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## US, UK pile pressure on Zionists

Biden says Bibi not doing enough • London bans some arms exports to Zionist entity

### Amir congratulates Al-Rajhi on winning Paralympic bronze

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Monday a cable to Faisal Al-Rajhi, congratulating him on winning the bronze medal at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. Commending the honorable achievement, HH the Amir wished the athlete further success. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah also sent congratulatory cables to Rajhi. Rajhi won the bronze medal in the men's 5000m race - T54, the first medal for Kuwait at the ongoing Paralympic Games. — KUNA



HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

GAZA: Pressure mounted Monday on Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a major strike was held and US President Joe Biden said he was not doing enough to secure the release of Gaza captives, while Britain suspended some arms export licenses with the Zionist entity. Zionist forces killed at least 48 Palestinians in the past 24 hours across the Gaza Strip, Palestinian officials said on Monday, while medics conducted a second day of polio vaccinations for children in the enclave.

Zionists were gripped by grief and fury after the military said Sunday the bodies of six captives were recovered from a tunnel in southern Gaza. A strike announced by the main trade union seeking a deal to secure the remaining captives' release had brought parts of the country to a standstill, although some cities were largely unaffected. But a Zionist court on Monday ordered an immediate end to the strike called by the Histadrut union, calling it "politically motivated".

Alongside the surging domestic anger, diplomatic pressure has also grown, with the US president on Monday delivering some of his strongest criticism of

Netanyahu. Asked by reporters if he thought Netanyahu was doing enough on the issue, Biden responded: "No." The US president was meeting with his negotiators who said they were "very close" to a final proposal to be presented to the Zionist entity and Hamas.

Responding to Biden's comments, senior Zionist sources said it was "remarkable" that Biden was pressuring Netanyahu over a hostage deal rather than Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar. Senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said Biden's criticism of Netanyahu was "American recognition that Netanyahu was responsible for undermining efforts to reach a deal". He said the group would respond positively to a proposal that could secure a permanent ceasefire and full Zionist withdrawal from the Palestinian enclave. Britain said Monday it would suspend some arms exports to the Zionist entity, citing a "clear risk" that they could be used in a serious breach of international humanitarian law. The announcement follows a review by the foreign ministry into the arms sales given concerns about the Zionist entity's conduct of its war in the Gaza Strip.

Continued on Page 6

### Saudi tanker, another oil ship hit in Red Sea

LONDON/ATHENS: A Saudi-owned crude tanker and a Panama-flagged oil ship were attacked on Monday in the Red Sea off Yemen, two sources familiar with the matter said, although it was unclear if the vessels were hit by Yemeni Houthi rebels. The sources said the Saudi-flagged Amjad and Panama-flagged Blue Lagoon I were sailing in waters near to each other when they were hit, although the tankers were able to continue their voyages with no major damage assessed or any casualties.

The Amjad's owner, Saudi national shipping group Bahri, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The supertanker has a maximum capacity of 2 million barrels. The Greek manager of the Blue Lagoon I, Sea Trade Marine SA, was not immediately available for comment. The Suezmax tanker has a maximum capacity of 1 million barrels.

One of the sources said the Amjad was unlikely to have been directly targeted. Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter, has watched with alarm as Houthi missiles have been fired over its territory to target ships in the Red Sea. The Houthis first launched aerial drone and missile strikes on the waterway in November in what they say is solidarity with Palestinians in the Gaza war. In more than 70 attacks, they have sunk two vessels, seized another and killed at least three seafarers.

The Joint Maritime Information Center (JMIC), run by international naval forces to track Houthi attacks, said three ballistic missile attacks hit the Blue Lagoon I tanker on Monday 70 nautical miles northwest of the northern Yemeni port of Saleef. "JMIC assesses that M/V BLUE LAGOON I was targeted due to other vessels within its company structure making recent port calls in (the Zionist entity)," it said in a report. "All crew on board are safe. The vessel sustained minimal damage but does not require assistance." — Reuters

### Bahrain to tax large MNCs minimum 15%

MANAMA: Bahrain is to introduce a tax on large multinational firms for the first time, the kingdom's official news agency reported Sunday, bringing the Gulf state in line with efforts towards a global minimum corporate rate. Beginning in January 2025, the measure will place a minimum tax of 15 percent on revenues

over €750 million (\$830 million) generated in the country, the Bahrain News Agency (BNA) reported.

The move aligns Bahrain with the standards of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which spearheaded the global minimum 15-percent rate agreed to in principle by around 140 countries in 2021. The BNA reported that the tax "builds on Bahrain's proactive engagement with the OECD, dating back to 2018" and "demonstrates its international commitment to global cooperation and its dedication to fostering a fair and level playing field in international taxation".

A small oil producer and non-OPEC member, Bahrain has sought in recent years to diversify its revenues, which, like its Gulf neighbors, is largely dependent on hydrocarbons. The United Arab Emirates, long considered a tax haven and the regional headquarters of many multinationals, last year began taxing the profits of companies worth more than 375,000 dirhams (roughly €91,500) at 9 percent. Oman and Kuwait already have a 15-percent tax rate on foreign companies.

"Bahrain is notable because it has no corporation income tax currently and is going straight to OECD compliance," Justin Alexander, director

of the Khalij Economics consultancy told AFP. Manama, which is home to the operations of multinationals such as Amazon Web Services, Microsoft and Pepsi had opposed corporate taxes up until a few years ago "because of concerns about competitiveness", Alexander said.

"But its persistent fiscal deficits mean that the benefits of the income it will generate should outweigh any negative competitive implications," he added. According to the OECD, the introduction of a worldwide minimum corporate tax rate should generate \$220 billion in additional annual revenue for governments. — AFP

### US seizes plane of Venezuelan leader Maduro

WASHINGTON: The United States on Monday seized Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's plane in the Dominican Republic and flew it to Florida, saying it acted over violation of US sanctions. United States officials moved to take the aircraft, a Dassault Falcon 900EX private jet used by Maduro and members of his government, with the Justice Department saying the jet was "illegally purchased".

"The Justice Department seized

an aircraft we allege was illegally purchased for \$13 million through a shell company and smuggled out of the United States for use by Nicolas Maduro and his cronies," Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement. Aircraft tracking site Flight Radar 24 showed that the jet flew from Santo Domingo to Fort Lauderdale on Monday morning. The US says that in late 2022 and early 2023, individuals affiliated with Maduro allegedly used a Caribbean-based shell company to conceal their involvement in the illegal purchase of the jet. The aircraft was then illegally exported from the United States to Venezuela through the Caribbean in April 2023.

Continued on Page 6

### No screens for toddlers, Sweden tells parents

STOCKHOLM: Toddlers should not be allowed to watch screens at all, Sweden told parents on Monday. Children under the age of two should be kept away from digital media and television completely, the country's Public Health Agency said. Kids between the ages of two and five should be limited to a maximum of one hour of screen time a day, it said in new recommendations, while those aged six to 12 should spend no more than an hour or two a day in front of a screen.

Teenagers aged 13 to 18 should be limited to two to three hours per day, the

agency said. "For too long, smartphones and other screens have been allowed to enter every aspect of our children's lives," Public Health Minister Jakob Forssmed told reporters. The minister said that Swedish teens aged 13 to 16 spend six and a half hours a day on average in front of their screens, outside of school hours.

Forssmed said that didn't leave "a lot of time for communal activities, physical activity or adequate sleep", and lamented a Swedish "sleep crisis" noting that more than half of 15-year-olds did not get enough sleep. The health agency also recommended that kids not use screens before going to bed and that phones and tablets be kept out of the bedroom at night. It cited research showing that excessive screen use can lead to poor sleep, depression and body dissatisfaction. Sweden's government has previously said it is looking at a ban on smartphones in primary schools. — AFP



CARAVAS: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro gestures during a rally on Aug 28, 2024. — AFP



A child watches a screen in this recent illustrative photo. — AFP



# NBK shares protection tips, warns of phishing scams

## Bank promotes 'Let's Be Aware' banking awareness campaign

- Customers urged to reject authentication requests from untrusted sources
- Users should log out of online or mobile banking once transactions are completed

**KUWAIT:** Underscoring its dedication to raising community awareness and active participation in enhancing financial literacy and inclusion among all people, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues promoting the "Let's Be Aware" campaign introduced by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with local banks and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

In this context, NBK intensifies awareness by sharing educational material including video clips, text messages, and tips across its social media platforms and other digital channels, as well as re-posting CBK's communications. This aims to raise awareness among all people and familiarize them with different fraud schemes and the required precautions to steer clear of banking scams, social media hacking, clone websites impersonating official entities, and other important topics.

In this campaign, NBK highlights phishing scams attempting to steal personal or banking information, where e-mails are typically sent from suspicious domains using the logo of well-known organizations such as banks, telecom or big companies, so that the user cannot distinguish between real and fake e-mails.

Therefore, the bank shares key tips to follow when dealing with e-mails, including always verifying that the e-mail sender is from a legitimate organization, as well as checking the grammar and spelling in the e-mail, as many phishing e-mails are poorly written, which, of course, would not be sent by an official, well-known organization. It also urges customers to ignore those suspicious e-mails to avoid falling victim to fraud.

The bank also advises customers to beware of links included in e-mails, by checking the source be-

fore clicking on them, verifying the phone number, hovering over the links to see if they are actually being directed to the right website, and always rejecting authentication requests from untrusted sources, especially if they appear urgent. It also called customers to avoid saving any sensitive information like debit/credit card number on the phone, writing down the PIN on the card or sharing it with any other person, which also applies to OTP. It also advises customers to log out of online or mobile banking once transactions are completed.

Additionally, it affirms that it will never ask customers for personal information via e-mail, SMS or phone calls, warning them of responding to such scam messages trying to obtain their banking information to steal their money. NBK employs its strong customer communication capabilities as well as all its digital channels, which are the most



popular among all Kuwaiti banks, to support the Central Bank's endeavors to protect customers and the national economy.

It is worth mentioning that NBK is a key supporter and partner in all CBK's campaigns and initiatives aiming to increase financial and banking awareness among different segments of society. As a leading financial institution in Kuwait, NBK frequently organizes various activities to raise awareness on all topics related to the banking sector, as well as various training courses for its employees to enhance their experience in the areas of combating fraud and financial crime.

## Officials inspect gold market to enforce rules

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Commerce and Industry affirmed that all commercial activities related to gold, jewelry, and precious metals are subject to strict control procedures in accordance with applicable regulations and legislation, noting that continuous inspection tours are conducted in the gold market to apply the highest standards of quality and integrity. The official spokesman for the Ministry of Commerce, Abdullah Al-Harz, denied in a press statement on Monday the news circulating on social media about the seizure of quantities of gold bearing forged stamps, explaining that it is an old incident dating back to 2021 and that necessary measures were taken at the time.

Al-Harz added that the joint team between the Commercial Control Department and the Precious Metals Department continuously conducts inspection tours in the gold market to apply the highest standards of quality and integrity, in addition to ensuring the accuracy of the scales used and adherence to the required conditions in the buying and selling processes for consumers.

He urged the consumer to obtain an invoice for purchasing gold from the store that shows the weight, carat, and value in detail, after which he can go to the Precious Metals Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to examine the gold to verify what is written on the invoice. He stressed that the Ministry of Commerce will not be lenient in enforcing the law to ensure the protection of consumer rights and achieve transparency in the market to enhance market control and ensure compliance with laws. — KUNA

## MoE participates in Gulf Hackathon competition in Bahrain

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait, represented by the Ministry of Education and under the supervision of General Supervisor of Computing, on Monday participated in the Gulf Hackathon competition to employ artificial intelligence in public education. The Hackathon, organized by the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, is in its second edition in the Kingdom of Bahrain. It is scheduled from September 2 to 7.

This participation came in light of the Ministry of Education's keenness to refine the talents of distinguished students and encourage them to participate in local, regional and international competitions and within the framework of the Ministry's objectives. Ministry of Education official, Mona Awad, expressed her delight to participate in the Gulf Hackathon and wished success to all participating students. The finalists for the Hackathon are five students, Hawra Al-Sharif, Alaa Al-Shammari, Lulwa AlSaeed, Ahmad Al-Rashidi and Abdul Wahab Haidar. — KUNA



Acting Deputy Director General for Labor Affairs at the Public Authority of Manpower, Musaed Al-Mutairi.



Officials take a group photo after the 10th meeting of the Committee of Undersecretaries of the Ministries of Labor in the GCC countries. — KUNA photos

## Forum reviews GCC strategic initiatives

**DOHA:** Acting Deputy Director General for Labor Affairs at the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM), Musaed Al-Mutairi, stressed on Monday the importance of participating in the 10th meeting of the Committee of Undersecretaries of Labor Ministries in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. Al-Mutairi told KUNA that the meeting, held in the Qatar capital, reviewed the GCC's strategic initiatives.

