalez Urrutia, a 74-year-old retired diplomat, won by a landslide. That publication has led to state prosecutors issuing a summons for Gonzalez Urrutia in an investigation for "usurpation" of official powers.

He twice ignored the summons, first on Monday then again on Tuesday, with the opposition saying that he was being subjected to "judicial harassment." The charges against Gonzalez Urrutia carry a potential 30-year sentence.

On Tuesday, Maduro forged ahead with his plans for a third six-year term by reshuffling his cabinet and naming two of his closest allies to key positions. Diosdado Cabello, the number-two in the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), will now head the interior ministry, which is responsible for policing and security matters.

Vice President Delcy Rodriguez will take over the role of oil minister in a country with the world's largest crude reserves but an industry bent under US sanctions. Also on Tuesday, Machado — replaced on the ballot by Gonzalez Urrutia at the last minute after the regime barred her from running — accused Maduro's government of "kidnapping" her lawyer. — AFP



AGRA: The Taj Mahal is seen amid heavy smog conditions as the sun rises in Agra on November 9, 2023. — AFP

of EPI's Clean Air Program.

Earlier this year, the center launched a \$1.5 million fund to finance the installation of air quality monitors that offer open data worldwide. Air pollution as a whole receives relatively little funding despite its outsized impact on human health. For example, in some of Africa's most-polluted nations, air pollution "is a more serious threat to life expectancy than HIV/AIDS, tropical diseases, malaria or water, sanitation and handwashing", the report said.

There are bright spots, however, including China's remarkably successful efforts to combat dirty air. It took

measures including restricting the number of cars in big cities, reducing heavy industry capacity and banning new coal plants from certain regions.

It has reduced air pollution by 41 percent since 2013, meeting its national standards and adding an average of two years of life expectancy for its citizens, AQLI said. Still, even in China, pollution remains more than five times higher than WHO guidelines, and the benefits of Beijing's measures are unevenly spread. Air quality remains poor across several major provinces, and in some prefectures has actually increased since 2013. — AFP

from Hasina's rivals, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Jamaat-e-Islami, the country's largest Islamist party.

Hasina's government consistently denied the allegations, claiming some of those reported missing had drowned in the Mediterranean while trying to reach Europe. Hasina fled to India by helicopter on August 5 after weeks of student-led protests forced her to quit, ending her iron-fisted 15-year rule.

### 'Disappearances and torture'

The five-member committee, headed by retired high court judge Moeenul Islam Chowdhury, will also investigate other paramilitary police units, including the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), a government order late Tuesday said. The UN rights office says both the RAB and BGB forces have "records of serious human rights violations, including enforced disappearances and torture and ill-treatment".

The commission, ordered to begin work by the interim government led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus, has 45 working days

to submit its report. Sanjida Islam Tulee, a coordinator of a group campaigning for the release of people detained under Hasina, welcomed the commission. "Most importantly, the report needs to be published fully and no information is kept hidden", Tulee told AFP, who heads the group called Mayer Daak, meaning "The Call of the Mothers".

Tulee, who along with those who searching for missing relatives met earlier this month with Yunus asking for action, said she wanted the commission to listen to every family without discrimination. She said they wanted the return of those missing, and for those responsible to face justice.

More than 600 people were killed in the weeks leading up to Hasina's ouster, according to the United Nations rights team's preliminary report, suggesting the toll was "likely an underestimate". The day after she fled, families gathered outside a military intelligence force building in Dhaka waiting desperately for their relatives. But only a handful have been confirmed as released. — AFP

THURSDAY, AUGUST 29, 2024

# Ethiopia says mega-dam on Blue Nile doubles electricity output

## Controversial dam now generating 1,550 megawatts of electricity

NAIROBI: Ethiopia said it has more than doubled electricity production from its controversial mega-dam on the Blue Nile after two more turbines started operations. The multi-billion-dollar Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), long a source of tensions with downstream nations Egypt and Sudan, is now generating 1,550 megawatts of electricity, GERD said in a post on X late Tuesday.

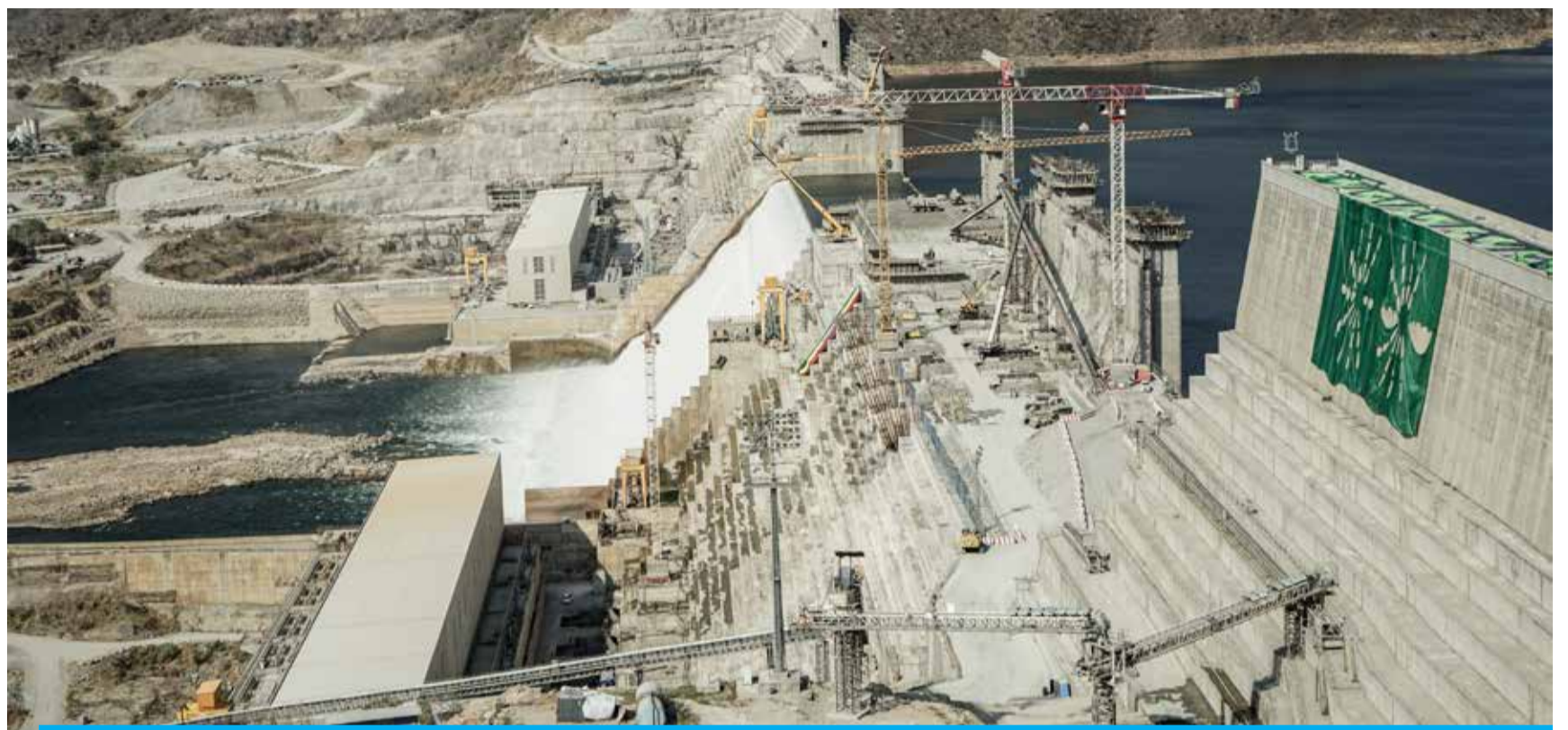
"The overall progress of the GERD has now transitioned from construction phase to operation phase," it said, adding that construction of the concrete dam was now complete. "The two turbines generating 400MW each have now started operations, adding to the already functional two turbines generating 375MW each, totaling an output of 1,550MW."

The dam's spillways were also releasing an extra 2,800 cubic meters of water to the downstream countries, it added. Ethiopia first began generating electricity at the \$4.2-billion project, which is located in the northwest of the country around 30 kilometers (18 miles) from the border with Sudan, in February 2022. At full capacity, the huge dam - 1.8 kilometers long and 145 meters high - could generate more than 5,000 megawatts of power when all 13 turbines are operational.

That would make it Africa's biggest hydroelectric dam and more than double Ethiopia's current output.

Addis Ababa deems the GERD essential for the electrification and development of Africa's second most populous country. According to the World Bank, roughly half of the 120 million population still does not have access to reliable electricity.

The dam, which can hold up to 74 billion cubic meters of water, has been at the centre of a regional dispute ever since Ethiopia broke ground on the project in 2011. Egypt and Sudan have voiced concerns about its operation without a three-way agreement, fearing it could threaten their access to vital Nile waters, but on-off negotiations have failed



GUBA, Ethiopia: This general view shows the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) in Guba, Ethiopia. - AFP

to make a breakthrough. Egypt, which is already suffering from severe water scarcity, sees the dam as an existential threat because it relies on the Nile for 97 percent of its water needs. The position of fragile Sudan, which is currently mired in a civil war, has fluctuated in recent years.

Ethiopia insists the dam will not reduce the volume of water flowing downstream. "The Grand Ethi-

opian Renaissance Dam (GERD) plays a crucial role in managing water flow, mitigating flood risks, and ensuring that downstream nations receive a steady supply of water, particularly during droughts," Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said in a post on X on Sunday.

In April, the World Bank announced a plan to help Ethiopia expand its electricity network and diversify into other clean resources, including solar, wind,

and geothermal power. It said the government had made "encouraging progress" on its electrification program and expanded the grid network coverage to nearly 60 percent of towns and villages. "Yet the electricity deficit in Ethiopia continues to exacerbate the poverty situation, preventing far too many people from fulfilling their basic socio-economic needs and limiting access to opportunity," it said. - AFP

## Libya's oilfield closures spread in standoff over CB

BENGHAZI, Libya: Libya's oilfield closures spread on Wednesday as the Sarir field almost completely halted output, two field engineers told Reuters, amid a political dispute over control of the central bank and oil revenue. Authorities in the east, where most of Libya's oilfields lie, declared on Monday that all production and exports would be halted.

Sarir was producing about 209,000 barrels per day (bpd) before output was reduced, the engineers said. Force majeure had already been announced on exports at the 300,000 bpd Sharara oilfield and this week Reuters has reported disruptions at El Feel, Amal, Nafoora and Abu Attifel. In July, Libya, an OPEC member, was producing about 1.18 million barrels of oil per day. The move to shut off Libya's main source of revenue comes in response to the Tripoli-based Presidency Council sacking Central Bank of Libya (CBL) chief Sadiq Al-Kabir, prompting rival armed factions to mobilize.

Prime Minister Abdulhamid Al-Dbeibah, installed through a UN-backed process in 2021 and head of the Tripoli-based Government of National Unity, said this week that oilfields should not be allowed to be shut "under flimsy pretexts". On Tuesday, US Africa Command General Michael Langley and Chargé d'Affaires Jeremy Berndt met Khalifa Haftar, the head of a force called the Libyan National Army that controls the country's east and south. "The United States urges all Libyan stakeholders to engage constructively in dialogue," with support from the United Nations Support Mission in Libya and the international community, the US Embassy in Libya said on social media platform X. Benchmark Brent oil prices were down 1.2 percent to \$78.35 per barrel as of 1039 GMT as concerns about Chinese demand and risks of a broader economic slowdown offset concerns about potential supply losses from Libya and elsewhere. - Reuters



TRIPOLI: Deputy governor of Libya's Central Bank Abdel Fattah Ghaffar holds a press conference in Tripoli on August 27, 2024. - AFP



MUMBAI: A security guard stands outside the Rubbunnisa Manzil building, partially collapsed after monsoon rains in Mumbai. - AFP

## Sky-high rents have Mumbai residents living on the edge

MUMBAI: Among the swanky skyscrapers of India's financial capital Mumbai, hundreds of dangerously dilapidated buildings facing demolition are crowded with families risking their lives rather than braving impossibly high rents. When torrential monsoon rains lash the coastal city each year, some of the decrepit colonial-era buildings come crashing down - often with a heavy loss of life. "It was like seeing a biscuit that crumbles after you put it in tea," said office worker Vikram Kohli, recalling how he narrowly missed being killed when a four-storey building partially collapsed in July.