He added that the meeting's discussions focused on international cooperation and the Gulf framework to combat "forced labor" and "human trafficking" in the field of work, and the recommendations of the Undersecretaries Committee were submitted to the Committee of Labor Ministers. Al-Mutairi invited the participating delegations to attend the 11th meeting of the Committee of Undersecretaries of Labor Ministries in the GCC countries, which will be held next September, considering that Kuwait is the country that chairs the next session.

He pointed out that Tuesday will witness an honoring ceremony attended by the Ministers of Civil Service, Ministers of Labor, and Ministers of Social Affairs and Development in the GCC countries, where the former Director General of the Executive Office of the Council of Labor Ministers and the Council of Social Affairs Ministers and a number of distinguished companies from Kuwait will be honored.

The meeting was held in Doha with the participation of the Kuwaiti Public Authority of Manpower Assistant Undersecretary for Expatriate Labor Affairs, Sheikha Najwa bint Abdulrahman said in her opening speech that the annual meeting is an opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas so as to enhance joint work frameworks on common issues and identify best practices in this field. Sheikha Na-



The 10th meeting of the GCC Ministries of Social Affairs and Development Undersecretaries Committee.

jwa stressed the importance of working to unify efforts and coordinate positions of labor ministries in the GCC countries.

The meeting's agenda includes the strategy of the Committee of Ministers of Labor and International Cooperation, the United Nations principles on business and human rights, and the Gulf framework to combat forced labor and human trafficking. The meeting is being held at a time when "serious violations continue to be committed against workers in Palestine and the occupied Arab territories amid the great suffering they are subjected to as a result of the expansion of settlements and closures.

### Significance of ties

Meanwhile, Kuwait on Monday emphasized the significance of the 10th meeting of the GCC Ministries of Social Affairs and Development Undersecretaries Committee. Highlighting the importance of reinforcing continuous cooperation, coordination, and the exchange of expertise in social affairs among GCC countries, Dr Khaled Al-Ajmi, acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs, told

KUNA that the meeting's agenda includes discussions on the social development strategy and its initiatives within the GCC, as well as the joint charitable work plan for the GCC countries (2025-2030).

On his part, Assistant Undersecretary for Social Development Affairs at Qatar's Ministry of Social Development and Family Affairs, Fahad Al-Khayareen, noted that the meeting takes place during a period of rapid social and economic changes. He stressed the need to intensify efforts and align visions to address all challenges. Al-Khayareen added that previous committee meetings have underscored the crucial role of ongoing coordination among GCC countries in enhancing social stability and sustainable development.

The current agenda focuses on initiatives aimed at strengthening integration in social sectors across the GCC. A key topic of discussion is the social development strategy, which seeks to improve citizens' living standards and achieve comprehensive, balanced development. The meeting will review the progress made so far and consider the next steps necessary to meet the desired goals. — KUNA



Kuwait Red Crescent Society officials visit an aid project in Yemen. — KUNA photos



## KRCS expands efforts with developmental projects in Yemen

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) affirmed that its projects in Yemen reflected a bright image of Kuwaiti humanitarian efforts. Director General of KRCS, Abdulrahman Al-Oun, said

this to KUNA following the conclusion of the field team's inspection visit to the association's projects in Yemen. Al-Oun added that the association continues Kuwait's humanitarian legacy in Yemen by expanding its developmental projects in medical, educational sectors and by responding urgently to the country's needs.

He pointed out that during their visit to Yemen, the association inspected developmental projects funded by KRCS in several Yemeni governorates and distributed relief aid, which contributed to improving the quality of life for a broad segment of citizens and

meeting their basic needs. These visits allow KRCS to closely examine the levels of healthcare, educational, social services, and water projects, assess them, and identify necessary needs in these areas.

Al-Oun mentioned that the KRCS delegation launched a project for distributing food items, clothing, and school supplies to students in the governorates of Taizz, Hadhramaut, Seiyun, and Al-Mahrah. He added that during the visit, the delegation met with local authorities and governors who expressed their deep gratitude to Kuwait for its efforts in aiding the Yemeni people, and they also

informed the delegation of the most critical needs of healthcare facilities, schools, medical equipment, medicines, and water projects.

Al-Oun expressed profound gratitude to the donors from Kuwait and noted that the KRCS would continue to inaugurate developmental, medical, educational, and water projects as part of Kuwait's ongoing support for Yemen. He also praised the cooperation and coordination with the Estijabah Foundation for Humanitarian Aid and Relief, which implements KRCS projects in Yemeni governorates. — KUNA

Local

# Fire experts stress the importance of instilling concepts of security, safety

## KFF affirms keenness to protect lives, properties

KUWAIT: Acting Chief of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), Major General Khaled Fahad, affirmed on Monday the keenness to protect lives and properties, deal with all accidents efficiently, reduce their negative effects, and raise community awareness on how to avoid accidents. Speaking during a workshop organized by the Kuwait Society for Protection from Fire Hazards under the title "Lessons Learned...Prevention of Major Accidents," the KFF's chief stressed the need for a matrix specifically for the type of risks first and foremost and then classifying them as major or minor risks, which will contribute to raising the efficiency of dealing with them.

He pointed out that risks are not only human but may also be natural, such as earthquakes, floods, and other natural disasters, adding that prior assessment of accidents, training, and community awareness with the optimal use of modern technology will contribute effectively to security, reduce risks, and minimize losses in lives and properties. For his part, the former Chief of the Kuwait Fire Force and honorary member of the association, Lieutenant General (retired) Yousef Al-Ansari, said that the workshop aims to bring together the concerned official and civil authorities, private companies that specialize in firefighting equipment, and consulting offices related to safety and accident protection issues to exchange views and experiences in this field in order to ensure the achievement of the desired goals.

Al-Ansari stressed the importance of instilling the concepts of security and safety among all segments of society, indicating that the responsibility is shared by all parties, especially



Acting Chief of the General Fire Force, Major General Khaled Fahad speaks during a workshop. — KUNA photos

specialists in this field, as they represent the elite and have a major role in educating and guiding society. The Chairman of the Kuwait Society for Protection from Fire Hazards, Adel Al-Nassar, praised the recommendations of the workshop, which agreed on the importance of reducing accident rates, recovering quickly from them, and trying to avoid them in the future.

Al-Nassar said, "We have succeeded in delivering our message with all professionalism through the rapid interaction of all representatives of the state sectors, the private sector, and the relevant authorities in this regard. The working papers presented by the participants are a fruitful step that calls for optimism, hard work, and moving forward towards creating community awareness that safety and pre-



vention of major accidents should not only be a routine matter, but their impact extends to becoming a way of life in society."

He pointed to the vital role of risk, crisis, and disaster management in normal and emergency situations and the importance of specialized training in developing field performance, calling for the need to

enhance the concepts of prevention and safety for sustainable development and quality of life. He explained that the association intends to organize the second civil safety and protection conference next February, which brings together a number of government officials, public benefit associations, the private sector, and experts. — KUNA



Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi listens to explanations from the health officials. — KUNA photos



Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi takes a group photo with the health officials.

## MoH inaugurates chronic ventilation unit for children

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi on Monday inaugurated the chronic respiratory unit for children at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Hospital in the presence of Undersecretary of the Ministry Dr Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi Al-Awadhi. He stressed in a press statement following the inauguration the importance of the chronic respiratory unit for children at Jaber Hospital, noting that it will contribute to the development of healthcare for children as it is a new addition that reflects the Ministry's keenness to provide the highest standards of healthcare for children suffering from chronic respiratory problems.

This step comes within the framework of the Ministry's strategic plan to provide comprehensive and distinguished healthcare for all citizens and residents in Kuwait and within its continuous efforts to develop medical services and provide the best treatments and modern technologies. For her part, Head of the Pediatrics Department at Jaber Hospital and Consultant of Pediatric Respiratory Diseases, Sleep Disorders, and Chronic Respiratory Diseases Dr. Aseel Al-Awadhi explained in a similar statement that the chronic respiratory unit represents a qualitative leap in the field of healthcare.

The unit aims to provide integrated and compre-



Some of the medical equipment.

hensive care for children who suffer from breathing difficulties due to several pathological reasons, including muscle weakness, dysfunction of the respiratory control in the brain, chronic lung diseases, or even suffocation resulting from sleep disorders. She stated that through this unit, children who rely on mechanical ventilators, whether through a tracheostomy or through positive airway pressure devices, can receive specialized care that contributes to im-



proving their quality of life.

She pointed out that recent studies have proven that the use of long-term ventilators enhances the child's ability to perform daily activities better and contributes to increasing his/her life expectancy based on the health condition and medical diagnosis. The unit consists of five rooms equipped with the latest equipment and technologies, in addition to a room designated for critical cases. — KUNA

## Omani Cultural Week kicks off in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Omani Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Saleh Al-Kharousi affirmed on Monday that the Omani Cultural Week in Kuwait, which kicks off on Tuesday at the Kuwait National Library, is an affirmation of joint cooperation and deep-rooted relations between the two brotherly countries. Ambassador Al-Kharousi said in a press interview at the embassy that there is great interest in cultural relations between his country and Kuwait.



Dr Saleh Al-Kharousi

He explained that the cultural week will kick off with a joint exhibition between the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters and the Omani Embassy in Kuwait with the participation of the Omani Writers and Authors Association. The program also includes a musical concert by Omani cellist Maryam Al-Munji, accompanied by Omani musician Yaqoub Al-Asimi.

The ambassador stated that the program on Wednesday includes a symposium on Kuwaiti-Omani relations, presented by Dr. Mohsen Al-Kindi, an academic and researcher in cultural history and winner of the Sultan Qaboos Award for Culture, Arts, and Letters in its first session in 2012 and the Cultural Personality of the Year Award in the Sultanate of Oman in its first session in 2020, indicating that Kuwaiti writer Alaa Al-Mansour will speak at the symposium about her book on Omani-Kuwaiti relations.

He added that the second day will also witness a poetry evening for Omani poets Badriya Al-Badri, Youssef Al-Kamali, and Kuwaiti poet Faisal Al-Enezi, indicating that poet Al-Badri has many printed novels, has participated in various literary events, and has won several awards, including first place in the Katara Award for the Poet of the Messenger. Youssef Al-Kamali is also a distinguished poet.

Thursday is the last day of the week's activities and will host a lecture entitled "Patterns of Omani Fortified Architecture" by Omani researcher Dr. Saeed Al-Saqlawi, who holds a degree in Urban and Regional Planning and completed his postgraduate studies in Urban Design. He explained that Dr. Al-Saqlawi combines his engineering specialization with his hobbies in literature and focuses on the pattern of fortifications in Oman. — KUNA

## Biometric: Numbers allocated for people with special needs

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior announced on Monday that it has allocated numbers for governorates to set an appointment for biometric for bedridden people and people with special needs at their headquarters. The General Department of Security Relations and Media at the Ministry of Interior said in a press statement that the General Department of Criminal Evidence has allocated numbers for governorates where the applicant can register his/her documents - proving his condition via the WhatsApp application.

The applicant will be contacted, and an appointment will be set for the biometric. It indicated that this step aims to enhance the services of the Ministry of Interior to the community and facilitate and simplify the procedures for taking biometric fingerprints for bedridden people and people with special needs. The number for this service for the Capital and Hawally governorates is 97687767; for Mubarak Al-Kabeer and Ahmadi governorates it is 95576305, while Jahra and Farwaniya governorates is 97781437. — KUNA



Photos show some of the migrating birds.

## KEPS team monitors and protects migrating birds

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS) team monitoring and protecting birds commented on the atmospheric and natural factors concerning the migration of birds. "In case of high humidity, the number of migrating birds will be much less compared during the ideal weather conditions",

the head of Birds Monitoring and Protection team at KEPS Mohammad Shah said.

Some factors directly affect the timing of birds' movement. After the northern-winds in autumn, large numbers of birds migrate to Kuwait. A team member Mohammad Al-Hudaina said "humidity plays a negative role on migrating birds, as an increase in humidity affects their ability to fly. Sometimes birds are forced to land and may not complete their journey". He said that he photographed many migrating birds that came to the country and were affected by weather conditions particularly high humidity and strong winds, and among those birds were desert eagles, vultures or shod eagles.



# KRCS and IFRC ink \$1.3m deal for Rohingya refugees

## Agreement, funded by KFAED, covers construction of 1,520 homes

AMMAN: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) signed a \$1.3 million project agreement with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in the Middle East and North Africa, to help the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, funded by Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED). In a statement to KUNA, Vice President of (IFRC), and Secretary-General of (KRCS) Maha Al-Barjas said that the agreement is funded by Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), and covers the construction of 1,520 homes for Rohingya refugees and supporting them with personal hygiene baskets for more than 6,000 beneficiaries.

Al-Barjas noted that the agreement entered into force on Monday, and will continue until June of next year 2025. She praised the role of (KFAED) for its role in supporting the various development projects worldwide, demonstrating Kuwait's pioneering role in the field of humanitarian work and helping brotherly and friendly countries. In a similar statement to KUNA, the Regional Director of (IFRC) for the Middle East and North Africa, Dr Hossam Al-Sharqawi, said that KRCS is one of the most prominent supportive partners in all parts of the world, that reflects the generosity of Kuwait and its people towards the issues of the vulnerable wherever they are.

He stated that the strategic partnership between the (IFRC) and (KRCS) is a distinguished partner-



AMMAN: KRCS and IFRC officials sign a \$1.3 million project agreement. — KUNA

ship developed through the exchange of experiences to enhance cooperation in relevant fields. The 11th Middle East and North Africa Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies began Monday in the Jordanian capital, Amman, with the participation

of member states. It includes specialized working sessions on the work of the societies and their role in meeting humanitarian needs, empowering volunteers, and keeping pace with global humanitarian transformations. — KUNA



Mohammad Al-Saqer

## Arab Council calls for unity, support for Palestinians

KUWAIT: The Council for Arab and International Relations called for a solid and united Arab stance in support of Palestinians against the atrocious occupation aggression and for joining South Africa in the International Court of Justice, as well as an Arab Summit resolution on breaking the siege. The Council, chaired by Mohammad Al-Saqer, mentioned in a press release on Monday that the genocide and forced eviction for the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank is a blatant challenge to the international community, condemning these fascist policies and practices.

Around 12 months since the beginning of the crisis, the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip reached a catastrophic level. Read the statement saying that the number of martyrs reached 50,000, including those lost under the rubble, around 92,000 injured, and 1.7 million diseased. Around 1.6 million Gazans are currently sequestered in a 24 square km strip without access to any basic necessities of shelter, water, food, or medicine.

The statement described the situation as the worst manmade humanitarian catastrophe in modern history, with three war crimes of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and mass punishment, and yet countries that have advocated for human rights and democracy remain stagnant when faced with the legitimate rights of Palestinians. This aggression does not specific any segment but the Palestinian people as a whole, it underscored.

The occupation would not have been emboldened to commit these heinous crimes if not for the failure of the international community and its double standards, allowing for the infringement upon the sanctity of Al-Aqsa mosque. The Council asserted that the Zionist occupation will not be stopped unless with united Arab and Islamic measures and with executing court rulings and United Nations resolutions. It further indicated that while the Arab and Islamic communities are cohesive, they are aspiring towards translating such cohesion into practical, tangible steps that truly pressurize the Zionist government. — KUNA



Al-Salam society for humanitarian and charity work's officials. — KUNA photos



The tenth relief planeload departs to Sudan carrying tons of foodstuff.



## Kuwait sends 10th relief planeload to troubled Sudan

KUWAIT: Kuwait's tenth relief planeload departed to Sudan on Monday carrying onboard 10 tons of food, organized by Al-Salam society for humanitarian and charity work in cooperation with Kuwait's ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Social Affairs. In remarks to KUNA Deputy Director General of the society, Hamad Al-Oun said this aid plane is to support and help the people of Sudan during this humanitarian crisis as the country is facing extreme shortages of food, water, and medicine, as well as floods and heavy rains that left millions of Sudanese displaced, especially with the current situation of armed conflicts.

They are carrying necessary food that will help meet the needs of the displaced families, which in-



cludes rice, beans, dates, and other basics. The second plane is scheduled to depart on Tuesday with more than 10 tons of aid, as he called for support to help the affected Sudanese who are facing famine and suffering from the spread of diseases, especially after the spread of cholera, which threatens the lives of millions with the absence of the basic and minimum humanitarian needs. According to the latest statistics from the United Nations for Coordination and Humanitarian Affairs, there are 25 million Sudanese suffering from widespread famine. — KUNA



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Sudan's residents receive treatment in mobile field clinics. — KUNA photos

## Direct Aid Society launches anti-cholera campaign in Sudan

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Direct Aid Society launched on Monday the second phase of its anti-cholera and communicable diseases campaign in Sudan. The society's Director Dr Abdullah Al-Sumait told KUNA that the campaign would help the displaced people in Kassala, Khartoum, Al-Qadarif and the eastern region of the country. He affirmed that the society's office in Sudan had reopened, focusing operations in the Port Sudan province to provide utmost assistance to those in desperate need. He revealed that the Direct Aid had previously provided all sorts of aid and assistance to the displaced with the number of amounting to 1.3 million people. — KUNA



Mobile medical clinics provide rapid care for critical and emergency cases in Sudan.



Kuwait's Direct Aid Society launches an anti-cholera and communicable diseases campaign in Sudan.



After defeat, Scholz urges parties to isolate far right

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KYIV: A worshipper enters the premises of the Islamic Cultural Centre, which was damaged by a missile attack in Kyiv on September 2, 2024, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

# Russia makes biggest advances in Ukraine in nearly 2 years: Analysis

## Putin says Ukraine border incursion will not stop Russian advance

**MOSCOW:** Russian President Vladimir Putin said Monday that his army was rapidly advancing in eastern Ukraine, citing this as proof that Kyiv's cross-border incursion into the Kursk region was failing. His comments came just before he left Russia for a visit to Mongolia, a member of the International Criminal Court (ICC) — a trip seen as a show of defiance following the court's issuance of an arrest warrant for him last year.

Moscow's forces have been notching up territorial gains on the sprawling frontline in eastern Ukraine even as Ukraine launched a shock border incursion onto its own territory. Putin acknowledged the difficulties Ukraine's counteroffensive — the largest attack by a foreign army on Russia since World War II — was putting on Russian border regions, but struck a defiant tone.

"People are experiencing and undergoing severe hardship, especially in the Kursk region," Putin said in a speech to schoolchildren at a televised event in Siberia. "But the enemy did not achieve the main task that they set themselves: to stop our offensive in the Donbas ... We have not had such a pace of of-

fensive in the Donbas for a long time," he said. The Donbas refers to a large area of eastern Ukraine covering the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk, which Moscow claims to have annexed.

### 'Bandits'

Analysis of troop positions showed that Russia's advance in the east gained ground in August, with its forces homing in on the key logistics hub of Pokrovsk, in Ukraine's Donetsk region. Russia advanced on 477 square kilometers (184 square miles) of Ukrainian territory in August, Moscow's biggest monthly increase since October 2022, according to data supplied by the Institute for the Study of War and analyzed by AFP.

Ukraine meanwhile made its own rapid gains in early August, advancing more than 1,100 square kilometers into Russia's Kursk region in two weeks, though its progress has slowed recently as the situation there has stabilized. Kyiv said the aim of the offensive was to draw Russian troops away from eastern Ukraine and stretch Moscow's forces. Around 130,000 people have fled the Russian border region since the start of

the fighting. "We have to, of course, deal with these bandits that entered the territory of the Russian Federation, specifically the Kursk region, attempting to destabilize the situation in the border areas," Putin said, in some of his strongest comments yet on the Ukrainian counterattack.

### 'No progress'

Russia claims to have captured a string of villages and settlements in eastern Ukraine in recent weeks, inching towards the city of Pokrovsk. Pokrovsk lies on the intersection of a key road that supplies Ukrainian troops and towns across the eastern front and has long been a target for Moscow's army.

Ukraine has rushed to evacuate families from the city, which was home to around 60,000 people before Moscow launched its 2022 attack. Around 30,500 people remain despite repeated calls to leave, Mayor Serhii Dobriak said Monday. The Russian defense ministry said in a briefing Monday that it had captured the Donetsk village of Skuchne, without providing further details.

But Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in-

sted the frontline had not moved. "In the Pokrovsk direction, no matter how difficult it is, there has been no progress for two days. This is what the Commander-in-Chief told me," he said. He added that Ukraine forces had captured more than 600 Russian soldiers in its Kursk offensive, which Kyiv hopes to swap for Ukrainian fighters held by Russia.

### Missiles

Russia continued its campaign of aerial bombardment of Ukrainian cities overnight, firing 35 missiles and 23 drones, Zelensky said earlier Monday. Loud explosions were heard in the capital around 5:30 am (0230 GMT), AFP journalists in Kyiv said. Zelensky said a mosque there had been "severely damaged" and condemned Russia for its "destruction campaign against the Ukrainian people". Three people were wounded in the capital, and the office of a Danish NGO was damaged. Ukraine shot down nine ballistic missiles, 13 cruise missiles and 20 drones in the attack, the air force said. Separately, Russian shelling on Monday killed a woman in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region, Governor Oleg Syneubov said. — AFP



MANILA: Youths waded in a storm surge along Manila Bay amid heavy rains brought by Tropical Storm Yagi in Manila on September 2, 2024. — AFP

## 11 dead after storm triggers landslides in Philippines

**MANILA:** Floods and landslides killed 11 people after a fierce tropical storm dumped heavy rain on the Philippines for a second day, officials said Monday. Tropical Storm Yagi slammed into the main island of Luzon on Monday after brushing past the Bicol region southeast of Manila overnight Sunday, with more heavy rain forecast which the state weather service said could cause flooding and more landslides.

As a precaution, schools and government offices across the capital were shut for the day, ferry services in some areas were suspended and 29 domestic flights were cancelled due to the weather. Three people, including a pregnant woman, were killed in a landslide Monday in Antipolo, near equally rain-soaked Manila, city information officer Rely Bonifacio told AFP.

He said the bodies of four other people, all drowning victims, were recovered Monday in three other areas of the hilly community, hours after creeks over-

flowed overnight. The Bicol city of Naga was also hard-hit, with a man electrocuted as floodwaters rose and a baby girl drowning, rescuers said.

"The floods were above head height in some areas," Joshua Tuazon of the city's public safety office told AFP, adding that hundreds of residents had been rescued. More than 300 people were at evacuation camps Monday, with local officials saying the floodwaters in the city of 210,000 people were slow to ebb.

Two landslides killed two people and damaged five houses in the central city of Cebu on Sunday, the local disaster office there told AFP. The storm also unleashed strong currents and big waves that wrought chaos in Manila Bay on Monday, hurling a barge and an oil tanker onto the seawall and causing another barge to run adrift, the coast guard said. A tug and a small passenger ship also collided while both were anchored, causing a fire aboard the second vessel, it said in a statement. Eighteen people on the passenger ship, all crew members, were later rescued and a coast guard vessel arrived to put out the blaze. Yagi slammed into the municipality of Casiguran northeast of Manila on Monday afternoon with sustained winds of 85 kilometers (53 miles) an hour, the state weather service said. The storm was forecast to churn through north Luzon overnight before moving out over the South China Sea early Tuesday. — AFP

## Zionist entity's 'genocidal violence' risks reaching beyond Gaza: UN expert

**GENEVA:** An independent UN expert warned Monday that the Zionist entity's "genocidal violence" in Gaza risked spreading to other parts of the occupied Palestinian territory amid a large-scale military operation in the West Bank. Francesca Albanese, the United Nations special rapporteur on the rights situation in the Palestinian territories, warned in a statement that the Zionist entity's recent intensification of its operations in the West Bank, which is separated from Gaza by the Zionist territory, marked "a dangerous escalation". "(The Zionist entity's) genocidal violence risks leaking out of Gaza and into the occupied Palestinian territory as a whole," she said. "The writing is on the wall, and we cannot continue to ignore it. There is mounting evidence that no Palestinian is safe under (the Zionist entity's) unfettered control."

Albanese, who is an independent expert appointed by the UN Human Rights Council but who does not speak on behalf of the United Nations, has repeatedly accused the entity of committing genocide in its war in Gaza. Monday's statement came after days of surging violence, with the Ramallah-based Palestinian health ministry saying Monday that at least 26 Palestinians had been killed since last Wednesday, when the Zionist entity launched simultaneous raids across the northern West Bank. Middle Eastern and Western governments as well as UN officials have called on the Zionist entity to end the large-scale operations in the Palestinian territory, which it has occupied since 1967.

"Apartheid (Zionist entity) is targeting Gaza and the West Bank simultaneously, as part of an overall process of elimination, replacement and territorial expansion," Albanese said. "The long-standing impunity granted to (the entity) is enabling the de-Pal-

estinization of the occupied territory, leaving Palestinians at the mercy of the forces pursuing their elimination as a national group," she added.

She called on the international community to "do everything it can to immediately end the risk of genocide against the Palestinian people under (Zionist) occupation, ensure accountability and ultimately end (the Zionist) colonization of Palestinian territory."