City authorities had red-flagged the century-old building in the megacity's bustling Grant Road area for repairs three years ago. The government issued a "warning notice for evacuation" in June - but residents ignored it. "No one vacated the premises", the state housing authority said. When the building collapsed, one passerby was killed, four were injured and the fire brigade had to rescue 13 people trapped inside.

Vaishnav Narvekar, who ran a simple cafe on the ground floor, said he had been "expecting" it to collapse - just not so quickly. It was the "worst feeling", he said. But that is only one case among many in the densely populated city of about 20 million people. More than 13,000 buildings require "continuous repair" to stave off collapse, the state's Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) said. Of those, it lists nearly 850 buildings as being "dangerous and dilapidated" and "not recommended for repair".

Many are apartment blocks packed with residents, suggesting more than a hundred thousand people could live in buildings at risk. Scores are crushed to death each year when buildings collapse, their walls weakened by rainstorms which climate scientists say are increasing in intensity.

Mumbai, the home of glitzy Bollywood stars and billionaire business tycoons, is in the midst of a major infrastructure drive, including highways, metro lines and

bridges. But the government says its affordable housing budget is stretched, leaving many tenants determined to stay put in unsound dwellings. "Where should we go if we left?" asked one tenant in the suburb of Ghatkopar, in a building listed as "dangerous", asking not to be named for legal reasons.

"Our lives are here." Mumbai has the highest rental rates in India, with the median rent for a one-room apartment estimated at \$480, according to the Global Property Guide. Top-end rents can be a dozen times higher than that. Owners complain restrictive rent control laws mean some long-term tenants pay legacy rent fees far lower than market rates, so they do not have the funds to invest in repairs. Tenants fear landlords will evict them, promising compensation, and then fail to pay. "Builders who will profit from redevelopment need to make sure we are adequately compensated," added the tenant, who pays 800 rupees (\$9.50) for a 46-square-metre (500-square-foot) apartment.

In a three-storey building in Ghatkopar classified as "dangerous", Jayesh Rambhiya rents a small apartment for around 500 rupees a month. Rambhiya, who grew up in the building, said he would consider leaving if offered compensation since he'd have to pay around 10 times more for a similar apartment nearby. "This is our right," he said.

City authorities offer temporary "transit housing" for those waiting for their home to be rebuilt, but space is severely limited. Sanjeev Jaiswal, the MHADA housing authority's deputy head, said they were "almost" full. Near Grant Road - where the building collapsed in July - is another four-storey apartment block. It is also on the "most dangerous" list.

Farida Baja, who runs an animal shelter in the building, received an evacuation order in June. "This is a very strong building," she said, shrugging off her failure to find new accommodation. "Even when we have to put a nail in the wall, the nail doesn't go in." Another tenant had since won a temporary court order staying demolition. Some residents accuse developers of claiming buildings are worse than they are to force tenants out. Residents therefore use legal challenges to delay demolition for years. Baja believes the surveyors are wrong, tapping the condemned walls with confidence. "I am not afraid," she said. "I know the building is not coming down". - AFP

## Wall Street little changed in run-up to Nvidia earnings

NEW YORK: Wall Street's main indexes were little changed on Wednesday ahead of Nvidia's earnings report, with focus squarely on if the recent bull market rally that was led by the AI chip firm and other tech-related shares can be sustained. The three main indexes have swung between small gains and losses this week, with the Dow drifting near a record high and the S&P 500 within 1 percent of an all-time peak, as investors await Nvidia's results after the bell.

The chip designer's shares were down marginally. Options pricing shows traders anticipate a move of around 9.8 percent in Nvidia's shares on Thursday, a day after it reports earnings, data from analytics firm ORATS showed. Any disappointment in Nvidia's results could hurt megacaps and other semiconductor stocks, which have led 2024's rally on the prospect of artificial intelligence integration boosting corporate profits. "Investors are a little nervous about what they're going to see and hear from Nvidia ... since expectations have been so high, you sort of wonder how much better can it get," said Sam Stovall, chief investment strategist at CFRA Research.

"The news itself will be driving not only Nvidia's shares, but the technology sector and the overall market." Other chip stocks such as Qualcomm and Advanced Micro Devices edged lower, with the Philadelphia SE Semiconductor index down 0.2 percent. The broader tech sector fell 0.4 percent. Megacaps such as Meta, Microsoft and Alphabet were down marginally.

Optimism continued to prevail that the US Federal Reserve will lower interest rates at its September meeting after Fed Chair Jerome Powell's support for imminent policy adjustment last week, that had sparked broad-based market gains. Odds of a 25-basis point reduction currently stand at 65.5 percent, while those of a 50-bps cut are at 34.5 percent, according to the CME Group's FedWatch Tool. The Personal Consumption Expenditure report for July, due on Friday, is expected to provide further insight into the pace and magnitude of the central bank's rate-cut trajectory. Comments on the economic outlook from voting member and Atlanta Fed President Raphael Bostic, due later in the day, will also be closely watched. The market value of billionaire Warren Buffett's conglomerate Berkshire Hathaway surpassed \$1 trillion.

Super Micro Computer tumbled 18 percent after the AI server maker said it would delay the filing of its annual report for the fiscal year ended June 30, a day after Hindenburg Research disclosed a short position in the company. Declining issues outnumbered advancers for a 1.76-to-1 ratio on the NYSE and a 1.8-to-1 ratio on the Nasdaq. The S&P 500 posted 35 new 52-week highs and one new low, while the Nasdaq Composite recorded 26 new highs and 27 new lows. - Reuters



## Business

# Disney, Reliance win approval for \$8.5bn India mega merger

## Companies clear antitrust hurdle after cricket rights scrutiny

**BENGALURU:** Walt Disney Co and Reliance Industries won approval on Wednesday for an \$8.5 billion merger of their Indian media assets after assuaging regulatory worries about their grip on broadcasting rights for cricket, India's favorite sport. India's Competition Commission (CCI) said the deal had been approved subject to some modifications.

The antitrust watchdog had expressed concern that a merged entity would control most cricket rights for TV and streaming in India, and could hurt advertisers. The merger will create India's biggest entertainment player to compete with Sony, Netflix and Amazon with 120 TV channels and two streaming services. Reliance and Disney have spent roughly \$9.5 billion in recent years for TV and streaming rights for the world's richest cricket tournament, the Indian Premier League, the International Cricket Council's matches such as the one-day and T20 World Cups, and matches organized by the Indian cricket board.

To get the merger over the line, the two companies have offered concessions to the CCI, including a commitment to not raise advertising rates unreasonably for streamed cricket matches, according to a source with direct knowledge of the matter. They also pledged not to bundle and sell advertising slots for different cricket tournaments, the source added.

The CCI said in a statement it "approves the proposed combination", without giving any more details. Both companies have offered free viewing of matches over the years to attract users to their streaming platforms in the hope they will then buy subscriptions. Media agency GroupM estimates that companies spent nearly \$2 billion in India in 2023 on sports industry related sponsorship, endorsement and media, with cricket accounting for 87 percent of the spend.

Disney and Reliance's merged entity will also own Indian broadcast rights for the Wimbledon tennis

championship, MotoGP and the English Premier League, among other sporting events. The merged company will be majority owned by Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani's Reliance. The CCI had privately asked Reliance and Disney around 100 questions related to the merger.

K K Sharma, a former head of mergers at the CCI, had earlier said the deal, if approved, would create "a big fish in the broadcasting market" which will practically be a "monopoly on cricket advertisement revenues". The proposed merger, first announced in February, is expected to combine 120 TV channels and two streaming platforms, challenging rivals such as Japan's Sony and Netflix in a \$28 billion media and entertainment sector set to be worth \$100 billion by the end of the decade. Here is a list of the other leading media players in India and the sectors they dominate:

### Amazon Prime

Amazon Prime Video is estimated to have about 20 million users in India. Its Indian aggregation service, Channels, offers subscriptions to other global and local video streaming services.

### Zee entertainment

One of the oldest media companies in India, Zee's businesses include television broadcasting, video streaming and movie production. Its domestic broadcast portfolio consists of around 48 TV channels as well as a streaming platform. Japan's Sony Group in January pulled the plug on a \$10 billion merger deal with Zee that had been in the works for two years, citing unresolved "closing conditions" and leadership disputes.

### Sony India

In its 29th year of operation, Sony Pictures Net-



An image of a smart TV screen with the emerging streaming services in India.

works India, Sony Group's subsidiary, operates 26 channels ranging from general entertainment to sports and movies. It says its content reaches as many as 700 million viewers in India and is available in 167 countries. Sony also operates the video streaming platform Sony LIV in India.

### Netflix

The streaming giant Netflix views India as a key market. In a recent visit to India, Netflix Co-CEO Ted Sarandos was quoted as saying that he sees its Indian subscriber base rising to 100 million over

time, from around 10 million now.

### Bennett Coleman and Company

Based in Mumbai and established in 1913, the company produces its flagship Times of India newspaper and owns a host of assets in broadcasting, publishing, radio, film and entertainment.

### Sun TV Network

Dominant in south India, Sun TV operates 35 TV channels in six languages, along with 69 FM radio stations and three daily newspapers. — Reuters

## Chinese EV giant BYD posts 24.4% rise in H1 profit

**BEIJING:** Leading Chinese automaker BYD posted on Wednesday a 24.4 percent rise in net profit for the first half of 2024, boosted by continuing strong demand for electric cars in its home and overseas markets.

The company posted a net profit of \$1.91 billion in the January-June period, up from \$1.54 billion in the same period last year, according to results published at the Hong Kong Stock Exchange where BYD is listed. The firm said sales during the period stood at \$42.3 billion, up 15.8 percent year-on-year.

The Shenzhen-based company — which adopts the English slogan "Build Your Dreams" — is the most prominent EV manufacturer in China, the world's largest automotive market. Leaders in Beijing are aiming for car sales to be mainly made up of electric and hybrid models by 2035.

In July, such vehicles accounted for more than half of all domestic sales, passing the threshold for the first time, according to the Chinese Association

of Automobile Manufacturers. Generous government subsidies initially helped sales take off — but the policies were phased out in late 2022 and the market now appears to be reaching maturity. Local EV firms have since been locked in a cut-throat price war as they fight to remain competitive, weighing on their profitability. BYD has "effectively dealt with challenges brought by intensified industrial competition", it said in the filing.

BYD and other Chinese EV giants have accelerated overseas expansion in recent years, despite concerns in Western countries that local markets will become flooded with imports at prices they view as artificially low. The European Union has alleged that Beijing's automotive subsidies have given Chinese firms an unfair leg up in foreign markets, distorting competition and harming the competitiveness of European automakers. Earlier this month, Brussels released a draft plan to impose tariffs of up to 36.3 percent



HUAIAN, China: Employees work on a new energy vehicle (NEV) assembly line at a BYD factory in Huai'an, in China's eastern Jiangsu province. — AFP

on Chinese EVs — a measure that will become permanent in October unless a deal is reached with Beijing. The United States said in May that it would significantly raise customs duties on Chinese EVs to 100 percent.

Canada also announced a 100 percent tariff on Monday, accusing China of "not playing by the same rules as

other countries" in areas such as environmental and labor standards.

BYD has nonetheless been ramping up globalization efforts, with plans to open factories in Hungary and Turkey. Originally specializing in the design and production of batteries, BYD diversified into the automotive industry in 2003. — AFP

## US consumer confidence index jumps

**WASHINGTON:** US consumer confidence rose to a six-month high in August amid optimism over the economic outlook, but Americans are becoming more anxious about the labor market after the unemployment rate jumped to near a three-year high of 4.3 percent last month. The better-than-expected reading in consumer confidence, reported by the Conference Board on Tuesday, reflected improved perceptions of business conditions over the next six months, and the survey suggested the odds of a recession had continued to decline. Consumers' uneasiness over the labor market is mirrored by concerns at the Federal Reserve, with Fed Chair Jerome Powell last Friday signaling interest rate cuts were imminent. "This report supports a rate cut on both the decline in inflation expectations and a softening labor market, but is not so weak as to suggest a recession at this point," said Conrad DeQuadros, senior economic adviser at Brean Capital. The Conference Board's consumer confidence index increased to 103.3 this month, the highest level since February, from an upwardly revised 101.9 in July.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the index would be little changed from the previously

reported 100.3. Confidence was higher among consumers aged 35 years and older, and those with annual incomes above \$100,000. The cutoff date for the survey was Aug. 21. The rise in confidence could have been influenced by President Joe Biden dropping out of the November presidential race and the nomination of Vice President Kamala Harris to head the Democratic Party ticket.

The Conference Board made no mention of any political impact. The University of Michigan this month, however, attributed the rise in its consumer sentiment measure in August to increased optimism among Democrats compared with Republicans. Former President Donald Trump is the Republican Party candidate in the upcoming election.

The Conference Board's Expectations Index, based on consumers' short-term outlook for income, business, and labor market conditions, improved to 82.5. That was the highest level since August 2023 and was up from 81.1 in July. It was the second straight monthly reading above 80. A reading below 80 usually signals a recession ahead.

Consumers were less upbeat, however, about the labor market. The share of consumers who viewed jobs as "plentiful" slipped to 32.8 percent from 33.4 percent in July. Some 16.4 percent of consumers said jobs were "hard to get," up from 16.3 percent last month. The survey's so-called labor market differential, derived from data on respondents' views on whether jobs are plentiful or hard to get, fell to 16.4, the narrowest since March 2021, from 17.1 in July. — Reuters

## India plans to raise vegetable oil import taxes

**MUMBAI:** India is considering an increase in import taxes on vegetable oils to help protect farmers reeling from lower oilseed prices, two government sources said on Wednesday. The move, which is likely to be announced in the coming weeks, could dampen demand and reduce overseas purchases of palm oil, soy oil and sunflower oil. "We are exploring all options to help farmers. Increasing import taxes is one of the options," said a government source, who asked not to be named in line with official rules. A proposal has been made by the farm ministry and a final decision will be made by the Department of Revenue, which falls under the finance ministry, said another government official, who also declined to be named.

A government spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In 2022, India, the world's biggest vegetable oil importer, abolished basic import taxes on crude vegetable oils to cool prices. New Delhi still levies a 5.5 percent tax, known as the Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess.

Farmers say higher import tariffs will help arrest a sharp drop in oilseed prices. Domestic soybean prices are around 4,200 rupees (\$50) per 100 kg, lower than the state-fixed support price of 4,892 rupees. Farmers in Maharashtra, India's No.2 soybean-growing state, have been unhappy over the fall in prices.

"At the current price, we are not even covering our production costs, let alone earning a profit," said Maces Gaikwad, a farmer who grows soybean on a 4-acre (1.62 hectares) plot.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is expected to woo farmers, who form an influential voting bloc, ahead of regional elections due in Maharashtra later this year. The new soybean crop will arrive in six weeks, leading to a further drop in prices, said BV Mehta, executive director of the Solvent Extractors' Association of India.

In July, India's vegetable oil imports jumped 22.2 percent to 1.9 million metric tons, the second highest on record. India meets more than 70 percent of its vegetable oil demand through imports. It buys palm oil mainly from Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, while it imports soy oil and sunflower oil from Argentina, Brazil, Russia and Ukraine. — Reuters



ALHAMBRA, US: Laborers work on the exterior of a new house being built in Alhambra, California. — AFP

### News in Brief

#### Outage paralyzes Dutch airport

**THE HAGUE:** A computer outage hit a regional airport and several public services including the coastguard and military police in the Netherlands Wednesday, with no immediate indications as to a cause. Planes were grounded at Eindhoven Airport in the southeast of the country, which normally takes passengers to 30 international destinations. "Due to a network disruption, there is no air traffic possible at Eindhoven airport. It is still unclear when the situation will be resolved," according to the airport website. The country's main airport, Schiphol near Amsterdam, which is a major European hub, appeared to be functioning normally. — AFP

#### Arla's raises 2024 revenue outlook

**COPENHAGEN:** Denmark's Arla, one of the world's biggest dairy producers and the maker of Lurpak butter and Castello cheese, raised its full-year revenue outlook on Wednesday and said it expected prices to rise, despite reporting a drop in first-half revenue. While dairy prices declined in late 2023 and early 2024 from historically high levels early last year, a shift in the balance of supply and demand was again making products more expensive, Arla said. "As the global milk production saw a decline in the first half of 2024, the global dairy price levels in commodities, retail and foodservice generally continued the upward trend, enabling price increases across markets," Arla CEO Peder Tuborgh said in a statement. — Reuters

#### Polestar reshuffles management

**PARIS:** Polestar, the electric car venture created by Volvo and now controlled by China's Geely, Wednesday named a new chief executive as it reshuffles its management to confront a shrinking share price and a stumbling EV market. Michael Lohscheller, former chief executive of German carmaker Opel, on October 1 will replace Thomas Ingenlath, who has run the brand since its creation seven years ago. Polestar had already recently replaced its chairman and chief of design. Lohscheller "brings a wealth of expertise in the automotive industry, particularly in navigating competitive markets and scaling businesses," the company said in a statement. — AFP

#### Ryanair boss reports rise in rowdiness

**LONDON:** The boss of low-cost airline Ryanair has warned of a "notable rise" in passengers misbehaving during flights due to alcohol and drug-taking in recent months. The Irish carrier's chief executive Michael O'Leary said it was a "pan-European problem" but at its worst on some UK routes to so-called party destinations like Ibiza. The typically outspoken CEO said authorities across the continent "don't take it seriously", as he urged them to consider restricting airport alcohol sales to curb the issue. "We've had a notable rise, as have most of the other airlines, in bad behavior among passengers particularly on those longer holiday flights this summer," he told reporters at a press conference Tuesday. — AFP

#### South Africa's 2024 maize harvest falls

**CAPE TOWN:** South African farmers are expected to harvest 20.5 percent less maize in the 2023/2024 season compared with the previous one, the government's Crop Estimates Committee (CEC) said on Wednesday. The CEC's seventh summer crop forecast estimated the 2024 harvest at 13.06 million metric tons, down from the 16.43 million tons harvested the season before. The previous estimate on July 26 put the 2024 maize harvest at 13.33 million tons. — Reuters

# China's solar sector blazes trail in commitment to renewables

## China accounts for over 40% of total installed solar capacity worldwide: Expert

**YINCHUAN, China:** Hundreds of rows of gleaming panels blanket swathes of scrubby sand at sunset in a remote northern Chinese desert — once the biggest solar farm in the world. On the edge of the forbidding Tengger desert, the solar park produces 1.5 gigawatts of power — but it has since been eclipsed and the largest is now further west with more than double the capacity. China, the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, is building almost twice as much wind and solar capacity as every other country combined.

Last week, its wind and solar capacity overshoot a target set by President Xi Jinping nearly six years ahead of schedule. The vast solar arrays in the Ningxia region are a testament to a state-led industrial policy that has driven that breakneck growth. South of the regional capital Yinchuan, huge lorries roar down a highway flanked by photovoltaic panels and wind turbines stretching to the horizon.

Ningxia, like much of China's northwest, is sparsely populated and sun-soaked, pockmarked with small farms, vineyards and hulking power stations. This geography makes it a prime location for generating solar power, which is then sent to China's eastern and southern provinces where electricity demand is highest. "China's solar energy is developing at an unprecedented pace and scale," said analyst Wu Di from Peking University's Institute of Energy.

The country increased its installed solar capacity by more than 55 percent last year, according to the National Energy Administration. China now accounts for over 40 percent of the total installed capacity worldwide, said Wu.

### 'Need for coal waning'

Beijing aims to bring emissions of planet-heating carbon dioxide to a peak by 2030 and to net zero by 2060, part of its commitments under the Paris climate accord that seeks to limit global warming to 1.5

degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. "Carbon can't peak unless incremental consumption demand is covered entirely by incremental growth in clean energy," said David Fishman, a senior manager at the Lantau Group specializing in China's power sector. "Incremental solar capacity growth is an important part of making sure all power demand growth is met by clean sources."

The government only permitted around nine gigawatts of new coal power in the first half of 2024, a year-on-year reduction of 83 percent, according to a report published this month by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air. "With new renewable energy installations now capable of meeting all incremental power demand in China, the need for new coal is waning," the Finland-based independent research group said. But it also warned that construction continued on existing coal projects, potentially slowing Beijing's energy transition.

### Industry shake-out

The blistering pace at which extra solar capacity has been added has not quite been matched by developments in the power grid, causing some energy to be lost — a phenomenon known as curtailment. In May, Fitch Ratings said this could continue to rise in the near term, with the solar curtailment rate for the first quarter of 2024 increasing to four percent.

"In the future, in order to control the solar curtailment ratio within a reasonable range, China still has lots of work to do," said Wu. Transferring power from west to east is also "not the most cost-effective approach", said Gao Yuhe from environmental group Greenpeace East Asia.

Besides the behemoth parks in the north, China's solar revolution has also relied on distributed solar energy — smaller panels set onto rooftops in residential and commercial areas, which reduce



Solar panels are seen at the south of Yinchuan in China's northern Ningxia region. — AFP

transmission losses. But even this smaller-scale infrastructure needs upgrading to cope with recent increased capacity, said Wu.

Long backed by generous government subsidies, China's domestic solar-panel industry is struggling with a global oversupply crisis that has driven down prices and pushed some firms into bankruptcy. Fishman, of the Lantau Group, said the intense competition "is good news for builders, who continue to benefit from the cheapest panels the world has ever seen".

"The unemployment rate is now around 90 percent of the Fed's dual mandate, inflation is about 10 percent," said John Silvia, founder of Dynamic Economic Strategy, adding that Powell's pivot to unemployment from inflation is remarkable considering the economy isn't in recession.

Of course, there's more than one way of measuring the strength or otherwise of the labor market and, by extension, the economy. They include nominal job growth, the ebb and flow of the labor force, and one of the Fed's favorites since the COVID-19 pandemic: the JOLTS estimates of outsized quits and job openings. But for the public, markets at large and politicians, the unemployment rate offers the clearest picture of how well the labor market is holding up. This figure is doubly important now the US presidential election is in full swing. The unemployment rate rose two-tenths of a percentage point in July to 4.3 percent, the highest level since October 2021. It triggered the so-called Sahm rule, which states that a 0.5-percentage point rise in the three-month average unemployment rate from the low of the past year typically signals recession. While economist Claudia Sahm, the rule's creator, has poured cold water on claims that recession is now inevitable, she does note that the rise in unemployment is concerning. When it comes to rising unemployment, momentum typically cannot be slowed easily, much less reversed quickly.

What's more, the current unemployment rate is now above Fed officials' median long-term projection of 4.2 percent, published in the June SEP. And since the Fed began including median projections in its quarterly SEPs in 2015, major policy shifts have always coincided with the two crossing over. This happened in late 2016 when the Fed started raising rates in earnest, in early 2020 when the pandemic prompted rates to be cut to zero, and in early 2022 when the Fed began its last hiking cycle.

The Thai economy is expected to grow 2.6 percent this year on tourism and exports, but will be dragged down by manufacturing. Factory output for the first half of 2024 period fell 2.01 percent from a year earlier. Thailand will set-up a task force comprising 28 government agencies that will meet every two weeks to review and revise regulations to prevent the distribution of illegal goods, Caretaker Commerce Minister Phumtham Wechayachai told reporters.

"We will use existing measures more extensively," Phumtham said, adding that these regulations comply with global trade rules.

Other measures include increasing the number of controlled goods under industrial and drug laws and ramping up the frequency of random container inspections, he said. Thailand in June introduced a 7 percent value-added tax on imported goods priced at less than 1,500 baht (\$44).

oil content in its bricks by paying up to 70 percent more for certified renewable resin, the raw plastic used to manufacture the bricks, in an attempt to encourage manufacturers to boost production. "This means a significant increase in the cost of producing a Lego brick," CEO Niels Christiansen told Reuters.

He said the company is on track to ensure that more than half of the resin it needs in 2026 is certified according to the mass balance method, an auditable way to trace sustainable materials through the supply chain, up from 30 percent in the first half of 2024. "With a family-owner committed to sustainability, it's a privilege that we can pay extra for the raw materials without having to charge customers extra," Christiansen said.

The move comes amid a surplus of cheap virgin plastic, driven by major oil companies' investments in petrochemicals. Plastics are projected to drive new oil demand in the next few decades.