The Zionist entity's military campaign in Gaza has so far killed at least 40,786 people, according to the territory's health ministry. The UN rights office says most of the dead are women and children. The entity launched its campaign after Hamas's October 7 attack which resulted in the deaths of 1,205 people, according to an AFP tally based on Zionist official figures. — AFP



JENIN: A man and a young child react during clashes between Zionist forces and Palestinian men in the center of Jenin in the occupied West Bank on September 2, 2024. — AFP

## International

# Tunisia's election body defies court, dismisses 3 candidates

## Developments reveal elite struggles behind the scenes among proponents and opponents of Saied

**TUNIS:** Tunisia's electoral board said Monday it approved three candidates for an October 6 presidential election, ignoring court rulings that had granted appeals by three other hopefuls who had been rejected. The three dismissed candidates were among 14 potential contenders to be turned down by the electoral board, ISIE, last month for not obtaining enough endorsements to challenge President Kais Saied.

Last week, the three hopefuls unexpectedly won appeals at the administrative court against ISIE's decision, in a verdict the court called "definitive". But on Monday, ISIE chief Farouk Bouasker said the board's initial list of candidates was also "definitive" and "not subject to appeal". Bouasker said the ISIE was maintaining the initial list because "the administrative court did not officially communicate its decisions within a 48-hour deadline, as per the law".

Saied, the incumbent and election front-runner, was democratically elected in 2019 but orchestrated a sweeping power grab in 2021 and has since ruled by decree. Former parliamentarian Zouhair Maghzaoui and businessman Ayachi Zammel are now his only challengers in next month's poll. Isabelle Werenfels, a political scientist at the Germany-based SWP institute, told AFP that ISIE's decision "has practically decided the outcome of the vote".

### 'Clear path ahead'

She also said that "part of the justice system under Saied's influence will obstruct the campaigns" of challengers Maghzaoui and Zammel. Earlier on Monday, Zammel was arrested on charges of forging ballot endorsements, according to members of his campaign, a month after the treasurer of his Azimoun party was arrested on similar charges. Several would-be candidates were accused of forging such signatures and barred from running for office.

Hatem Nafti, a political commentator and author of a forthcoming book on Saied's authoritarian rule, said the incumbent "now has a clear path ahead of him". "The candidates who could have hindered Saied have just been eliminated," he told AFP, adding that ISIE's decision "has proved that there is no longer any rule of law". "We now have a candidate from within the regime," he said of Maghzaoui, who supported Saied's 2021 power grab, "and another one in prison since this morning".

Zammel is the only approved candidate to have been arrested, but he joins a list of would-be hopefuls who have been imprisoned or are facing prosecution. Prior to Zammel's arrest, Human Rights Watch said Tunisian authorities "have prosecuted, convicted or impris-

oned at least eight prospective candidates" for the October vote.

The North African country under Saied was "gearing up for a presidential election amid increased repression of dissent and free speech, without crucial checks and balances on President Saied's power", HRW added. On Saturday, a petition signed by prominent Tunisians and civil society groups urged that rejected candidates be allowed to stand in the presidential election.

The rejected candidates whose appeals were granted are Imed Daimi, an adviser to former president Moncef Marzouki, former minister Mondher Zenaidi and opposition party leader Abdellatif Mekki. The petition said the administrative court's rulings on appeals "are enforceable and cannot be contested by any means whatsoever".

### 'Pure formality'

It also called on ISIE to "respect the law and avoid any practice that could undermine the transparency and integrity of the electoral process". But ISIE's announcement of the official list of candidates on Monday dashed such hopes.

Dozens of activists gathered near the commission's headquarters on Monday, demanding the commission step down.



Tunisia's President Kais Saied

"This is a complete coup against the will of the voters ... This sets a precedent in election history that the commission does not respect the decision of the Administrative Court," Hichem Ajbouni, a protester, told Reuters. "We have moved to the law of force ... This is a farce," he added.

Houssein Hami, coordinator of the Soumoud centre-left political coalition, said that with only three candidates "the election will become a pure formality,

without much excitement for Tunisians". For Werenfels, however, the conflict between ISIE and the administrative court showed "there are elite struggles behind the scenes among proponents and opponents of Saied". "This could be positive for what remains of democracy," she said. "But it is also problematic if not dangerous." "The president could become more authoritarian if he feels he is being challenged." — Agencies

## S Korean police probe whether Telegram abets online sex crimes

**SEOUL:** South Korean police have launched an investigation into Telegram that will look at whether the encrypted messaging app has been complicit in the distribution of sexually explicit deepfake content, Yonhap news agency said on Monday. Yonhap quoted the head of the National Office of Investigation. The office's cyber investigation bureau declined to comment on the report.

The launch of an investigation would follow public and political outrage over digital deepfake pornography featuring South Korean women, with local media reporting such content is often found in Telegram chatrooms. It would also go one step further than comments from the commissioner of the National Policy Agency, Cho Ji-ho, earlier on Monday who said his agency was reviewing whether to investigate secure messaging apps by charging them with abetting crimes.

Authorities in South Korea last week pledged a crackdown on sexually exploitative deepfake crimes — one that has coincided with a French investigation into Pavel Durov, Telegram's Russian-born founder, as authorities there probe organized crime on the platform.

Asked in parliament about criminal activities on Telegram, Cho said investigations into secure message providers have proven complicated and time-consuming. Telegram did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment on Monday. Last week it said it actively moderates harmful content on its platform including illegal pornography. — Reuters

## Russians afraid of losing information source after Telegram boss arrest

**MOSCOW:** France's arrest of Telegram chief Pavel Durov has raised fears in Russia that the popular messaging app — used both by the Kremlin and its opponents — could be blocked, depriving them of one of the last sources of critical, uncensored news. Since the start of its offensive in Ukraine in February 2022, Russia has cracked down on dissent and protest, leaving Russians without independent news outlets or access to Western social media such as Facebook, Instagram and X, formerly Twitter.

In that climate, Telegram — which was itself blocked for a period by the Kremlin for refusing to cooperate with Russian law enforcement agencies — has become one of the last bastions of free speech and uncensored information. Moscow now fears for the fate of the messenger and its Russian-born founder Durov, charged late August with failing to curb extremist and illegal content on the platform.

Though he has been released on bail, he cannot leave the country and the Kremlin has warned France against turning the case against him "into political persecution." Durov's arrest is not the only headache the privately-owned service faces. The European Commission is also investigating whether Telegram has more EU users than claimed and must therefore comply with more stringent rules.

### 'For all Russians'

In Russia, Telegram channels widely cover subjects that are otherwise strictly censored in state media. That includes everything from front-line reports of the conflict in Ukraine to trials of Kremlin critics and manifestos dispatched from political prisoners. The most popular channels have millions of subscribers.



The logo of mobile messaging and call service Telegram.

The Kremlin, government ministries and regional governors also use Telegram as their go-to public communications tool. "Telegram is a very practical and reliable messaging service for all Russians, regardless of their political opinions," said Alexei Venediktov, head of the Echo of Moscow radio station, blocked in Russia after its criticism of the Ukraine offensive.

The messaging service "is considered independent of the Russian state," the veteran journalist — who has over 200,000 subscribers there — told AFP. Blocking Telegram would be equivalent to "a measure of censorship," he said.

### 'Main source of information'

Telegram's popularity has grown steadily in Russia throughout the Ukraine conflict, after Russia blocked access to Instagram, Facebook and X, as well as the websites of several opposition media outlets. It is the fourth most popular online service, ahead of YouTube and the Russian social network VKontakte, according to a study by Russian media research group Mediascope.

It is also heavily focused on news. Two-thirds of its Russian readers prefer to follow political and news channels, with only six percent preferring entertainment or cinema, for instance. Mila, a 45-year-old psychologist, said she started using

it after Facebook was blocked and she now subscribes to some 80 Telegram news channels. She also uses it to communicate privately with friends who are against the offensive in Ukraine.

"Today, it is my main source of information. If Telegram stops working, it will hurt me a lot," Mila told AFP, speaking on condition her full name not be used. Naida, a 56-year-old logistician said she trusts Telegram more than other messaging services. "And all the news is there, you don't need to have a VPN on all the time," she said.

Telegram is now "the main source of information" for those seeking independent views, said political scientist Tatiana Stanovaya of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center. "Telegram has no alternative" in Russia, she said, adding the free flow of information on the service is a throwback to before President Vladimir Putin began to crack down hard on dissent.

### Battlefield communications

Amid the conflict in Ukraine, the platform has also become a key military communication tool. Both Russia and Ukraine warn their populations of incoming air attacks via Telegram posts, while their armies use it to communicate and coordinate internally. "Telegram has almost become the main way of commanding units on both sides of the front," said Mikhail Zvinchuk, a former military officer whose Telegram blog on the conflict, Rybar, has more than 1.3 million subscribers.

Pro-Kremlin Russian journalist Andrei Medvedev also said Telegram was "the main messaging service" of the conflict. "It is an alternative to the secret military communication system," he said. Thanks to its broad appeal across the political spectrum, the fate of Durov and the implications for the site have become a rare point of unifying concern. Russian opposition politician Ilya Yashin, recently released as part of a historic prisoner exchange with the West, is among those who have taken Durov's side. "I do not consider Pavel Durov a criminal, and I hope that he will be able to prove his innocence," Yashin said. — AFP

## US, UK pile pressure on...

### Continued from Page 1

Foreign Secretary David Lammy told parliament that the UK would suspend 30 out of 350 arms exports licenses to the Zionist entity. He said the partial ban covered items "which could be used in the current conflict in Gaza", including fighter aircraft, helicopters and drones. The ban does not include parts for the F-35 fighter jets, Lammy added.

He stressed that the suspension was "not a determination of innocence or guilt" and that the situation would be kept under review. "We have not and could not arbitrate on whether or not the Zionist entity has breached international humanitarian law," Lammy said, adding that Britain is "not an international court".

On the ground in the Gaza Strip, the fighting raged on Monday, the second day of localized "humanitarian pauses" to facilitate a vaccination drive after the first confirmed polio case in 25 years. An AFP correspondent reported some air strikes overnight, and the civil

defense agency said shelling and gunfire rocked Gaza City, with two people killed by a missile.

Louise Wateridge, spokeswoman for the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said 87,000 children received a first vaccine dose on Sunday in central Gaza. There were shorter queues Monday, she said, but "this is to be expected". "The biggest challenge now is just making sure that everybody has safe access" to the vaccination centers, she added. UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini called the inoculation campaign a "race against time to reach just over 600,000 children" in the war-torn territory of 2.4 million people.

"I am happy that I vaccinated my children against polio so that they don't suffer from anything in the future, God willing. Hopefully all Gazan children get vaccinated not only against polio but against other diseases too," said Waffa Abdelhadi after getting her two daughters, aged five months and five years old, vaccinated at a medical facility in Deir Al-Balah. She had to navigate roads devastated by war, with wrecked residential buildings on all sides, to reach the facility. "We don't (only) want vaccinations. We want them to stop the war," said Abdelhadi, adding she had been displaced with her family seven times in recent months. — Agencies

to maintain power by force," a US National Security Council spokesperson said. The seizure of the plane "is an important step to ensure that Maduro continues to feel the consequences from his misgovernance of Venezuela," they added.

The United States, the European Union and several Latin American countries have refused to recognize Maduro as having won without seeing detailed voting results. Violence that accompanied the protests left 27 people dead and at least 192 wounded. Since 2005, Washington has imposed sanctions on Venezuela that target individuals and entities "that have engaged in criminal, antidemocratic, or corrupt actions," according to a Congressional briefing document.

"In response to increasing human rights abuses and corruption by the government of Nicolas Maduro, in power since 2013, the Trump Administration expanded US sanctions to include financial sanctions, sectoral sanctions, and sanctions on the government." Caracas was yet to comment on the seizure. — AFP

## US seizes plane of Venezuelan...

### Continued from Page 1

Since May 2023, the plane has flown almost exclusively to and from a military base in Venezuela. The South American country was rocked by protests when Maduro was declared the winner of a disputed July 28 election, with dozens killed and more than 2,400 people arrested.

The opposition claims it won by a landslide and that it has the voting records to prove it. The leftist Maduro government, brushing off accusations of authoritarianism, has resisted international pressure to release vote tally numbers to back up its claim of victory.

"Maduro and his representatives" have tampered with the results of the July 28 presidential election, falsely claimed victory, and carried out widespread repression

## Swathes of China, Japan log record summer temps

**BEIJING:** Swathes of China logged the hottest August on record last month, the weather service said, as Japanese authorities announced that this summer had been the joint warmest since records began. China is the leading emitter of the greenhouse gas emissions scientists say are driving global climate change.

Beijing has pledged to bring planet-warming carbon dioxide emissions to a peak by 2030 and to net zero by 2060. Its weather service said in an article published Sunday that average air temperatures last month in eight provinces, regions and cities "ranked the hottest for the same period" since records began. They included the megacity of Shanghai, the provinces of Jiangsu, Hebei, Hainan, Jilin, Liaoning and Shandong as well as the northwest region of Xinjiang, the weather service said.