Lego's suppliers are using bio-waste such as cooking oil or food industry waste fat as well as recycled materials to replace virgin fossil fuels in plastic production.

The market for recycled or renewable plastic is still in its infancy, partly because most available feedstock is used for subsidized biodiesel, which

"Once a few of them go toes-up because they can't endure the competition, the market should stabilize," he added. Chinese subsidies have also created friction with global trading partners, with the EU launching an investigation to discern whether the subsidies have helped homegrown firms undercut European rivals.

Beijing denies that its industrial policies are unfair and has initiated a series of probes into European imports in apparent retaliation. — AFP



TYSONS, US: A hiring sign is posted on the exterior of Urban Outfitters at the Tysons Corner Center mall on August 22, 2024 in Tysons, Virginia. — AFP

So that's why it's so significant that both the unemployment rate and the Fed's long-term outlook will be updated within days of each other. Changes in either will go a long way in determining the Fed's path for the rest of this year and early 2025.

Traders expect 100 basis points of easing by year end, and at least another 100 bps next year. And even though futures markets are still betting on the Fed delivering a quarter-point cut in September, the probability of a half-point move has a one-in-three chance. So what happens if we see another solid rise in the unemployment rate on Sept. 6? This could seal the deal for a 50-basis-point cut on Sept. 18 and boost the case for similarly bold moves in the coming months. A cutting cycle of that size and speed wouldn't be easy for the Fed to navigate or communicate. Just as importantly, it will likely only occur if the US truly is in the early stages of a recession, blowing apart the market's "soft landing" narrative once and for all. — Reuters

But the launch of Chinese e-commerce firm TEMU in Thailand in July has stoked fresh fears among small businesses that cheaper imported goods would decimate their businesses. The Thai government said it was in discussions with the Chinese embassy about concerns over the online platform's compliance with local tax law, according to Phumtham.

The Chinese embassy in Bangkok did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

"We are not discriminating against any country, but ready to make adjustments if current rules cannot address these problems and society's concerns," Phumtham said. Thailand's influential former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra last week called for "small steps of protectionism" to combat the flood of cheap Chinese goods, in a speech just days after his daughter, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, was appointed prime minister. — Reuters



COLOGNE: Visitors walk past a giant Lego sculpture during the media day at the Gamescom video games trade fair in Cologne, western Germany. — AFP

is mixed into transportation fuels.

According to Neste, the world's largest producer of renewable feedstocks, fossil-based plastic is about half or a third of the price of sustainable options. — Reuters

## US clean energy jobs growth rate double that of overall jobs

**WASHINGTON:** Jobs in the US clean energy industry in 2023 grew at more than double the rate of the country's overall jobs, and unionization in clean energy surpassed for the first time the rate in the wider energy industry, the Energy Department said on Wednesday.

Employment in clean energy businesses — including wind, solar, nuclear and battery storage — rose by 142,000 jobs, or 4.2 percent last year, up from a rise of 3.9 percent in 2022, the US Energy and Employment Report said. The rate was above the overall US job growth rate of 2 percent in 2023.

Unionization rates in clean energy hit 12.4 percent, more than the 11 percent in the overall energy business, it said. That was driven by growth in construction and utility industries and after legislation passed in 2022 including the bipartisan CHIPS Act and President Joe Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, the department said. Construction jobs in clean energy, driven by the legislation and private-sector investments, "is expected to continue for decades to build out the clean energy infrastructure that we need," Betony Jones, the Energy Department's head of energy jobs, told reporters in a call. While unionized members "might move from project to project, there is continuity of that work in order for workers to make a career in that industry," she said.

Employment in the utility scale and rooftop solar industries grew 5.3 percent adding more than 18,000 jobs, it said. The solar installation industry in California, the country's most populous state, says it has lost more than 17,000 jobs due to high interest rates and the state's lowering of net meter rates that allow customers to be credited for excess power their rooftop panels generate. New jobs in fossil fuels were mixed. The natural gas workforce grew by more than 77,000 or 13.3 percent, while jobs in petroleum fell more than 44,000 or 6 percent. Coal jobs fell nearly 8,500 or 5.3 percent as power generation continued to switch from coal to gas, wind and solar. White House climate adviser Ali Zaidi told reporters that the report showed the administration's commitment to pursue both energy and climate security. Energy remained a mostly male workforce with an average of 73 percent in 2023 compared with the national workforce average that was 53 percent male, the same numbers as in the previous year. — Reuters

## Lego outperforms toy market with robust sales in H1

**COPENHAGEN:** Lego's sales of its colorful plastic bricks outpaced the overall toy market in the first half of the year, driven by strong demand in Europe and North America, the Denmark-based toymaker said on Wednesday. The surge in Lego's sales contrasts with a stagnating global toy market and tepid sales for rivals such as Barbie-maker Mattel and Hasbro, the firm behind My Little Pony.

The family-owned Lego company said sales from January through June rose 13 percent to 31 billion Danish crowns (\$4.65 billion). By comparison, Lego increased first-half sales by 1 percent last year and 17 percent in 2022, year over year. "We have performed significantly better than the overall toy market and have grabbed market share at a fairly high pace," CEO Niels Christiansen told Reuters.

The global toy market has stagnated this year fol-

## Unemployment rate is now Fed's lodestar: Expert

**ORLANDO, Florida:** Jerome Powell's Jackson Hole speech has turned Sept 6 and Sept 18 into the two most important dates for US monetary policy in years, as events on both days center on the Fed's new guiding light: the unemployment rate. The first marks the release of the August non-farm payrolls report, and the second will see the Fed's much-anticipated interest rate decision and, just as crucially, its updated Summary of Economic Projections (SEP).

The Fed will almost certainly cut rates on Sept 18, as Powell signaled at Jackson Hole and as other officials have effectively confirmed since. The only questions now are whether the easing cycle starts with a 25- or 50-basis-point cut, and how much policy is loosened in the coming months.

After these two pivotal days in September, investors should have their answers.

Powell essentially made two pivots in Jackson Hole. The first, as expected, is his clear signaling that a rate cut is forthcoming. The second, perhaps less anticipated, is his equally clear emphasis that unemployment, not inflation, is now the number one determinant of upcoming policy decisions. Powell's warning that the Fed does "not seek or welcome further cooling in labor market conditions" basically means the current unemployment rate of 4.3 percent — which is still fairly low by historical standards — is now a "line in the sand" that, if crossed, will likely trigger a policy response.

## Thailand steps up regulation of Chinese goods

**BANGKOK:** Thailand will set up a task force to strictly enforce existing regulations aimed at stemming the tide of cheap Chinese imports that is threatening the manufacturing sector and an already weak economy, a minister said on Wednesday. The move comes amid warnings that many Thai businesses may not survive what the main manufacturing association has called a tsunami of cheap Chinese goods, which has already contributed to nearly 2,000 factory closures in Southeast Asia's second-largest economy in the last year.

lowing a 7 percent decline in sales last year, he said. Lego's operating profit rose 26 percent to 8.1 billion crowns. Following the strong start to the year, Christiansen now expects double-digit sales growth in 2024, compared with earlier guidance of single-digit growth. The company plans to open around 100 stores this year, slightly fewer than in previous years, bringing the total number of stores above 1,100. "We are opening slightly fewer stores in China right now because we see that consumers there are holding back a bit," Christiansen said.

Instead, the company has shifted focus to Europe and North America, where it is seeing strong demand. Lego Icons, which includes models of the Eiffel Tower and Titanic, was among the best-performing themes along with City, Technic and Star Wars.

Meanwhile, Lego said it was on track to replace the fossil fuels used in making its signature bricks with more expensive renewable and recycled plastic by 2032 after signing deals with producers to secure long-term supply. Lego, which sells billions of plastic bricks annually, has tested over 600 different materials to develop a new material that would completely replace its oil-based brick by 2030, but with limited success.

Now, Lego is aiming to gradually bring down the

THURSDAY, AUGUST 29, 2024



Customers taste the flavors of the ice creams and cakes at "Roberto confectionery" pastry shop.



A trophy for the craziest kind of ice cream maker is on display at "Roberto confectionery" pastry shop.



Robert Reinhardt, owner of "Roberto confectionery", prepares his newly created ice cream, the 'Mexican chili beans' at his pastry shop.

## Cone appetit: Hungary goes wild for cabbage stew ice cream

**G**oulash-flavored gelato, anyone? Curious customers are flocking from all over Hungary to taste the summer's wackiest taste sensations - a small ice cream parlor serving up savory Hungarian staples. Robert Reinhardt and his taste-bud challenging flavors have become an overnight hit, creating a buzz on social media. "We started with the drink and potato pancake flavors. That already blew some people's minds," the 44-year-old, who runs Roberto Confectionery in the city of Tatabánya north of Budapest, told AFP.

After receiving requests for new flavor creations from people online, Reinhardt began to experiment, mixing traditional Hungarian dishes such as paprika chicken, cabbage stew and hearty meat pancakes with a variety of ice cream bases.

But he doesn't limit himself to Hungarian cuisine, broadening his menu to include all-time favorites like spaghetti bolognese and scrambled eggs with bacon. "I realized that you could get really good flavors out of it. This is not a joke," Reinhardt said, who sells his ice cream for 500 forints (1.27 euros) a scoop. Turnover at the shop has since increased by "three or four times" since Hungarian media first got the scoop on his unusual treats, said his wife Ena. "We are a little bit overwhelmed because we didn't expect that it would become such a hit," she told AFP. "We're constantly looking for more staff."

**Fried cheese and tomato soup**  
So far the savory ice creams have been popular with customers, although



The ice creams are on display at "Roberto confectionery" pastry shop in Tatabánya, north-western Hungary. — AFP photos

some admitted they are more of an acquired taste. "I thought they were going to be very unusual, but they taste great," said masseuse Ildiko, who declined to give her full name, after sampling all flavors for free before making her choice. "The tomato soup, the sheep cheese with dill and the fried cheese tasted the best," she told AFP, adding that she would soon be back for more. Others were not as enthused.

Krisztian Kiss, a 43-year-old lawyer from the country's northwest said he probably wouldn't be making the trip back. "I had to check out this kind of quirky idea," he quipped, complimenting the authenticity of the flavors. His 10-year-old son Zeteny was less excit-

ed, saying it is a "very strange feeling" to taste something salty, when your tongue is "used to it being sweet".

While opinions on social media have been divided as detractors slammed the novel ice creams as "disgusting", posts about the wacky flavors have been viewed tens of thousands of times, with some even reaching a million views.

Banking on sustained demand for his offerings, Reinhardt plans to open up a second shop in the capital while continuing to provide his novel flavors even during the winter months. — AFP



Robert Reinhardt, owner of "Roberto confectionery", prepares his newly created ice cream, the 'Mexican chili beans' at his pastry shop.



Robert Reinhardt poses for a photo during an interview for AFP at his pastry shop.



Robert Reinhardt, owner of "Roberto confectionery", checks the quality of his newly created ice cream, at his pastry shop.



Ena, wife and staff member of Robert Reinhardt, owner of "Roberto confectionery", puts the 'Hungarian Goulasch' ice cream into an open cooling counter.



Customers taste the flavors of the ice creams and cakes at "Roberto confectionery" pastry shop.

## South Africa plan to 'bomb' mice that eat albatrosses alive

**C**onservationists said Saturday that they plan to bomb a remote South African island with tons of pesticide-laced pellets to kill mice that are eating albatrosses and other seabirds alive. Hordes of mice are devouring the eggs of some of the world's most important seabirds that nest on Marion Island, about 2,000 kilometers (1,240 miles) southeast of Cape Town, and have started eating live birds, leading conservationist Mark Anderson said. This includes the iconic Wandering Albatross, with a quarter of the world's population nesting on the Indian Ocean

Island. "The mice have now, for the first time last year, been found to be feeding on adult Wandering Albatrosses," Anderson told a meeting of BirdLife South Africa, the country's leading bird conservation organization. Gruesome images presented at the meeting showed bloodied birds, some with flesh chewed off their heads. Of the 29 species of seabirds that breed on the island, 19 are threatened with local extinction, the Mouse-Free Marion Project said.

Mouse attacks have escalated in recent years but the birds do not know

how to respond because they evolved without terrestrial predators, said Anderson, a leader of the project and CEO of BirdLife South Africa. "Mice just climb onto them and just slowly eat them until they succumb," he told AFP. It can take days for a bird to die. "We are losing hundreds of thousands of seabirds every year through the mice."

### Extreme conditions

Billed as one of the world's most important bird conservation efforts, the Mouse-Free Marion Project has raised about a quarter of the \$29 million it

needs to send a squad of helicopters to drop 600 tons of rodenticide-laced pellets onto the rugged island. It wants to strike in 2027 in winter, when the mice are most hungry and the summer-breeding birds are largely absent. The pilots will have to fly in extreme conditions and reach every part of the island, which is about 25 kilometers long and 17 kilometers wide.

"We have to get rid of every last mouse," Anderson said. "If there was a male and female remaining, they could breed and eventually get back to where we are now." The mice are proliferating

because warmer temperatures due to climate change means they are breeding more frequently over a longer period, Anderson said. After eating through plants and invertebrates, the mice turned to the birds. House mice were introduced to the island in the early 1800s. Five cats were brought in around 1948 to control their numbers. But the cat numbers grew to about 2,000 and they were killing about 450,000 birds a year. An eradication project removed the last cat in 1991. — AFP

Lifestyle



# Indian desert school's unique design offers respite from heat

A worker mops rain water at Rajkumari Ratnavati girls' school.



Rajkumari Ratnavati girls' school pupils stand outside a house.



An empty classroom of Rajkumari Ratnavati girls' school.



Rajkumari Ratnavati girls' school pupil Khushboo Kumari (right) speaks during an interview with AFP at her house. - AFP photos



A worker walks at Rajkumari Ratnavati girls' school.



Rajkumari Ratnavati girls' school pupils study at their house.

The following story has been selected by AFP's chief editors for re-publication as one of the best of the week. Pictures by Idrees Mohammed. Video by Shubham Koul. In the sweltering heat of India's Thar desert, where summer highs soar above 50 degrees Celsius, an architecturally striking school is an oasis of cool thanks to a combination of age-old techniques and modern design. The Rajkumari Ratnavati girls' school uses the same yellow sandstone as the 12th-century fort in nearby Jaisalmer, in India's western state of Rajasthan, dubbed the "golden city" due to the color of the rock.

Like the fort, the school has thick rubble walls that help bounce back the heat, while the interior is plastered with lime, a porous material that regulates humidity and aids natural cooling. Unlike the ancient fort, its roof is lined with solar panels, which provide all the school's power in an area with frequent electricity cuts. Temperatures inside the school, designed by US-based architect Diana Kellogg and built by local artisans — many of them parents of pupils — can be as much as 20 percent lower than those outside. "I love going to the school," said eight-year-old Khushboo Kumari, one of the 170 students. "The air feels as if it is coming from an AC."

The school's classrooms are arranged around an open elliptical courtyard resembling a Roman coliseum, and walls with grids of vents create shade while allowing for cooling airflow. Elevated windows allow hot air to escape as it rises. Rainwater is harvested from the flat roof. In some places, the walls are dotted with perforations — a technique known as "jali" that was traditionally used for modesty, shielding women from view in the conservative society.



This aerial photograph shows a view of Rajkumari Ratnavati girls' school, in Kanoi village near Jaisalmer, in India's desert state of Rajasthan. — AFP photos

At the school, it is used to promote ventilation, creating a breeze channeled by the building's oval shape. "There is cross-ventilation," said school supervisor Rajinder Singh Bhati, aged 29. "The white tiles on the terrace reflect the sunlight." "It is totally eco-friendly."

**'Airy and cool'**

India this year baked in its longest-ever heatwave, according to

government weather experts. Temperatures surged above 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit), with warnings people will face increasingly oppressive heat in the future. Manohar Lal, 32, the father of pupil Khushboo, said students looked forward to class thanks to the relative cool.

"There are frequent power cuts in Rajasthan, and children have to suffer as temperatures touch almost 50 degrees Celsius in summer," Lal said

outside his modest home of mud and brick, which does not have a ceiling fan. "But there are no such worries in the school because it is powered by solar energy," he added. "It is airy and cool, and that is why the children enjoy going to school".

**'Feels like heaven'**

The school is supported by the US-based CITTA Education Foundation, meaning pupils attend for free

in a state where the literacy rate for women is about 52 percent. Uniforms, school materials and lunch for pupils are also provided. "It's a big thing that they are getting quality education free of cost, considering they can't even afford proper meals or clothing," said Hindi teacher Priyanka Chhangani, 40.

Kellogg, the architect, said combining tradition with modern design and sustainable techniques was key. "Because the craftsmen were so familiar with the stone, we were able to integrate traditional architectural details along with indigenous heritage details, so that the structure felt authentic to the region", she said. Her oval design was inspired by "feminine symbols of strength", she added.

But while her design focused on tackling baking heat, it also faces an unexpected, climate change-driven problem — floods. Intense rainfall during the annual monsoon is common from June to September, but experts say climate change is increasing its frequency and severity. That increased rainfall has begun to impact the school, which was designed for a drier climate.

This year, a long-dormant river was overflowing, washing away soil at one side of the school. Rajan Rawal, a professor at India's Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology University, said the increasing intensity of rain was impacting buildings designed for other weather. "Disasters like heat waves and floods impact the structural stability," Rawal said. They also affect the thermal performance of the building, he added. But teacher Chhangani said the school was still changing the lives of the pupils. "These children don't even have fans at home," she said. "When they come to school, it feels like heaven to them." — AFP



Rajkumari Ratnavati girls' school pupil Khushboo Kumari studies at her house.



A worker mops rain water at Rajkumari Ratnavati girls' school.



Rajkumari Ratnavati girls' school pupil Khushboo Kumari stands in her house.



Rajkumari Ratnavati girls' school pupils study at their house.



Rajkumari Ratnavati girls' school pupils study at their house.



Members of the jury Venezia 81 (from left), Italian director Giuseppe Tornatore, British writer and director Andrew Haigh, US director and member of the jury James Gray, Polish director Agnieszka Holland, Brazilian screenwriter and director Kleber Mendonça Filho French actress and president of the jury Isabelle Huppert, President of the Festival Pieterangelo Buttafuoco, German director Julia von Heinz, Chinese actress Zhang Ziyi and Mauritanian director Abderrahmane Sissako and the director of the 81st Venice Film Festival, Alberto Barbera.



US actress Sigourney Weaver attends a photocall on the day she will receive the Golden Lion For Lifetime Achievement.

# GHOULS, GOTHAM AND GAGA AS VENICE FILM FESTIVAL OPENS

**T**he Venice Film Festival kicks off Wednesday with a devilish debut of Tim Burton's "Beetlejuice" sequel and a surge of star power for the glitzy competition on the sun-splashed Lido. Lady Gaga, George Clooney, Daniel Craig, Julianne Moore and Brad Pitt are among the A-listers expected in Italy's watery city for the world's longest-running movie festival, known as "La Mostra". Arriving via water taxi from across the Venetian lagoon for the 10-day event, the celebrities promise to return some big-budget Hollywood pizzazz after a low-key edition last year due to the Hollywood writers' strike.



US actor Michael Keaton (left) and US director Tim Burton.

First up is the out-of-competition world premiere of "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice", featuring Michael Keaton as a chaos-causing ghoulish alongside Winona Ryder, Catherine O'Hara and Monica Bellucci. The fantastical romp into the afterlife was a project "from my heart" for Burton, the acclaimed aficionado of the strange and ghoulish. "In the past few years, I got a little bit disillusioned with the movie industry," Burton told journalists ahead of the opening.

"For me, this movie was re-reener-

gizing, kind of getting back to the things that I love doing, the way I love doing it, the people I love doing it with," he said. The festival shifts tone Thursday, when eyes turn to Angelina Jolie as Maria Callas in "Maria", Pablo Larrain's biopic about the opera diva's tormented life - one of 21 films in contention for the top Golden Lion prize to be awarded September 7. Also much anticipated is the dark psychological thriller "Joker: Folie a Deux", the sequel to US director Todd Phillips' 2019 Venice-winning film loosely based on the DC Comics characters and set in a gritty Gotham City.

The sequel brings back Joaquin Phoenix, who won an Oscar for his depiction of the failed clown descending into mental illness, this time paired with Lady Gaga as his sidekick and love interest Harley Quinn. Bond star Daniel Craig stars in "Queer" from Italy's Luca Guadagnino, an adaptation of the William Burroughs novel set in 1940s Mexico City, while Australian director Justin Kurzel's "The Order" features Jude Law as an FBI agent investigating white supremacy in the Pacific Northwest.

Spain's Pedro Almodovar is back with his first full-length film in English, "The Room Next Door", with Moore and Tilda Swinton. Nicole Kidman stars with Antonio Banderas in the erotic thriller "Babygirl" from Dutch director Halina Reijn, about a powerful woman CEO who embarks on a torrid affair with a much-younger male intern.

The roster also includes US director Brady Corbet's "The Brutalist", featuring Adrien Brody as a Hungarian Jewish architect who emigrates to America after World War II and embarks on a project promising to change the course of his life.

## War

Alongside the studio films and their stars, the festival is also hosting

## The 21 films in competition at Venice

- The Room Next Door** directed by Pedro Almodovar/ (Spain / 107 minutes)
- Campo Di Battaglia** directed by Gianni Amelio/ (Italy / 103 minutes)
- Leurs Enfants Apres Eux** directed by Ludovic Boukherma, Zoran Boukherma/ (France / 144 minutes)
- The Brutalist** directed by Brady Corbet/ (UK / 215 minutes)
- Jouer Avec Le Feu** directed by Delphine Coulin, Muriel Coulin/ (France / 110 minutes)
- Vermiglio** directed by Maura Delpero/ (Italy, France, Belgium / 119 minutes)
- Iddu (Sicilian Letters)** directed by Fabio Grassadonia, Antonio Piazza/ (Italy, France / 122 minutes)
- Queer** directed by Luca Guadagnino/ (Italy, USA / 135 minutes)
- Kjaerlighet (LOVE)** directed by Dag Johan Haugerud/ (Norway / 119 minutes)
- April** directed by Dea Kulumbegashvili/ (Georgia, France, Italy / 134 minutes)
- The Order** directed by Justin Kurzel/ (Canada / 116 minutes)
- Maria** directed by Pablo Larrain/ (Italy, Germany, USA / 123 minutes)
- Trois Amies** directed by Emmanuel Mouret/ (France / 118 minutes)
- El Jockey (Kill the Jockey)** directed by Luis Ortega/ (Argentina, Spain / 97 minutes)
- Joker: Folie A Deux** directed by Todd Phillips/ (USA / 138 minutes)
- Babygirl** directed by Halina Reijn/ (USA / 114 minutes)
- Ainda Estou Aqui (I'm Still Here)** directed by WALTER SALLES/ (Brazil, France / 135 minutes)
- Diva Futura** directed by Giulia Louise Steigerwalt/ (Italy / 128 minutes)
- Harvest** directed by Athina Rachel Tsangari/ (UK, Germany, Greece, France, USA / 131 minutes)
- Qing Chun Gui (Youth - Homecoming)** directed by WANG BING/ (France, Luxemburg, Netherlands / 152 minutes)
- Stranger Eyes** directed by Yeo Siew Hua/ (Singapore, Taipei, France, USA / 125 minutes). — AFP

independent films often exploring often subjects, including two documentaries about the Ukraine war - "Songs of Slow Burning Earth" by Ukrainian director Olha Zhurba and "Russians at War", in which Russian-Canadian filmmaker Anastasia Trofimova was embedded with a Russian army battalion in eastern Ukraine.

Director Amos Gitai's "Why War" is based on correspondence between two of the 20th century's brightest minds -

Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud - on the subject of war.