A further five provinces chalked up their second-hottest August, while seven more endured their third-hottest. "Looking back at the past month, most parts of China have experienced a hotter summer than in previous years," the weather service said. The major population centers of Shanghai, Hangzhou and Chongqing also saw more "high temperature days" — typically declared when the mercury breaches 35 degrees Celsius — than in any August since records began.

Although the heat is expected to recede across much of the north as autumn begins, "it is still too early to end completely", the weather service said. Climate scientists have already predicted that 2024 will be the hottest year on record for the Earth because of a warming planet. The Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said July was the second warmest on record books going back to 1940, only slightly cooler than July 2023.

Extreme heat has seared much of East Asia this



TOKYO: Tourists cool down under a mist shower in central Tokyo where temperatures topped 35 degrees Celsius on July 8, 2024. — AFP

summer, with Japan saying on Monday that its long-term average temperature between June and August was 1.76C above the standard value — equalling the level seen in summer 2023 — the highest since statistics started being kept in 1898. Rising global temperatures also make extreme weather more frequent and intense, and China has seen a summer of extreme weather, from heatwaves across much of the north and west to devastating floods in central and southern regions.

Chinese weather authorities said July was the country's hottest month since records began, state media reported, as extreme temperatures persist across large parts of the globe. July 2024 was "the hottest July since complete observations began in 1961, and the hottest single month in the history of observation", state broadcaster CCTV said, citing weather authorities. The average air temperature in China that month was 23.21C, exceeding the previous record of 23.17C in 2017, CCTV reported the weather authorities as saying. — AFP

## International

# After defeat, Scholz urges parties to isolate far right

## Anti-Islam AfD becomes first far-right party to win a regional election since World War II

BERLIN: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Monday urged parties to avoid collaborating with the far right, after the AfD made record gains in two regional polls and his own coalition suffered a heavy defeat a year before a general election. In the former East German state of Thuringia, the anti-immigrant, anti-Islam AfD became the first far-right party to win a regional election since World War II, taking around 33 percent of the vote on Sunday.

The AfD was headed for a close second place in neighboring Saxony. Germany's top selling Bild daily described the outcome as "a political earthquake". Scholz, whose deeply unpopular three-party coalition received a slapdown in both states, called the results "bitter" and "worrying". "The AfD is damaging Germany. It is weakening the economy, dividing society and ruining our country's reputation," he said. "All democratic parties are now called upon to form stable governments without right-wing extremists," he said in a message on Facebook.

Coalition governments are the norm in Germany at federal and state level, and mainstream parties have always ruled out collaboration with the far right. But AfD co-leader Alice Weidel said she believed the "undemocratic firewall" was untenable given the party's electoral success, while fellow leader Tino Chrupalla said there would be "no politics without the AfD".

### 'Reasonable government'

The conservative CDU, the only centrist party to perform strongly on Sunday, was quick to dismiss the idea of teaming up with the AfD. "Voters know that we do not form coalitions with the AfD," said Carsten Linnemann, the general secretary of the conservative CDU. The CDU only narrowly edged out the AfD with 32 percent of the vote in Saxony

and came second in Thuringia. The conservatives still hold hopes of leading the next government in Thuringia, with their lead candidate Mario Voigt appealing for a "reasonable government" in a coalition led by the CDU. The AfD's controversial local leader, Bjoern Hoecke, meanwhile declared that his party was the "people's party in Thuringia". "We need change and change will only come with the AfD," he said, hailing the "historic result".

Hoecke has often caused outrage with his outspoken statements and was fined twice this year for deliberately using a banned Nazi slogan. Sahra Wagenknecht, who heads the far-left BSW, said her party "cannot work together" with Hoecke and has long ruled out a coalition with the AfD. BSW, formed earlier this year as a breakaway from the ex-communist Linke party, secured vote shares in the teens in both regional polls and is seen as a key building block in any coalition. BSW however has serious differences with the more established parties, complicating negotiations, including a dovish stance towards Russia and opposition to the planned stationing of US missiles in Germany.

### 'Alarming'

Political divisions and complicated electoral math mean "forming a government will be difficult" after the two regional elections, said Marianne Kneuer, a professor of politics at the Dresden University of Technology. The election result was also a "big slap for the entire government and Olaf Scholz", Kneuer said, as voters showed their discontent with the deeply unpopular three-party coalition in Berlin.

Scholz's Social Democrats recorded meek results, scoring around seven percent in Saxony and falling to six percent in Thuringia. The chancellor's partners in a fractious coalition - the liberal FDP and



ERFURT: Demonstrators display a banner reading 'AfD ban now' and 'Mario Voigt says no to AfD' during a demonstration in front of Thuringia's State Parliament in eastern Germany during Thuringia's regional elections day. — AFP

the Greens - struggled even more. The FDP fell below the five-percent threshold for seats in both elections, while in Saxony the Greens only scraped in. The results were "nothing to celebrate", Social Democrats party chair Lars Klingbeil said, adding that the party had to be "better". The run up to the elections was dominated by a bitter debate over immigration stirred up by a suspected Islamist

knife attack a few days before the vote.

Opposition parties, including the AfD and the CDU, seized on the deadly stabbing in the western city of Solingen to criticize the government for its supposedly lax border regime. The government has sought to respond to the alarm by announcing stricter knife controls and rules for migrants in Germany illegally. — AFP

## Pakistanis tried for incitement to kill Dutch leader Wilders

SCHIPHOL, Netherlands: Two Pakistani men stood trial in absentia Monday at a high-security court in the Netherlands over alleged attempts to incite the murder of far-right and anti-Islam Dutch leader Geert Wilders. Dutch prosecutors have charged 56-year-old religious leader Muhammed Ashraf Jalali for calling on his followers to kill Wilders and promising they would be "rewarded in the afterlife."

Another man, Saad Hussain Rizvi, leader of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) party, is suspected of urging followers to kill Wilders after Pakistani cricketer Khalid Latif was sentenced for incitement to murder him. "This case has had a huge impact on me and my family," said Wilders, dressed in a dark suit, white shirt and maroon tie. "I'm asking this court to send a strong signal ... that calling a fatwa in this country is unacceptable," he added.

The trial took place at a highly secure courthouse near Amsterdam's Schiphol airport. Dutch authorities asked Islamabad for legal assistance to question the suspects and demand they appear in court. However, no treaty exists with Pakistan for mutual legal assistance and the two men did not appear in the dock. Neither man had legal representation present.

### 'Death threats'

In September last year, judges sentenced Latif to 12 years behind bars for incitement to murder Wilders after the firebrand lawmaker sought to arrange a competition for cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). Wilders cancelled the cartoon contest after protests broke out in Pakistan and he was inundated with death threats. He has been under 24-hour state protection since 2004.

The planned competition "caused a lot of unrest within the Muslim community. He (Wilders) received hundreds, if not thousands of death threats," said the judge, who asked not to be identified. In the Netherlands, the plan to stage the contest was widely criticized as needlessly antagonizing Muslims.

But the call to kill Wilders appeared to resonate, as a Pakistani man was sentenced to 10 years in prison in 2019 for plotting his assassination in the wake of the cancelled contest. Wilders said in court he had planned the contest because "it's unacceptable that you are not allowed freedom of speech ... in countries where it is permitted by law." "For the past 20 years I have been robbed of my freedom because of what I think, say, write and do," said Wilders. "Fatwas are the worst of all. They never go away. I still receive death threats on a daily basis," added the politician.

The public prosecutor called for Jalali to receive 14 years in prison. Six years were requested against Rizvi with a verdict expected on September 9. "The aim of the suspect (Jalali) was to kill Wilders. He (Jalali) had great influence in Pakistan," alleged the prosecutor, who asked to remain anonymous. "Unfortunately, we see politicians being more and more threatened because of what they say and think."

The hardline TLP religious group is known for its massive street protests over blasphemy allegations that can paralyze cities for days. It brought tens of thousands of people to the streets after Paris-based satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo republished cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed in 2020. — AFP

## Ousted Bangladeshi leader becomes headache for India

NEW DELHI: Four weeks after ex-premier Sheikh Hasina fled Bangladesh by helicopter during a student-led revolution, analysts say she has become a diplomatic headache for her hosts in India. Hasina's iron-fisted tenure came to an end last month as protesters marched on her palace in Dhaka after 15 years characterized by rights abuses and opposition crackdowns.

Bangladeshi students who led the uprising are demanding she return from India, her biggest benefactor before her ouster, to be tried for the killing of protesters during the revolt. But sending the 76-year-old back risks undermining India's standing with its other neighbors in South Asia, where it is waging a fierce battle for influence with China. "India is clearly not going to want to extradite her back to Bangladesh," said Thomas Kean of the conflict resolution think-tank International Crisis Group. "The message that would send to other leaders in the region who are close to New Delhi would not be a very positive one ... that ultimately, India will not protect you," he told AFP.

### 'Want a good relationship'

New Delhi last year saw its preferred presidential candidate in the Maldives lose to a rival that immediately tilted the strategically placed luxury tourism destination towards Beijing. Hasina's toppling lost India its closest ally in the

region. Those who suffered under Hasina in Bangladesh are openly hostile to India for the abuses committed by her government.

That hostility has smoldered through megaphone diplomacy waged by Hindu-nationalist Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and directed towards Bangladesh's caretaker administration. Modi has pledged support for the government that replaced Hasina, led by 84-year-old Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus.

But Modi, who has made championing the Hindu faith a key plank of his tenure, has also repeatedly urged Yunus's administration to protect Bangladesh's Hindu religious minority. Hasina's Awami League was considered to be more protective of Bangladesh's Hindu minority than the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Modi used his annual Independence Day address from atop the 17th century Red Fort to suggest Bangladeshi Hindus were in danger, and later raised the matter with US President Joe Biden.

Some Bangladeshi Hindus and Hindu temples were targeted in the chaos that followed Hasina's departure in attacks that were condemned by student leaders and the interim government. But wildly exaggerated accounts of the violence were later reported by pro-government Indian news channels and sparked protests by Hindu activist groups loosely affiliated with Modi's party.

Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, a top leader of the BNP, said India had put "all its fruit in one basket" by backing Hasina, and did not know how to reverse course. "The people of Bangladesh want a good relationship with India, but not at the cost of their interests," Alamgir, one of thousands of BNP members arrested during Hasina's tenure, told AFP. "The attitude of India unfortunately is not conducive to creating confidence."

The memo did not state to whom it was addressed. Banerjee had directed officials to take "effective and prompt" action "within a specified timeframe," according to the document. It did not detail the preparation period. "If those measures had been taken, this incident may never have happened," said Dr Riya Bera, a postgraduate trainee at R G Kar, of her colleague's death.

Asked by Reuters about the 2019 assurances, West Bengal Health Secretary N S Nigam said the COVID-19 pandemic had disrupted improvements for two years but "a lot" had been done since 2021, including strengthening CCTV coverage and engaging private security in hospitals. "We are committed to do the remaining work and fill the gaps that emerged after the R.G. Kar incident," he said.

Banerjee on August 28 also announced that \$12 million would be spent to begin work on improvements such as better lighting in health facilities, resting spaces and female security staff. The chief minister's office, as well as R.G. Kar hospital, did not respond to calls seeking comment. Authorities continue to investigate the August 9 incident, for which no charges have yet been filed.

### 'Patriarchal attitudes and biases'

The assault on the doctor in Kolkata, who cannot be named under local laws, recalled memories of the 2012 gang rape of a physiotherapist in a Delhi bus, which convulsed India in anger and triggered protests. Reuters interviewed 14 female doctors at government hospitals in West Bengal and elsewhere in India about their challenges in a country where women's safety is a long-standing concern.

They described poor working conditions, including aggressive treatment from the families of patients and having to sleep on benches in dimly-lit corridors due to a lack of rest facilities. Some doctors spoke of napping in break rooms with no locks during lengthy shifts, only to have people barging in. Others described confronting male patients who photographed them without permission, claiming that they were documenting evidence of their treatment.



Former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

### 'Sheltering the autocrat'

Such is the atmosphere of distrust, when deadly floods washed through both countries in August some Bangladeshis blamed India for the deaths that resulted. Bangladesh's interim government has not publicly raised the issue of Hasina taking refuge in India with New Delhi — her last official whereabouts is a military airbase near the capital — but Dhaka has revoked her diplomatic passport, preventing her from travelling onwards.

The countries have a bilateral extradition treaty first signed in 2013 which would permit her return to face criminal trial. A clause in the treaty, however, says extradition might be refused if the offence is of a "political character".

India's former ambassador to Bangladesh, Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty, said that the bilateral relationship is too important for Dhaka to sour it by pressing for Hasina's return. "Any mature government will realize that making an issue out of Hasina staying in India is not going to give them any benefits," he told AFP. — AFP

Indian Medical Association (IMA) President RV Asokan told Reuters that while the August 9 homicide-assault appeared to be unique in its brutality, "the fact that anybody can walk in shows the vulnerability of the place, and this when more and more women are joining the profession."