## Cult classic

With "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice", Burton fans get to revisit the madcap world of his 1988 cult classic 36 years later. The "Edward Scissorhands" director updates the oddball family drama centred on Lydia, played by Ryder, whose teenage daughter (Jenna Ortega) discovers a mystery in the attic, acciden-

tally unleashing mayhem once again on the Deetz household. When asked by a reporter whether another sequel about the prankish, irreverent ghoulish Beetlejuice could be on the cards, Burton joked: "Well, let's do the math." "It took 35 years (to do this sequel), I'll be over 100 (for a third). I guess it's possible - medical science these days - but I don't think so." — AFP



French actress and president of the jury Isabelle Huppert



(From left) US actor Willem Dafoe, Italian actress Monica Bellucci, US actor Justin Theroux, actress Catherine O'Hara, US actress Winona Ryder, US director Tim Burton, US actor Michael Keaton and US actress Jenna Ortega pose during the photocall of the opening film "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" on August 28, 2024 during the 81st International Venice Film Festival at Venice Lido. - AFP photos



Chinese actress Zhang Ziyi

## A new hope? France's Ubisoft banking on new 'Star Wars'

**L**aser pistols loaded, hover bikes revved up, lizard-faced aliens in the crosshairs - the latest "Star Wars" video game hits the shelves on Friday with its French publisher, Ubisoft, in need of a rescue mission. Or at least a new hope. The game maker has rolled out its priciest promotional campaign for "Star Wars Outlaws", after a topsy-turvy period that saw it slip into the red in 2022-2023 before returning to profit last year. "Ubisoft is a bit at a crossroads," said Charles Louis Planade, director of international operations at Midcap Partners advisory firm.

The firm has launched plenty of

games recently and "there haven't been any big failures but there haven't been any big successes either", he told AFP. The French firm has announced dozens of job losses this year alone as it struggles with an industry-wide downturn.

The lockdowns caused by the Covid pandemic led to a boom in video game sales, player numbers and engagement and with it came a flood of investment. But despite many firms continuing to make healthy profits, tech investors are looking elsewhere for quick returns, particularly to artificial intelligence or defense products. The slump has left Ubisoft and its competitors in need of hits.

## 'No mega-hit'

And Ubisoft is not stinting on the hype around "Outlaws", developed for more than four years by its Swedish subsidiary, Massive Entertainment. The group's first foray into the universe created by George Lucas, "Outlaws" is an open-world game featuring Kay Vess, a young outlaw who travels the

galaxy far away to pull off the heist of the century. Ubisoft's chief financial officer, Frederick Duguet, said in July he expected it to be "one of the biggest games, in terms of sales, in the industry this year and among our best sales ever". But gamers have been here be-

fore with Ubisoft.

While Planade said Ubisoft had "no big failures" in the past year, he quickly added a caveat - "Skull and Bones", a role-play pirate game that had taken seven years to develop. Before its release in February this



Attendees play Star Wars Outlaws at Ubisoft's Forward conference.

year, Ubisoft CEO Yves Guillemot had dubbed the pirate game "quadruple-A". But reviews were tepid and sales fell flat, with plenty of complaints about the hefty \$70 price tag. Planade said "Outlaws" would probably "do the job commercially". But he added that early feedback from specialist media outlets suggested it "wouldn't be a mega-hit". The review website Metacritic posted a score of 77 out of 100 for "Outlaws" on Tuesday, based on 64 reviews. The score is solid if not spectacular.

It puts "Outlaws" way ahead of "Skull and Bones" and one point ahead of "Assassin's Creed Mirage", last year's installment of what remains Ubisoft's most bankable franchise. The next episode, "Assassin's Creed Shadows", is due for release on November 15, and Planade said this would be "by far" the biggest release of the year for Ubisoft. Ultimately, he said Assassin's Creed was the franchise that would "work better and longer" than Star Wars. — AFP

## Sports

# Windies romp to T20 International series sweep over South Africa

## West Indies opener Shai Hope blast unbeaten 42 off 24 balls

**TAROUBA:** West Indies cruised to an eight-wicket victory over South Africa in a rain-disrupted match to complete a 3-0 T20 International series sweep on Tuesday. West Indies opener Shai Hope blasted an unbeaten 42 off 24 balls while Nicholas Pooran clubbed 35 off just 13 deliveries to lay the foundation for the hosts' victory at the Brian Lara Stadium in Tarouba.

After South Africa scored 108-4 off 13 overs, West Indies were left with a victory target of 116 under the Duckworth Lewis method.

The Caribbean side reached that total at a canter, finishing on 116-2 with 22 balls remaining. A whopping 82 runs from the West Indies total came from boundaries, with nine sixes and seven fours. Romario Shepherd was the man-of-the-match for West Indies after a tidy bowling spell that saw him finish with figures of 2-14 off two overs as South Africa's innings stalled.

The victory was sweet for a West Indies squad who were eliminated from the T20 World Cup by the South Africans in June. "To come and clean sweep the team which knocked us out of the World Cup was great," Shepherd said. West Indies skipper Roston Chase added: "We wanted to win the series 3-0. In a shortened game we want guys to go and play their natural game. The guys came out and played brilliantly."

South Africa captain Aiden Markram, who chipped in with 20 off 12 balls in the Proteas' total, said his team had room for improvement. "Tough one today," Markram said. "Probably got the tougher of the conditions. That being said, we can improve as a team. It's going to take a little bit of time; there's a bit we can take from it but it's never great to lose." — AFP



**TAROUBA:** West Indies team pose with the trophy as they celebrate winning the 3rd and final T20i match between West Indies and South Africa at Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Tarouba, Trinidad and Tobago. — AFP

## Summer Shooting Championship with PAS concludes

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** The Summer Shooting Championship for the outstanding in cooperation with Public Authority for Sport (PAS) concluded Tuesday evening at the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex. President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Eng. Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi in a statement to journalists said the support of the political leadership for the sport of shooting "enabled it to make many achievements".

He said the summer championship was a good opportunity to discover promising talents in the pistol and rifle shooting as well as archery. Eng. Al-Otaibi said 70 shooters participated in the three days championship which is the result of long training camp that was held at the club with large participation.

He appreciated the cooperation between the club and PAS to organize such sports event and pointed to the efforts of coaches and organizers from the club and PAS, which led to this success. Eng. Al-Otaibi said the club began its preparation for the launch of the 2024/2025 season which will be opened with HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, to be followed with the local championships, then the season will be concluded with the most important event which is HH the Amir International Shooting Grand Prix.

Meanwhile, Kuwait national team shooters are getting ready for the regional and international event pointing to the selection of shooter Mohammad Al-Daihani among the best 12 shooters to participate in the World Champions finals of the skeet event to be held in India in October. On his part PAS Deputy Director General for the Sports for all sector Hamid Al-Hazeem said PAS aimed out of this gathering to spread the culture of practicing societal non-competitive sport among society members.

He said this sports gathering that lasted for two months saw the participation of more than 200 youth of both genders allowed them to practice their preferred hobbies in shooting sport during summer, and thanked the shooting club for orga-

nizing the closing ceremony. Results of the tournament were as follows:

### 10 Meter Pistol-Men:

Faisal Abdulhameed Al-Qallaf, Ahmad Abdulredha Buhamad, Mohammad Jassim Al-Shimmari.

### 10 Meter Pistol-Women:

Haya Abdelhadi Al-Shabbal, Sheikha Saud Al-Hawsawi, Sarah Ahmad Al-Hajiri.

### 10 Meter Air Rifle-Men:

Marzouq Khalid Marzouq, Ali Yaqoub Al-Awadhi, Bader Nasser Al-Muhareb.

### 10 Meter Air Rifle-Women:

Jinan Hussein Mohammad, Salwa Mushari Marzouq, Farah Mohammad Al-Jufaira.

### Olympic Archery-Men:

Yousuf Yaqoub Marzouq, Abdulaziz Faisal Al-Shimmari.

### Olympic Archery-Women:

Ghaliya Adel Al-Khassab, Zahraa Abdulaziz Hindal, Dana Abdullah bin Nasser.

## Malan retires from international cricket

**LONDON:** Dawid Malan retired from international cricket on Wednesday, with the batsman saying his England career "has not been easy". Malan signed a 12-month central contract in October and was England's leading run-scorer in their woeful 50-over World Cup title defence in India in the weeks that followed.

But the left-hander, 37 next week, has not played for England since that showpiece tournament. Yet he was repeatedly criticized for being insufficiently aggressive at the crease in an era of dynamic white-ball hitting. Nevertheless, Malan is just one of two England batsmen, alongside Jos Buttler, to have scored hundreds in all three international formats — Tests, ODIs and T20s.

But Malan, a member of England's 2022 T20 World Cup-winning squad, has accepted now is the right time to call time on a seven-year international career of 22 Tests and 92 white-ball internationals. "It has been an incredible journey since July 2017," said Malan, born in England but brought up and educated in South Africa. "I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to play for England in all three formats.

"Cricket, like most sports, is an industry where almost everyone eventually retires wishing they had done that little bit more.

"Whether you've played 10 Tests or 100, many step away regretting not playing just one more, scoring a few more runs, or winning more trophies.

"Right now, as I retire from international cricket, I can say I am genuinely satisfied."

He added: "It has not been easy. It may be my nature, but for whatever reason, it has always seemed that I had something to prove and often felt as if I was playing for my place. "The pressure goes with the territory, but it does take a mental and physical toll. Even so, I look back with pride on what I have been able to achieve."

Malan, who amassed 4,416 runs for England across all formats, agreed a white-ball-only deal at English county Yorkshire earlier this year and could now spend most of his time on the global T20 franchise circuit.

England managing director Rob Key paid tribute to Malan's "pivotal" contributions. "Dawid Malan retires after an excellent international career marked by resilience and determination," said Key. The former England batsman added: "Early on, he had to fight for every opportunity, often facing some of the best teams in the world. His contributions were pivotal, particularly during the memorable (T20) World Cup victories in Australia, where he played an integral role in the team's success." — AFP



Winners seen with the officials.

## Bigger? Draw marks start of Champions League's new era

**MONACO:** A new era in European club football begins on Thursday when the draw takes place in Monaco for an expanded UEFA Champions League featuring a radically changed format. European football's governing body is selling what it describes as "a thrilling new future" for the game on the continent with more teams playing more matches, and more prize money on offer. UEFA needs to generate hype around the new format, because there is a risk — in the beginning at least — that fans will find it confusing compared to the old model.

For the last 21 years, the Champions League had consisted of a group stage in which 32 clubs were split into eight groups of four, each playing six games. The top two in each group qualified for the knockout phase.

The new version will feature 36 clubs with everyone playing eight matches, but all teams pooled together into one giant league rather than in groups. Clubs will still be split into four seeded pots of nine teams, with every participant given two opponents from each pot.

The top eight in the final ranking go through to the last 16, while the next 16 sides advance to an intermediate play-off round and the remainder go out. The new format was introduced against the backdrop

of the threat by Europe's biggest clubs to break away and form their own Super League. But UEFA are also hoping the format can be a solution to the problem of competitive imbalance in the sport which was making the group stage more predictable. "The new format will introduce a better competitive balance between all the teams, with the possibility for each team to play opponents of a similar competitive level throughout the league phase," UEFA say.

### Financial rewards

What the changes will certainly not address are concerns about too much football being played and damaging the quality as a result. The increasing demands on players, and the lack of rest as a result, were cited as reasons why many matches at Euro 2024 proved disappointing. The new Champions League, in a season which is also set to finish with the first expanded version of FIFA's Club World Cup, will feature a total of 144 games in the group stage, up from 96 before. The financial rewards are greater, however, with UEFA's total prize pot for the Champions League rising by about 25 percent to almost 2.5 billion euros (\$2.79 billion). The winners of the competition can pocket over 86 million euros just in prize money, not including bonuses of 700,000 euros for every point gained in the league phase or income from television. Real Madrid were the winners last season, raising the trophy for the sixth time in the last 11 years. The addition of Kylian Mbappe to their squad means they will hope to go all the way again, and emerge victorious in the final in Munich on May 31, next year. — AFP

## Taleban bans 'violent' mixed martial arts

**KABUL:** Afghanistan's Taleban government has banned mixed martial arts (MMA), believing it to be un-Islamic, its sports authority said in a statement on Wednesday. The order was passed down by Afghanistan's morality police in the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice after an investigation into the sport's compliance with Islamic law, or sharia, the statement and local media said.

"It was found that the sport is problematic with respect to sharia and it has many aspects which are contradictory to the teachings of Islam," the Taleban government sports authority said in a statement sent to AFP. "That's why this decision has been made to ban mixed martial arts in Afghanistan."

A sports authority official told local media MMA was banned in part because it was considered too violent and posed the risk of injury or death. The Taleban authorities returned to power in 2021, implementing a strict interpretation of Islamic law. They recently ratified a morality law formalizing many rules on behavior and dress, including that men must not wear shorts above the knee. Martial arts are popular sports in Afghanistan. Four of the 11 Afghans who competed at the Paris Games, on either the national or the Refugee Olympic teams, were martial arts athletes. — AFP



**LONDON:** England's Dawid Malan celebrates his half-century during the third One Day International (ODI) cricket match between England and New Zealand at The Oval in London on September 13, 2023. Dawid Malan retired from international cricket. — AFP

Sports

# Royals pull even with Guardians in AL Central

## Tigers extend win streak, hand Angels 6th straight setback

**CLEVELAND:** Paul DeJong hit a two-run homer as the surging Kansas City Royals won their third straight over host Cleveland, prevailing 6-1 on Tuesday to move into a first-place tie with the Guardians atop the American League Central. Four Kansas City relievers retired the final 15 Cleveland hitters in order. James McArthur (5-5) got credit for the win. The Guardians got their lone run in the fourth. Carlos Hernandez issued a two-out walk to David Fry, who went to second on Daniel Schneemann's base hit and scored via Lane Thomas' seeing-eye single. Royals starter Michael Lorenzen departed in the second inning with a left hamstring strain apparently sustained while covering first base on a ground ball. He had been 2-0 with a 1.99 ERA in four starts since being acquired from the Texas Rangers.

### Tigers 6, Angels 2

Kerry Carpenter homered and drove in three runs as host Detroit extended its winning streak to five games by defeating Los Angeles in a game delayed 2 hours, 45 minutes by inclement weather. Jake Rogers and Riley Greene also homered for the Tigers. Brant Hurter (2-1) tossed five innings of two-run ball in his first career start. Jason Foley got the last out with two runners on to pick up his 18th save. Taylor Ward scored and knocked in a run for the Angels, who have lost six straight. Los Angeles starter Johnny Cueto (0-2) gave up six runs in five innings.

### Orioles 3, Dodgers 2

Ramon Urias hit a go-ahead two-run home run in the fifth inning and Baltimore opened a three-game series between two of the top teams in the major leagues with a win in Los Angeles. Ryan O'Hearn also hit a home run for the Orioles, who are 19-18 since the All-Star break and pulled within a game of the first-place New York Yankees in the American League East. Shohei Ohtani had two hits and a run for the Dodgers, while Miguel Rojas and Teoscar Hernandez each drove in a run. In his fifth start since joining Los Angeles at the trade deadline, right-hander Jack Flaherty (10-6) gave up three runs on six hits over six innings. He walked two and struck out five.

### Mets 8, Diamondbacks 3

Sean Manaea matched his season high of 11 strikeouts while tossing 6 2/3 solid innings to help New York beat Arizona in Phoenix. Pete Alonso homered. Jeff McNeil had two RBIs and Brandon Nimmo had three hits as New York won for the seventh time in 11 games. The Mets are three games behind the Atlanta Braves for the National League's final wild-card spot. Manaea (10-5)

served up two homers in the seventh inning after allowing just one hit over the first six innings. Overall, he gave up three runs and four hits while issuing no walks. Lourdes Gurriel Jr. hit a solo homer and Corbin Carroll had a two-run shot for the Diamondbacks, who lost for just the seventh time in their past 31 games. The Diamondbacks are in a virtual tie for the top wild-card spot in the NL with the San Diego Padres. Brandon Pfaadt (8-7) was charged with eight runs (six earned) and eight hits over 4 2/3 innings. He struck out six and walked one.

### Rays 3, Mariners 2

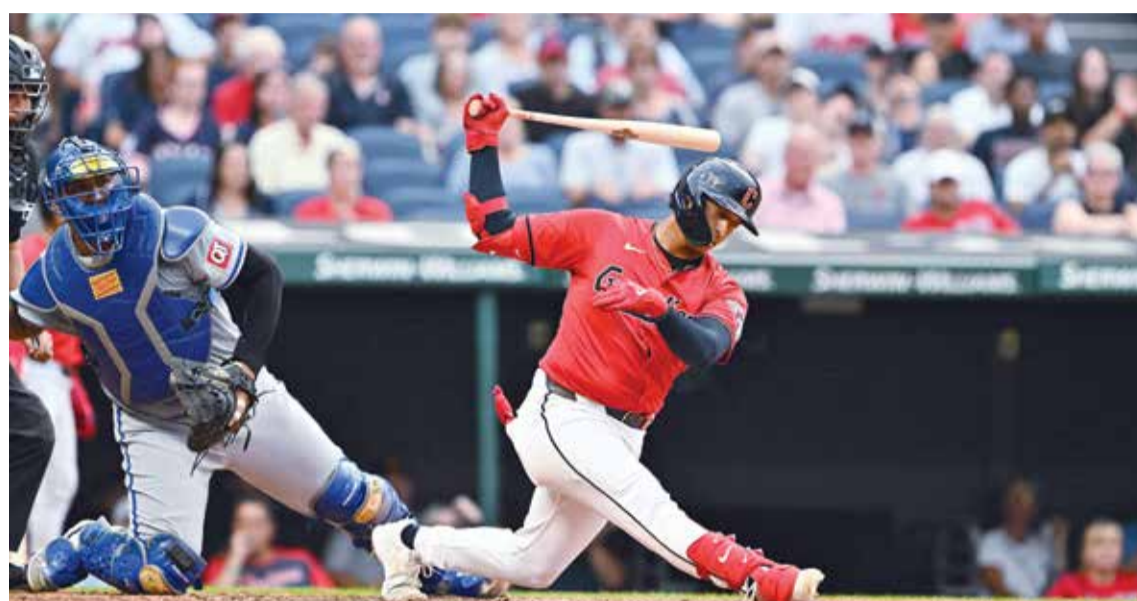
Jose Siri hit a go-ahead two-run homer with two outs in the seventh inning as Tampa Bay won in Seattle. Yandy Diaz added a solo shot in the eighth for the Rays, who won for just the second time in their past six games. Rays reliever Edwin Uceta (2-0) got the victory and Manuel Rodriguez worked the ninth for his second save. The Mariners lost for the second time in five games under new manager Dan Wilson and remained 3 1/2 games behind the first-place Houston Astros in the American League West. Mariners reliever JT Chargois (2-1) took the loss after Logan Gilbert struck out a season-high 10 in six shutout innings. Gilbert gave up four hits without walking a batter.

### Marlins 9, Rockies 8

Jesus Sanchez hit a three-run homer to cap a five-run ninth inning and Miami rallied to beat Colorado in Denver. It marked the second time this season that Miami scored five runs in the ninth against Colorado. The Marlins first did it at home on April 30 to force extra innings, and they went on to win that game 7-6. Sanchez finished with two hits and four RBIs. Kyle Stowers also went deep and added a triple and Griffin Conine tripled and doubled in his first career start. George Soriano (1-1) got the win, while Calvin Faucher picked up his fourth save of the year. The ninth-inning rally by Miami spoiled a big night for Rockies shortstop Ezequiel Tovar, who homered twice, doubled and drove in four runs. Charlie Blackmon and Sam Hilliard also homered, and Jacob Stallings had two hits.

### Braves 8, Twins 6 (10 innings)

Ramon Laureano went 3-for-5 with a double and two RBIs and Atlanta outlasted Minnesota in 10 innings in Minneapolis. Michael Harris II went 2-for-5 with a homer and two RBIs for Atlanta, which won for the eighth time in the past 10 games. Marcell Ozuna finished 2-for-4 with a double and a pair of RBIs. Braves right-hander Raisel Iglesias (4-1) pitched 1 1/3 innings of scoreless relief for the win. Trevor Larnach went 3-for-6 with a



CLEVELAND: Bo Naylor #23 of the Cleveland Guardians strikes out to end the second inning against the Kansas City Royals at Progressive Field in Cleveland, Ohio. — AFP

double and three RBIs to lead the Twins. Matt Wallner, Edouard Julien and Jose Miranda added one RBI apiece for Minnesota, which lost its third game in a row. Reliever Jhoan Duran (6-8) took the loss, giving up four runs (three earned) on four hits in one-third inning.

### Padres 7, Cardinals 5

Jake Cronenworth drove in the decisive run to lift visiting San Diego past St. Louis. Manny Machado hit a home run as the Padres won for the fourth time in five games. Luis Arraez went 3-for-5 with an RBI and a run. Padres starter Dylan Cease allowed four runs on seven hits in 4 1/3 innings. He struck out four and walked four. Yuki Matsui (4-2) got the victory and Tanner Scott claimed his 20th save. Paul Goldschmidt went 3-for-3 with a two-run homer for the Cardinals, who lost for the third time in four games. Cardinals starter Miles Mikolas allowed four runs on six hits in 5 2/3 innings. He struck out three and walked one. Reliever John King (3-3) took the loss.

### Giants 5, Brewers 4

Mike Yastrzemski hit a go-ahead two-run homer in the seventh inning as visiting San Francisco rode the long ball to a comeback victory over Milwaukee. Grant McCray and Matt Chapman each hit solo homers for

the Giants. Logan Webb's streak of not allowing a home run ended at 43 1/3 innings. He gave up four runs on four hits in five-plus innings, including a two-run shot to Willy Adames in the sixth. Camilo Doval (5-1) finished the sixth for the victory, working into and out of a bases-loaded jam. Rookie Jackson Chourio also hit a two-run homer for Milwaukee. Starter Tobias Myers lasted five innings and permitted three runs on three hits and a walk, with four strikeouts.

### Nationals 4, Yankees 2

Patrick Corbin pitched six scoreless innings. Andres Chaparro and Jose Tena hit back-to-back homers and Washington beat visiting New York. Dylan Crews, playing his second major league game, had the first two hits of his career for the Nationals. Corbin (4-12), who earned career victory No. 100 in his previous start, allowed two hits and two walks while striking out six on Tuesday. He won consecutive starts for the first time this year. Washington prevailed despite going 0-for-10 with runners in scoring position. Aaron Judge had a double and a walk for the Yankees, who had won five of their past six. Gerrit Cole (5-3) allowed three runs on six hits over five innings. He walked one and fanned seven. Cole came into the game 2-0 with a 1.17 ERA in four starts this month. — Reuters

## Jusufovic - from Bosnian minefield to Paralympic gold

**SARAJEVO:** Ermin Jusufovic still remembers the moment he woke up in a hospital bed in 1997, over a year after the end of the war in Bosnia. He heard a voice, his father's voice, and the words which changed his life: "You don't have your leg anymore."

Twenty-seven years later, Jusufovic, 43, is one of the pillars of the Bosnian sitting volleyball team. A gold medalist in Athens and London, he has two silvers and a bronze in his treasure chest. Now the MVP of the 2022 World Cup is aiming for a sixth paralympic medal in Paris.

It has been quite a journey which began on May 19, 1997 in his village near Lukavac in the north-east of the country, a few days before his sixteenth birthday. Jusufovic was out ploughing in the fields with his mother and twin brother.

Instead of making a 30-metre detour to avoid a "suspect plot of land" that had been on the front line during the 1992-95 war, he decided to walk across it. "Something happened. I didn't realize it was an explosion," Jusufovic told AFP. "I fell to the ground and lay there motionless. I could smell black powder. A mine." Then came darkness.

### 'You must accept it'

Jusufovic was hardly the first to take a wrong step in a Bosnian field. According to official figures, post-

war mine accidents in the country have left more than 1,150 people injured and 624 dead. He was one of the relatively lucky ones.

When he came to in hospital his family was with him. "I asked my parents if my leg had been cut off," he says. "I knew it couldn't be saved, the way I'd seen it." "My mother stammered something. Then my father said: 'You don't have your leg anymore. You have to accept that sooner or later. You'll have to live with it.'"

"Then the tears came and all the other stuff you'd expect in the circumstances. For six months. "And then with the first prosthesis, the first tears of joy." That joy was followed some months later by another slice of luck when the coach of the local sitting volleyball club spotted him at a medical facility and invited him to a training session.

"I said okay, I'll drop in," says Jusufovic with a smile. "Then at home, I said to myself, no chance. It was inconceivable to be seen without a leg." He did not go that time but it had opened the door and after a meeting in a convalescent bath with Safet Alibasic, now his team-mate in the national team, he changed his mind.