Some doctors have taken self-defense measures: One doctor at a hospital in Odisha state, which neighbors West Bengal, said her father gave her a knife to ward off potential attackers. And Dr Gauri Seth, a post graduate trainee at Medical College, Kolkata, told Reuters that after the August 9 incident, she would not go on duty again without carrying a pepper spray or scalpel to defend herself.

About 60 percent of India's doctors are female, and three-quarters of them have described being victims of verbal abuse, physical attacks and other harassment while on duty, according to the IMA, the nation's largest group of physicians. "Due to ingrained patriarchal attitudes and biases, relatives of patients are more likely to challenge women medical professionals ... (they) also face different forms of sexual violence at the workplace," India's Supreme Court wrote in a August 20 ruling ordering the creation of a task-force on medical workers' safety.

India introduced tough laws governing crimes against women following the 2012 Delhi gang rape, including expanding the definition of rape to include all penetration without consent, as well as criminalizing voyeurism and stalking. But the situation remains bleak, according to activists and government data. Almost 450,000 crimes against women were reported in 2022 — the most recent year for which data is available — up 4 percent on 2021, government data show. More than 7 percent of the alleged crimes were rape-related.

Lawyer and rights activist Vrinda Grover blamed inadequate training for police investigators and broader cultural issues. "What is very disturbing in this case is the ordinariness of what the victim was doing: she was in her workplace," she said. "There is something wrong with a society where such conduct is so commonplace." — Reuters

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2024



CAIRO: In this picture taken on Feb 27, 2023, a deliveryman balances a load of bread on his head as he rides a bicycle through a street in the old quarter of the Egyptian capital. — AFP

# Egypt counts on foreign funds to buy gas as power crisis worsens

## Saudi Arabia, Libya help fund Egypt's gas purchases

CAIRO: Saudi Arabia and Libya have financed the purchase of gas cargoes worth at least \$200 million to help Egypt ease its energy crisis this summer amid a steep decline in domestic gas output, two industry sources familiar with the matter said. Egypt needs some \$2 billion worth of gas to cover summer demand through October, according to one of the two sources familiar with the government's plan, but a hard currency crisis means it lacks funds to fully cover imports of liquefied natural gas.

"Without support from our friends in the Gulf, we won't be able to pay for these shipments," one of the sources said. He added officials were looking to raise more money from allies. The two sources said Saudi Arabia had financed three of the 32 LNG cargoes Cairo has bought so far this year, which according to Reuters calculations are worth around \$150 million at current prices.

Libya bought one cargo in July worth around \$50 million with funds of the Libyan National Oil Corporation, the sources added. Egypt's gas bill and funding from Saudi Arabia and Libya have not been previously reported. A spokesperson for Egypt's petroleum ministry said gas tender details were confidential. The Saudi government, Saudi Arabia's central bank and Libya's state energy firm

NOC did not respond to Reuters' requests for comment. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have poured tens of billions of dollars into Egypt to support President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, who they view as an important ally.

Egypt has had to resort to load-shedding in the last year to keep its grid functioning amid a lack of gas supply and rising demand, and the deepening energy crisis is straining Cairo's budget as it grapples with a heavy subsidies bill. Sisi's government has boosted fuel and food subsidies this summer, but those increases do not offset a 60 percent devaluation in the Egyptian pound since March 2024, leaving Egypt's growing population struggling with the rising costs of living.

Egypt's foreign debt reached \$154 billion in May, close to end-2023's all-time high of \$168 billion. "This financial burden (of the gas bill) comes at a critical time for Egypt as it faces troubles reining in its subsidy bill, which could have an impact on social security and overall stability," said Mona Sukkarieh, political risk consultant and cofounder of Middle East Strategic Perspectives.

Egypt's domestic gas output plummeted to a six-year low in May, down around 25 percent from its 2021 peak, and is expected to fall by a further 22.5

percent through 2028, consultancy Energy Aspects said. The country had planned to become a major gas exporter after Italian energy group Eni discovered the giant Zohr offshore field in 2015.

Its energy ministry at the time said when Zohr started production in 2017 that the field would produce 2.7 billion cubic feet per day until 2039, but after rising to a peak at 3.2 bcf/d in 2019 output fell to just 1.9 bcf/d in the first half of 2024. Four industry and diplomatic sources said Zohr's speedy development has injected too much water into the reservoir and made gas extraction more difficult.

Eni said production from Zohr was in line with what it had been forecasting and what had been agreed with its partners and authorities. The group added that plans for the field's output had to be updated following slower development during the COVID-19 pandemic. Zohr's development has been in line with Eni's fast-track model, the Italian group also said. The same four sources said investments in the gas industry have also slowed because Egypt has accumulated around \$6 billion worth of debt for gas and fuel supplies.

Egypt's debt to Eni alone - mainly related to gas - stood at nearly \$1.27 billion at the end of June, up from \$1.16 billion at the end of last year. Eni's spokes-

person said the situation had begun to improve from July as the country started to repay some debts. In the first months of 2024, Eni reduced its investments in the country on the basis of assessments of efficiency and field performance, the spokesperson said. A source close to Malaysia's Petronas said the firm has also paused investments in its West Nile Delta project as it waits to be repaid hundreds of millions of dollars of debts.

Petronas did not respond to Reuters' request for comment. The financial and power crises have become a major challenge to Sisi's effort to stabilize the economy and fuel an infrastructure boom. Along with inflation and a weakening currency, the outages have become symptoms of the worst economic crisis since Sisi took power in 2014.

Egypt's power consumption will jump by 39 percent in the next decade due to a rising population, urbanization, industrialization and air conditioning use, said Lerato Monaisa, senior analyst at Fitch group company BMI. "Egypt is facing significant challenges, worsened by rising power demand and declining gas output... daily power cuts had been disrupting businesses and risked fuelling public discontent," said Mehrun Etebari, Global LNG director at S&P Global Commodity Insights. — Reuters



TRIPOLI: Deputy governor of Libya's Central Bank Abdel Fattah Ghaffar holds a press conference at the bank's headquarters in Tripoli. — AFP

## Oil exports remain halted at major Libyan ports

BENHAZI: Oil exports at major Libyan ports were halted on Monday and production curtailed across the country, six engineers told Reuters, amid a standoff between rival political factions over control of the central bank and oil revenue. Some output was being increased to feed local power generation, they said. Libya's oil production has plummeted by more than half from typical levels since the standoff began last month, when western factions moved to oust veteran Central Bank of Libya (CBL) Governor Sadiq al-Kabir and replace him with a rival board.

In response, eastern factions called for a shutdown to all oil production. The crisis threatens to end a four-year period of relative peace in the OPEC member that for a decade has been split between eastern and western factions that have drawn backing from Russia and Turkey respectively.

Exports remained halted at the ports of Es Sidra, Ras Lanouf, Hariga, Zueitina, Brega and Sirte, engineers there said. Arabian Gulf Oil Company (AGOCO), a subsidiary of the state-owned National Oil Corporation (NOC), ordered production to be boosted at its fields to feed a power plant at Hariga port, engineers have told Reuters. AGOCO, which controls the Sarir, Nafoura and Messla fields, was producing 139,000 barrels per day (bpd) on Aug. 28, down from 290,000 bpd on July 20, NOC said last week. — Reuters

## China rolls out the red carpet for African leaders

BEIJING: China rolled out the red carpet on Monday for leaders from across Africa, seeking to deepen ties with the resource-rich continent it has furnished with billions in loans for infrastructure and development. Beijing has said this week's China-Africa forum will be its largest diplomatic event since the Covid-19 pandemic, with more than a dozen leaders and delegations expected. China has sent hundreds of thousands of workers to Africa to build its megaprojects while tapping the continent's vast natural resources including copper, gold, lithium and rare earth minerals.

Its huge loans have funded infrastructure but also stoked controversy by saddling countries with huge debts. China, the world's number two economy, is Africa's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade hitting \$167.8 billion in the first half of this year, according to Chinese state media.

Security is tight across Beijing, with roads and bus stops bedecked with banners declaring China and Africa are "joining hands for a brighter future". Among

the leaders in the capital is South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, who arrived early on Monday for a four-day trip during which he will also visit the southern tech powerhouse city of Shenzhen.

Trade between China and South Africa soared to \$38.8 billion in 2023, according to the South African presidency. Ramaphosa met Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Monday, state news agency Xinhua said.

China and South Africa are expected to sign a number of agreements focused on "enhancing economic cooperation and the implementation of technical cooperation", Ramaphosa's office said.

Xi also met Democratic Republic of Congo President Felix Tshisekedi on Monday, state news agency Xinhua said. China has a significant presence in the DRC, where it is keen on tapping vast natural resources including copper, gold, lithium and rare earth minerals. But it has grappled with security issues there. DRC sources told AFP in July that a militia attack on a mining site in gold-rich Ituri province killed at least four Chinese nationals. Leaders of Djibouti — home to China's first overseas military base — as well as Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Mali and others, also arrived in Beijing on Sunday and Monday. Beijing's loans to African nations last year were their highest in five years, research by the Chinese Loans to Africa Database found. Top borrowers were Angola, Ethiopia, Egypt, Nigeria and Kenya. — AFP



BEIJING: A motorcade prepares as South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa arrives at the Beijing Capital International Airport, ahead of the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Beijing on Sept 2, 2024. — AFP

## UK North Sea tax hike means \$16bn revenue drop

LONDON: British government plans to increase a windfall tax on North Sea oil and gas producers would lead to a nearly 12 billion pound (\$16 billion) drop in revenue to the state and accelerate a decline in output, an industry group said on Monday. The Labour government, elected in July, has said the changes will help to achieve a ramp-up in renewable power and shift from oil and gas to reduce carbon emissions and help curb global warming.

Industry group Offshore Energies UK forecast the changes would reduce tax revenue by 12 billion pounds between 2025 and 2029 compared to the current tax regime. Capital investment in the sector over the period is expected to fall to 2.3 billion pounds from around 14 billion pounds, OEUK said.

The proposed tax changes "will trigger an accelerated decline of domestic (oil and gas) production, and a corresponding reduction in taxes paid, jobs supported, and wider economic value generated," OEUK CEO David Whitehouse said in a statement. North Sea focused NEO Energy said the fiscal and regulatory uncertainty would slow investment across its portfolio.

NEO owns half of the Buchan Horst development project in the UK North Sea with Serica Energy and Jersey Oil & Gas owning 30 percent and 20 percent, respectively. Production in the mature North Sea basin has declined from a peak of 4.4 million barrels of oil equivalent per day (boed) at the start of the millennium to around 1.3 million boed today.

The North Sea Transition Authority (NSTA) regulator has forecast it will decline to less than 200,000 boed by 2050. Shortly after its election, Britain's Labour government said it would increase the Energy Profits Levy (EPL) to 38 percent from 35 percent starting Nov. 1, bringing the headline rate of tax on oil and gas activities to 78 percent, among the highest in the world. — Reuters



## Business

# Gulf Capital Investment Company 'InvestGB', Investcorp announce strategic partnership

## Partnership helps clients diversify their investment portfolios

KUWAIT: As part of its continuous efforts to provide the best investment opportunities to its clients, Gulf Capital Investment Company "InvestGB", the wholly owned investment arm of Gulf Bank, has entered a strategic partnership with Investcorp, a leading global alternative investment manager. This partnership will allow InvestGB and Gulf Bank's broad client base to access Investcorp's diversified real estate investment portfolios.

Through this strategic partnership, InvestGB and Gulf Bank's clients will have the opportunity to invest in curated investment offerings across key real estate sectors which include multifamily, industrial, and student housing. Investcorp's multifamily portfolio offers exposure to a well-diversified basket of residential properties across attractive markets that align with the investment objectives of InvestGB and Gulf Bank clients. Investcorp's industrial portfolio also provides clients with unique opportunities to benefit from the flexibility of industrial assets and the remarkable growth they are wit-



Noorah AlSane

nessing in addition to their resilience. The student housing sector offers clients a unique combination of stable occupancy rates, providing InvestGB and Gulf Bank clients with access to this asset class.

Commenting on this partnership, Noorah AlSane, Managing Director of Real Estate Investments at InvestGB said, "This strategic partnership aligns perfectly with our commitment to pro-



Mohamed AlSada

viding our clients with innovative and diversified investment solutions".

AlSane added, "Investcorp's strong reputation and expertise in real estate make them the ideal partner for offering these exclusive investment opportunities to our valued clients."

Mohamed AlSada, Managing Director of Private Wealth - Bahrain and Kuwait Markets at Investcorp expressed

his delight on this strategic partnership, "This partnership leverages Investcorp's global investment expertise and proven track record in these sectors, and offers InvestGB and Gulf Bank clients with access to our best-in-class real estate investment offerings.

InvestGB is a closed Kuwaiti shareholding company with a capital of KD 10 million, and provides a comprehensive range of leading and innovative services segmented into Wealth Management, Asset Management, Investments, and Investment Advisory for



INVESTCORP

AlSada added, "This strategic partnership with InvestGB will provide its valued clients with access to our best real estate investment offers and will ensure an array of benefits for both parties, as it allows InvestGB to benefit from Investcorp's global expertise in the real estate investments sector and its extensive track record in real estate investment. It also provides us with the opportunity to access InvestGB's wide client base and partner with Gulf Bank, one of Kuwait's leading banks."

high-net-worth individuals and institutional investors. Guided by a seasoned team of investment professionals, InvestGB adheres to the highest ethical standards, one of its core values.

InvestGB aims to build a robust investment management platform for its clients and Gulf Bank's clients, contributing to the Bank's revenue and profits through a solid investment strategy and innovative offerings. The company seeks to expand its strategic relationships with top-tier firms and strengthen Kuwait's image as a business destination for foreign investors.

## Australia home prices nudge higher in August

SYDNEY: Australian home prices nudged higher in August, posting a 19th straight monthly rise, though the pace of growth showed some signs of slowing, data showed on Monday. Figures from property consultant CoreLogic showed national home prices rose 0.5 percent in August, slightly above the downwardly revised 0.3 percent rise in July. Prices, which have continued to hit record highs since bottoming out early last year, are up 7.1 percent from a year ago.

But CoreLogic said the quarterly increase of 1.3 percent is now less than half the rate of growth in the same three-month period a year ago. "While seasonality may have contributed to weaker value growth through winter, affordability constraints are a key factor behind the broader slowdown," CoreLogic's Head of Research Eliza Owen said in a statement. Still, there is more demand for housing than supply though the market was becoming "increasingly balanced," Owen said.

Rates of increase across the cities remained diverse as prices rose 2.0 percent in Perth, followed by a 1.4 percent increase in Adelaide and 1.1 percent in Brisbane. Sydney rose a mild 0.3 percent, while prices dipped in Canberra, Melbourne, Darwin and Hobart.

A Reuters poll of property analysts last week showed average home prices in Australia will rise more than 6 percent this year, before moderating slightly in coming years. The Reserve Bank of Australia has raised interest rates by 425 basis points since May 2022 to tame inflation, but the gains in the real estate market have defied expectations, helped by record immigration and a limited housing supply.

While that may be good news for property owners, the recent rally in house prices will make it more difficult for first-time home buyers. The RBA is not expected to reduce rates this year and is forecast to cut by just 75 basis points in 2025. Home prices were expected to rise an average 6.3 percent nationally this year, according to the Aug. 20-29 Reuters poll of 13 property market analysts, faster than the 5.3 percent rise predicted in a May survey. That outlook was largely driven by expectations of strong price growth in some state capitals.

"I see consistent growth in the next couple of years, but no boom. The growth will be underpinned by our very strong migration and the fact we're not building enough dwellings," said Michael Yardney, founder of Metropole, a real estate advisory firm. "Property markets are always fragmented based on local factors. But what has surprised many analysts is the strong performance of Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane. It's a combination of more people, strong wages, and up until recently, relatively cheaper properties."

Home prices in those three cities were expected to rise by 22 percent, 14 percent and 12 percent, respectively, in 2024. In Sydney, Australia's biggest city, prices were forecast to rise 5 percent; in Melbourne, they were predicted to fall 0.4 percent. At a national level, average prices are expected to rise 4.3 percent in 2025 and 4.5 percent in 2026, the poll showed. "There's no short-term solution to fixing the Australian housing market or affordability ... Owning a house will remain a luxury good for many and we think renting is probably going to increase its dominance, as it has over the last decade or so," said Johnathan McMenamin, senior economist at Barrenjoey. "Even once we get interest rates coming off their peaks, there isn't enough housing in Australia for the population we have and we think that will continue to put upward pressure on house prices." Relatively high mortgage rates and a short supply of affordable homes are expected to force many would-be first-time buyers to keep renting despite it eating up a relatively large proportion of their earnings. Rents have increased nearly 40 percent over the past five years in Australia, according to data from CoreLogic. Average urban home rents will rise 5-7 percent over the coming year, according to the median view of eight economists in the poll. — Reuters

## ECB policymakers at odds over growth outlook

FRANKFURT: European Central Bank policymakers are increasingly at odds on the outlook for growth, a rift that could shape the rate cut debate for months with some fearing a recession and others focusing on lingering inflation pressures, sources close to the debate said. The ECB cut interest rates in June and is almost certain to ease again in September in a nod to slowing price growth. However, policy decisions further down the road are likely to be more complicated as the euro zone economy enters a more precarious state, conversations with close to a dozen sources suggest.

The core of the debate is over how weakness in economic growth and a potential recession will impact inflation - the bank's ultimate focus - as it tries to cut inflation to 2 percent by the end of 2025.

Although much of the discussion is private, conversations with sources with direct knowledge of it reveal diverging views. An ECB spokesman declined to comment.

Policy doves, who remain in the minority, argue the economy is weaker than thought, recession risks are on the rise and firms that have hoarded labor are starting to cut vacancies, leaving the jobs market softer. Once employment declines, so does disposable income, quickly eroding consumption and leaving a self-reinforcing downturn.

"This would weaken price pressures quicker than we now forecast, so I think the risk of returning to below-target inflation is real," one of the sources, who asked not to be named, said. This would suggest the central bank is behind the curve in cutting interest rates and buffering the economy, supporting the case for quicker interest rate cuts, they say. Inflation, down to 2.2 percent in August, is now forecast to rise

## China warns Japan of retaliation over new chip curbs

BEIJING: China has warned of severe economic retaliation against Japan if it further restricts sales and servicing of chipmaking equipment to Chinese firms, Bloomberg News reported on Monday, citing people familiar with the matter. Toyota Motor privately

## Ghana set to raise cocoa farmgate price

ACCRA: Ghana will increase the state-guaranteed price paid to its cocoa farmers by nearly 45 percent for the 2024/25 crop season, two sources with knowledge of the price review told Reuters, to help boost their incomes and deter bean smuggling out of the country. The world's number two cocoa producer raised the farmgate price by more than 58 percent to 33,120 cedi (\$2,123.08) per metric ton, or 2,070 cedi per 64 kilogram (kg), in April for the rest of the 2023/24 season.

The mid-season price hike came after top cocoa producer, neighboring Ivory Coast, raised its farmgate price to 1,500 CFA francs (US\$2.55), or around 40 cedis, per kg for the April-to-September mid crop of the 2023/24 season, up from 1,000 CFA francs last season. One source said Ghana's cocoa producer price review committee had pegged the price at 48,000 cedi per ton, translating to 3,000 cedi per 64 kg of cocoa, for the 2024/25 season due to begin later in September, an increase just shy of 45 percent. The source said the decision would be sent to the cabinet pending an announcement.

Both sources asked for anonymity because the decision is not yet public. The second source said it was unlikely that the cabinet would change the committee's decision, saying also the price could not be increased beyond 48,000 cedis per ton without pushing Cocobod, Ghana's cocoa marketing board, into a deficit.

Ghana's price will also have to align with Ivory

again towards the end of the year and coming back to 2 percent only in late 2025.

Conservatives, or hawks in central banking parlance, who have dominated the policy debate since the start of rapid rate hikes in 2022, argue that actual growth figures persistently outperform weak survey results and the economy is holding up. Consumption is robust, the bloc just enjoyed a superb tourism season and construction is finally rebounding, so growth remains respectable.

Moreover, wage growth remains far above levels consistent with a 2 percent inflation target, so real incomes are rebounding quickly and should continue to insulate the economy. While industry is in a deep downturn and could drag Germany into a recession, this is more a structural issue that could take years to resolve, so monetary policy has little role, many of the sources said.

All this builds the case for slow rate cuts, perhaps one every quarter, until the ECB is certain inflation is heading back to 2 percent. Hawks are also likely to fight any policy easing that would push into 2026 the date the inflation target is met, since that could jeopardize the ECB's credibility, the sources said.

ECB board member Isabel Schnabel, a prominent policy conservative, argues that inflation concerns should trump growth. "Monetary policy should remain focused on bringing inflation back to our target in a timely manner," she said in a speech on Friday. "While risks to growth have increased, a soft landing still looks more likely than a recession."

The rift is unlikely to impact September's policy decision since there is already widespread consensus to cut rates, the sources said.

But it could affect how ECB President Christine Lagarde communicates the decision, shifting expectations for the October meeting. The bank is unlikely to discard its "meeting by meeting" approach to setting policy so there will be no commitment about October, but doves want Lagarde to highlight growth risks and signal that back-to-back cuts are not excluded.

Hawks fear such a message would heighten mar-

told Japanese officials that Beijing could react to the curbs by cutting Japan's access to minerals required for automotive production, the report said.

Several Chinese officials had repeatedly outlined the position with their Japanese counterparts in recent meetings, the report added. China's foreign ministry said the country has always been firmly opposed to the "artificial disruption" of global production and supply chain stability, the politicization of normal economic and trade cooperation, and scientific and technological blockades against China.

"China has always been committed to maintaining the safety and stability of the global



FRANKFURT: ECB President Christine Lagarde addresses a press conference on the Eurozone's monetary policy, at the ECB headquarters in Frankfurt am Main. — AFP

ket expectations too much, putting the ECB in a bind. Investors already see a 40 percent to 50 percent chance of an October cut and such a dovish message would only firm up those bets. "I think quarterly cuts serve us well and the data just don't support picking up this pace," a third source said.

While governors will agree on the text of the policy statement, Lagarde enjoys some freedom in delivering the message and can choose to emphasize certain points.

Economists also appear to take a mixed view on the outlook, even if most agree that it is far from bright. "Even if the US is to avoid recession, Europe might not," Macquarie strategist Thierry Wizman said. Wizman argued that weak Chinese demand for European goods exacerbates the downturn, while the potential impact on political stability from the rise of the far right in France and Germany could also weigh on consumer sentiment.

ABN Amro, meanwhile, expects continued, if meager, growth. "The euro zone economic recovery is struggling to gain momentum," ABN said. "High savings rate suggests consumers are less willing to spend real income gains, especially in France, the Netherlands and Germany." — Reuters

production and supply chain, and has always implemented fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory export control measures," spokesperson Mao Ning said, when asked for a comment at a regular news briefing.

A Toyota spokesperson said the automaker was constantly considering the best procurement strategies, not limited to mineral resources, to meet the needs of its customers. Japan began restricting exports of 23 types of semiconductor manufacturing equipment, aligning its technology trade controls with a US push to curb China's ability to make advanced chips in July. — Reuters



Though cocoa prices on the financial markets have soared, the rise is benefiting cocoa growers, bean processors, speculators and chocolatiers in unequal measure. — AFP

Coast's 2024/25 farmgate price, which has yet to be announced, the person added. The two biggest cocoa growing countries set up an initiative to coordinate farmgate prices and cocoa supplies to help sustain the sector and boost their farmers' incomes. Cocoa prices have been buoyant this year as disease and adverse weather in Ghana and Ivory Coast, which together supply more than 60 percent of the world's cocoa, pushed the market to a third successive deficit.

The International Cocoa Organization on Thursday raised its global cocoa deficit forecast for the 2023/24 season (October-September) to 462,000

tons from 439,000 tons, saying the market was headed for a 45-year low stocks-to-grindings ratio. Cocobod previously planned to launch the 2024/25 season on Sept. 1, earlier than usual, with a reduced production target of 650,000 tons, but both sources said the opening will be later. Opening the season earlier was aimed at helping reduce bean smuggling, which has been incentivized by low prices and delayed payments to farmers.

Some of Ghana's cocoa farmers and licensed buyers accused both sides of hoarding beans to benefit from the proposed price hike in the new season. — Reuters

# New unproductive forces: Chinese youth owning their unemployment

## Graduates grappling with unprecedented job scarcity

BEIJING: After quitting the education industry last August due to China's crackdown on private tutoring, He Ajun has found an unlikely second life as an unemployment influencer. The Guangzhou-based vlogger, 32, offers career advice to her 8,400 followers, charting her journey through long-term joblessness. "Unemployed at 31, not a single thing accomplished," she posted last December.

He is now making around 5,000 yuan (\$700) per month through ads on her vlogs, content editing, private consultations and selling handicrafts at street stalls. "I think in future freelancing will be normalized," said He. "Even if you stay in the workplace, you'll still need freelancing abilities. I believe it will become a backup skill, like driving." China is under instruction to unleash "new productive forces", with government policies targeting narrow areas of science and technology including AI and robotics.