Jusufovic decided to go with Alibasic to his first training session. That was in 1998. He remembers the sessions that followed as "difficult" and very physical but suddenly he was motivated. He exercised constantly at home, and lost 30 kilos in one year, honing his body to improve his game.

### 'The best version of myself'

Three years later, Jusufovic was in the national team that won the Eu-



SARAJEVO: Bosnia and Herzegovina's national sitting volleyball team gather before departure for Paris 2024 Paralympic Games at Sarajevo International Airport. — AFP

ropean Championships in Hungary. Since then, he has not missed a single major tournament as Bosnia emerged as the only genuine, consistent rival for Iran who remain the benchmark for the sport worldwide, with seven golds and two silvers in nine Paralympics.

Apart from their gold medals in 2004 and 2012, Bosnia have also won three world championships and 11 European titles. Iran and Bosnia will again be the favourites in Paris: they are in different pools and cannot meet before the semi-finals or the final.

Jusufovic is far from being the oldest in the squad but he has to balance his sporting career with a family life and a day job. The father

of two is working for the cantonal administration in Tuzla in the field of sport and youth.

But he has no regrets over how his 23-year sports career has panned out, especially as it has enabled him to travel the world, make friends and have a family whose support is "crucial" to him.

"There were times when I thought about giving up. I wondered if I needed this," he admits. "But one fact I'm certain of: I'm the best version of myself on the sitting volleyball court. It's what keeps me going. "Once I get to training, I never ask myself why I came. "Sometimes I say: I'm glad I lost my leg." — AFP

## Discus great Dan Greaves eyes seventh Paralympic medal

**PARIS:** Dan Greaves once competed in the same team as British athletics legend Mo Farah but whilst the latter is now retired the discus thrower is bidding for a national record-extending seventh successive Paralympics medal in Paris.

At "the grand old age of 41" and with a gold, two silvers and three bronzes he embodies the advice he was once given by a coach "success isn't final, failure isn't fatal, it's the courage to continue that counts".

Greaves competes in the F64 category — for field athletes with moderately affected movement in one or both legs or the absence of limbs. And he is attempting to dethrone Jeremy Campbell of the United States, his great rival and the man who he told AFP along with him has taken the event to new heights.

However, in 2001 he was selected along with four-time Olympic champion Farah and Goldie Sayers, who was to win javelin Olympic bronze in Beijing in 2008, to take on the United States in a Under 20 international match.

It came a year after he had won silver in the Sydney Paralympics, qualifying to compete due to suffering from the foot deformity talipes (club foot). "I speak to Goldie now and again," he told AFP. "People like to say they competed with the first Paralympian to appear in an able bodied competition for Britain.

"Some of that team say to me they cannot believe 'you are still going' when in their early 20s they gave up after being a junior. "I look back and see they had a different life for the last 20 years which is fine as everyone picks their own path. "This sport has been very kind to me. I have made friends and been up against some tough competitors. "It has kept me motivated." — 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

## Change of Name

**I, Zahra D/o Nadeem Kaiser Abdullah Syed & Shaheen Nadeem, holder of Passport No. V7778233 do hereby change my name to Zahra (as given name) Nadeem Syed (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Zahra Nadeem Syed and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#6159 29/08/2024)**

**I, Kuntal Bhattarcharjee, holder of Indian Passport No. N2358730 having permanent address Halisahar, Khasbati S S Lane P.O - Hazinagar, North 24 Parganas Pin: 743135, West Bengal, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: (given name) Kuntal and (surname) Bhattarcharjee. (#6158 27/08/2024)**

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## Olmo clinches Barca comeback win at Rayo in La Liga on debut

Victory guarantees Barca will top table after third round of matches



MADRID: Barcelona's Brazilian forward #11 Raphinha challenges Rayo Vallecano's Spanish goalkeeper #01 Daniel Cardenas during the Spanish league football match between Rayo Vallecano de Madrid and FC Barcelona. — AFP

MADRID: Dani Olmo celebrated his delayed Barcelona debut with a goal to seal a 2-1 comeback victory at Rayo Vallecano in La Liga on Tuesday. The Spain playmaker's 82nd-minute strike helped Barcelona claim their third win from three matches under new coach Hansi Flick at the start of the season.

Barca were unable to register Olmo with La Liga after signing him from RB Leipzig until earlier in the day and he made an instant impact after being brought on at Rayo's Vallecas stadium. Unai Lopez sent Rayo ahead against a flat Barca in the first half but Olmo came on at the break and energized the Catalans, who levelled through Pedri before the new arrival struck the winner.

"(I've been waiting to play) since I arrived, looking forward to the first game, the debut, and what better way (to mark it)," Olmo told DAZN. "I was really looking forward to it, I felt physically ready to play, and it finally happened today."

"I am very happy to have made my debut and helped the team." In the final stages 17-year-old defensive midfielder Marc Bernal was taken off after appearing to twist his knee and Flick was worried about the youngster, who has impressed at the start of the season.

"It's a sad victory because Marc Bernal is injured and it looks not so good," said the German coach. "We have to wait until tomorrow to wait and

see how heavy it is. "We win, it's OK but when you see the dressing room nobody is happy."

Rayo Vallecano, celebrating their centenary year, signed former Real Madrid playmaker James Rodriguez earlier in the week and he watched on from the presidential box as the capital club started strongly.

The hosts attacked with intent and got their reward when Jorge De Frutos drove forward on the right and crossed for Lopez, who finished with a low effort at the near post. Rayo minimised Barcelona's threat in the first half except for the odd occasion teenage star Lamine Yamal managed to work his magic.

Flick hooked Ferran Torres at half-time and threw on Olmo for his debut, after he had missed their first two league matches waiting for Barcelona to get their finances in order to complete his registration. With Olmo entering the fray he took up a central attacking midfield position, with Brazil winger Raphinha restored to the left flank.

The former Barca academy player quickly began to make his mark on proceedings and the Catalans started to generate chances. Polish veteran Robert Lewandowski should have levelled but could not get a solid touch close to goal on Raphinha's dangerous cross.

Raphinha whistled a free-kick narrowly wide and Olmo smashed a 30-yard drive against the crossbar. Barca made the pressure count and Pedri

levelled on the hour mark after exchanging passes with Raphinha and sweeping home.

### 'A good goal'

Barca thought they had a second 10 minutes later, when Yamal's shot was saved and Lewandowski worked room to tuck the rebound home. However the goal was controversially disallowed after a VAR referral when the referee deemed Jules Kounde guilty of a foul, when he made light contact with Pep Chavarria's foot in the build-up. The visitors did not lick their wounds for too long, maintaining the pressure, and Olmo finished with aplomb after Yamal set him up. "I'm always a player who looks to score, Lamine found me well and I finished well, a good goal, I'm very happy," added Olmo.

Barcelona played with an energy in the second half which has often been missing late in games in recent years, with the team appearing notably fitter under Flick. The victory guarantees Barca will top the table after the third round of matches, despite various injury issues affecting important players including Gavi, Frenkie de Jong and Ronald Araujo.

Bernal has started all three of Barcelona's games this season and the club will hope he does not join the list of long-term absentees. Champions Real Madrid visit Las Palmas on Thursday while Atletico Madrid host Espanyol on Wednesday, among other fixtures. — AFP

## Kane receives European Golden Shoe in Munich

MUNICH: Bayern Munich and England striker Harry Kane received the Golden Shoe award as the highest goalscorer in a European football league at a ceremony in the Bavarian capital on Tuesday. Kane scored 36 goals during the previous Bundesliga season, more than any other player in Europe. Despite being the top Premier League scorer three times, Kane had never won the award. "It's a fantastic feeling," Kane said. "The award is for everyone. Without you, I wouldn't be standing here today."

"I feel good and am looking forward to the new season. I feel a new energy. "I'm very proud to receive this award." The prize was the latest won by the striker in a long list of personal awards, but Kane is still yet to win a team title in his career.

Kane went trophyless in his debut year in Munich, the first time Bayern finished a season without silverware since 2012. He told reporters "I want to continue on as I started last season, but it is important to win titles. We want to achieve success as a team."

Kane's tally of 36 goals in 32 Bayern appearances is just five shy of the single-season record held by former Bayern striker Robert Lewandowski of 41. The forward said Lewandowski's record was too far off to consider now.

"Once we get to April and we're a little bit closer, maybe it's something we can talk about, but for now it's just taking it game by game, trying to help the team by scoring goals. "But also if we're winning and I'm not scoring goals I'm not going to worry."

This season's Champions League final will be held in Munich and Kane told reporters "we have to be there".

The England captain was handed the award by Bayern CEO Jan-Christian Dreesen, who praised Kane's character since making the move to Munich one season ago. — AFP



Harry Kane

## Sinner, Alcaraz survive US Open wobbles as Osaka weeps on return

NEW YORK: Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz survived US Open first round wobbles on Tuesday to stay on course for a semi-final showdown as two-time champion Naomi Osaka made a tearful and colorful return to Flushing Meadows. World number one Sinner fought back from a set and break down to defeat 140th-ranked Mackenzie McDonald in his first match since being embroiled in a doping test controversy.

Alcaraz, the third seed and 2022 champion in New York, overcame a second set blip to defeat 186th-ranked qualifier Li Tu of Australia 6-2, 4-6, 6-3, 6-1. Italian Sinner battled to a 2-6, 6-2, 6-1, 6-2 win over American opponent McDonald on Arthur Ashe Stadium, racing away with 18 of the last 22 games. The 23-year-old was returning to action just a week after it was revealed he had failed two drug tests in March. However, he escaped a lengthy ban when officials decided he wasn't at fault for the presence of banned anabolic agent clostebol in his system.

"The response from fans, I feel it has been great, also throughout when the news came out, in the practice sessions, there was a lot of support," said Sinner. "It's still a little bit not easy. You have to go through day by day." Alcaraz, who won the first of his four Grand Slam titles in New York in 2022, opened the night session against Tu who hasn't won a match on the main tour this year.



NEW YORK: Spain's Carlos Alcaraz returns the ball to Australia's Li Tu during their men's singles first round match on day two of the US Open tennis tournament. — AFP

### 'He surprised me'

However, Tu thrilled the crowd as he went about his task of facing a player who is attempting to become only the third man in the modern era to win the French Open, Wimbledon and US Open in the same year. After being outplayed in the opening set, Tu levelled the tie on a fifth set point in the second. But Alcaraz crushed any hint of a shock result by running away with the clash to record his 15th successive Grand Slam match win.

"He surprised me a little bit. In the first set, he was nervous but after that he grew into it and played great tennis," said the Spanish star. Naomi Osaka, who missed last year's tournament after giving birth to her daughter Shai, stunned 10th seed Jelena Ostapenko. Former world number one Osaka, now ranked 88, came through 6-3, 6-2 for her first top 10 win

in four years. The Japanese star crunched nine aces in her 19 winners and committed just five unforced errors to her opponent's 21.

Her tennis was as striking as her outfit. Osaka arrived on court with a brightly-colored, giant bow on the back of her jacket and a frilly skirt over her playing dress. To complete the ensemble, the 26-year-old attached small bows to the heels of both shoes.

"Last year I was watching Coco (Gauff) play and I so badly wanted to step on these courts again," said a tearful Osaka, a four-time major winner.

"I didn't know if I could ... just to win this match and just to be in this atmosphere means so much to me." World number one and 2022 champion Iga Swiatek defeated 104th-ranked Kamilla Rakhimova after having to save three set points in the second set.

French Open champion Swiatek, chasing a second New York title to add to her four triumphs in Paris, saw off the Russian lucky loser 6-4, 7-6 (8/6) to extend her season-leading record to 54 match wins. However, it was an unconvincing display by the Pole who committed 41 unforced errors.

Fifth-seeded Daniil Medvedev, who shattered Novak Djokovic's dream of a calendar Grand Slam by claiming the 2021 US Open, went through with a four-set victory over Dujan Lajovic. Greek 11th seed Stefanos Tsitsipas, who has never made the second week at the tournament, was stunned 7-6 (7/5), 4-6, 6-3, 7-5 by Australia's Thanasi Kokkinakis.

Stan Wawrinka, the 2016 champion, failed in his bid to become only the third man in last 50 years to win a main draw match at the tournament at the age of 39 or over. Wawrinka slipped to a 6-4, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 loss at the hands of Italian qualifier Mattia Bellucci. — AFP