But critics say that has meant weak demand in other sectors and risks leaving behind a generation of highly educated young people, who missed the last boom and graduated too late to retrain for emerging industries. A record 11.79 million university graduates this year face unprecedented job scarcity amid widespread layoffs in white-collar sectors including finance, while Tesla, IBM and ByteDance have also cut jobs in recent months.

Urban youth unemployment for the roughly 100 million Chinese aged 16-24 spiked to 17.1 percent in July, a figure analysts say masks millions of rural unemployed. China suspended releasing youth jobless data after it reached an all-time high of 21.3 percent in June 2023, later tweaking criteria to exclude current students.

Over 200 million people are currently working in the gig economy and even that once fast-growing sector has its own overcapacity issues. A dozen Chinese cities have warned of ride-hailing oversaturation this year. Redundancies have even spread to government work, long considered an "iron rice bowl" of lifetime employment.

Last year Beijing announced a 5 percent headcount

reduction and thousands have been laid off since, according to official announcements and news reports. Henan province trimmed 5,600 jobs earlier this year, while Shandong province has cut nearly 10,000 positions since 2022. Meanwhile, analysts say China's 3.9 million vocational college graduates are mostly equipped for low-end manufacturing and service jobs, and reforms announced in 2022 will take years to fix underinvestment in training long regarded as inferior to universities.

China currently faces a shortage of welders, joiners, elderly caregivers and "highly-skilled digital talent", its human resources minister said in March. Yao Lu, a sociologist at Columbia University, estimates about 25 percent of college graduates aged 23-35 are currently in jobs below their academic qualifications.

Many of China's nearly 48 million university students are likely to have poor starting salaries and contribute relatively little in taxes throughout their lifetimes, said one Chinese economist who asked not to be named because of the sensitivity of the issue. "Although they cannot be called a 'lost generation', it is a huge waste of human capital," the person said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping in May urged officials to make job creation for new graduates a top priority. But for younger workers unemployed or recently fired, the mood is bleak, nine people interviewed by Reuters said. Anna Wang, 23, quit her state bank job in Shenzhen this year due to high pressure and frequent unpaid overtime. For a salary of about 6,000 yuan per month, "I was doing three people's jobs," she said. Her ex-colleagues complain about widespread pay cuts and transfers to positions with unmanageable workloads, effectively forcing them to resign. Wang now works part-time jobs as a CV editor and mystery shopper.

At a July briefing for foreign diplomats about an agenda-setting economic meeting, policymakers said they have been quietly urging companies to stop layoffs, one attendee told Reuters. Olivia Lin, 30, left the civil



HUAI'AN, China: This photo taken on June 2, 2024 shows people attending at a job fair in Huai'an, in eastern China's Jiangsu province. — AFP

service in July after widespread bonus cuts and bosses hinted at further redundancies. Four district-level bureaus were dissolved in her city of Shenzhen this year, according to public announcements.

"The general impression was that the current environment isn't good and fiscal pressure is really high," she said. Lin now wants a tech job. She has had no interview offers after a month of searching. "This is completely different from 2021, when I was guaranteed one job interview a day," she said.

Shut out of the job market and desperate for an outlet, young Chinese are sharing tips for surviving long-term unemployment. The hashtags "unemployed", "unemployment diary" and "laid off" received a combined 2.1 billion views on the Xiaohongshu platform He uses. Users describe mundane daily routines, count down the days since being fired, share awkward chat exchanges

with managers or dole out advice, sometimes accompanied by crying selfies. The increasing visibility of jobless young people "increases broader social acceptance and reduces stigma surrounding unemployment", said Columbia's Lu, allowing otherwise isolated youth to connect and "perhaps even redefine what it means to be unemployed in today's economic climate".

Lu said unemployed graduates understood blaming the government for their plight would be both risky and ineffective. Rather, she said, they were more likely to slip into "an internalization of discontent and blame" or "lying flat". He, the influencer, thinks graduates should lower their ambitions.

"If we have indeed entered 'garbage time', then I think young people could accumulate skills or do something creative, such as selling things via social media or making handicrafts." — Reuters

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Finland to ban Russians from buying property

ELSINKI: Finland's government is proposing to ban most Russian citizens from buying property in the Nordic country in a move to protect national security, Defense Minister Antti Hakkanen said on Monday. Relations between Finland and neighboring Russia have soured since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, which prompted Helsinki to join the NATO military alliance after decades of non-alignment. The proposed ban on real estate purchases would exempt dual citizens and Russians with permanent residence in Finland or other European Union nations, and is subject to expert consultations before a later vote by parliament. "The regulations are aimed at preventing possible hostile influences against Finland," Hakkanen told a press conference. — Reuters

#### Berlin extends trusteeship over local Rosneft assets

BERLIN/FRANKFURT: Germany will extend its trusteeship over the local units of Russia's Rosneft for six more months in anticipation of a sale of the assets to Qatar, two people familiar with matter told Reuters on Monday. The future of Rosneft's German assets, which include a 54.17 percent stake in the PCK Schwedt refinery, has yet to be resolved after Berlin effectively took control of them following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. A trusteeship that puts Germany in charge of the division while leaving ownership with Rosneft has already been extended three times to protect Schwedt's supply and to give Rosneft time to find a buyer for its stake. The people, who could not be named because they were not authorized to speak publicly, said a decision to extend the trusteeship, which is set to expire on Sept 10, once again has been made. — Reuters

#### Murdoch looks to buy UK property website Rightmove

LONDON: REA Group, the Australian online real estate business majority-owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp empire, said Monday it is mulling a multi-billion-pound takeover of British peer Rightmove. Shares in Rightmove soared by 20 percent in early deals on London's top-tier FTSE 100 index, giving it a market value of almost \$5.3 billion (US\$7 billion). In a statement published on the London Stock Exchange, REA Group did not reveal what it would be prepared to pay for Rightmove. Following media speculation, it confirmed "that it is considering a possible cash and share offer" for all of the British company. "REA has not approached, nor had any discussions with, Rightmove regarding any potential offer." — AFP

#### Malaysia, New Zealand plan 50% increase in trade by 2030

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia and New Zealand said on Monday they plan to increase bilateral trade by 50 percent by 2030 and will also review an existing free trade agreement. The two countries will eliminate non-tariff trade barriers that impede the flow of goods between their borders, New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Luxon said at a joint press conference with Malaysian counterpart Anwar Ibrahim. "We're (also) working on e-certification and new customs cooperation to smooth flows at the border," Luxon said. The countries' trade ministers will meet next year to discuss reviewing the Malaysia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement, Luxon said, without providing details on how they would increase trade by 50 percent by 2030. — Reuters

## German, British tourists spur Spain's GDP gains

MADRID/BERLIN: Spain received a record 10.9 million tourists in July, 7.3 percent more than a year ago, while their spending jumped 12 percent, stoking the Spanish economy's solid growth in contrast to some European peers responsible for much of the inflow of visitors. Data released on Monday by the National Statistics Institute also showed that in the first seven months of 2024 spending by foreign visitors rose 18.6 percent to 71 billion euros (\$79

billion), despite initial concerns over anti-tourism protests and extreme summer temperatures.

The boom, driven by British and German visitors, is expected to propel Spain's GDP growth to 2.4 percent this year, significantly above 0.7 percent expected for the euro zone or Germany's 0.3 percent, according to a Reuters poll. Despite a 0.2 percent dip in Germany's second-quarter domestic consumption, German tourists increased their spending in Spain by almost 10 percent to an average of 1,340 euros per visit. Britons, who account for one in five visitors, spent 7.5 percent more, or 1,389 euros in July.

"Spain is more competitive than Germany in the services sector," said Raymond Torres, chief economist at the Fucnas think tank. "There is also a shift in consumption patterns, which have globally shifted towards spending on travel. People prefer to spend more on a better hotel."

## South Africa asks China for better balanced trade

BEIJING: South African President Cyril Ramaphosa told China's Xi Jinping on Monday he wanted to narrow his country's trade deficit with Beijing, days before the Chinese leader is due to urge a summit of 50 African nations to buy more Chinese goods. China, which has the world's second-biggest economy, is South Africa's largest trading partner globally but last year the value of its imports from China far outstripped exports.

Ramaphosa's remarks point to the challenge Xi may have in convincing African leaders gathering in Beijing to absorb more of the production powerhouse's wares, particularly after China did not meet a pledge from the

last Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Summit in 2021 to buy \$300 billion of African goods.

With Western curbs on Chinese exports such as solar panels and electric vehicles looming, finding buyers for items that the US and Europe maintain Beijing has overcapacity in is a top priority for Xi at this year's summit, which opens on Wednesday. This meeting of the three-yearly gathering is also likely to address China's role as a major lender to Africa, where many countries are struggling under growing debt burdens.

China's lending to Africa rose for first time in seven years in 2023. "As South Africa, we would like to narrow the trade deficit and address the structure of our trade," Ramaphosa told his host during talks at Beijing's Great Hall of the People, a statement from his presidential office said.

"We urge for more sustainable manufacturing and job-creating investments," Ramaphosa added ahead of the ninth Forum on China-Africa Co-operation Summit. South Africa which co-founded the BRICS group of de-

Hauke Prigge, 34-year-old communication coach from Berlin, has visited Spain thrice so far this year, spending an average of 2,200 euros on each of his two-week visits - more than he would spend at home, he said. After a 2017 peak for German tourism to Spain, a gradual decline followed as they explored other Mediterranean destinations, but since last year, data suggests a resurgence. Flight bookings for September - one of the German tourists' favorite months to travel - point to an 8.3 percent increase. Prigge likes to travel in September, but also out of season - in March. "The weather there is much better when it is cold here," he said. Germans are also changing their destinations within Spain. Although they still mainly visit the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean, many are now opting for mainland regions of Catalonia and Valencia. — Reuters



BEIJING: South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa (second left) arrives at the Beijing Capital International Airport, ahead of the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Beijing on Sept 2, 2024. — AFP

veloping economies along with Brazil, Russia, India, and China is also seeking Beijing's backing to help it move on from over a decade of economic stagnation by building up its infrastructure. — Reuters

## China's economic malaise speeds up obesity rates

HONG KONG/SHANGHAI: As China builds fewer houses and bridges, its consumers buy cheaper, less-healthy meals, and as factories and farms invest in automation, a new fiscal challenge is emerging: the country's obesity rate may grow much faster and add to healthcare costs.

Job stress, long work hours and poor diets are growing high-risk factors in the cities, while in rural areas, agriculture work is becoming less physically demanding and inadequate healthcare is leading to poor screening and treatment of weight problems, doctors and academics say. China is facing a twin challenge that feeds its weight problem: In a modernizing economy underpinned by technological innovation, more jobs have become static or desk-bound, while a prolonged slowdown in growth is forcing people to adopt cheaper, unhealthy diets.

With housing and infrastructure already abundant, for instance, millions of workers have switched from construction and manufacturing jobs to driving for ride-sharing or delivery companies in recent years. In a deflationary environment, consumers prefer cheaper meals, which can be unhealthy. Parents cut down on swimming or other sport classes. China's fast food market is expected to reach 1.8 trillion yuan (\$253.85 billion) in 2025, from 892 billion yuan in 2017, according to Daxue Consulting. "Economic downturns often lead to changes in peoples lifestyles," said Yanzhong Huang, senior fellow for global health at the Council on Foreign Relations. "Di-

etary habits may become irregular, and social activities might decrease."

"These alterations in daily routines can contribute to an increased incidence of obesity, and consequently, diabetes," he said, adding that he expected obesity rates to continue "rising exponentially, burdening the healthcare system." In July, Guo Yanhong, a senior official of the National Health Commission (NHC), said that obese and overweight people pose "a major public health issue."

The NHC did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Xinhua, China's official news agency reported in the same month that more than half of the country's adults are obese or overweight, higher than the 37 percent estimate provided by the World Health Organization.

A study by BMC Public Health estimates that costs with weight-related treatments are expected to rise to 22 percent of the health budget, or 418 billion yuan by 2030, from 8 percent in 2022. The estimate was "conservative" and did not take into account increases in healthcare costs, it said. That will add further strain on indebted local governments and reduce China's ability to direct resources to more productive areas to stimulate growth.

China's NHC and 15 other government departments in July launched public awareness efforts to fight obesity. The campaign, set to last for three years, is built around eight slogans: "lifelong commitment, active monitoring, a balanced diet, physical activity, good sleep, reasonable targets and family action." Health guidelines were distributed to primary and secondary schools in July urging regular screening, daily exercise, hiring nutritionists and implementing healthy eating habits - including lowering salt, oil and sugar.

The WHO defines an overweight person as someone with a body mass index (BMI) of 25 or higher, while the BMI threshold for obesity is 30. Only 8 percent of Chinese are considered obese, higher than neighboring Japan and South

Korea, but far lower than the United States' 42 percent rate, WHO data show.

That's in part because it's a relatively new problem in China, which has experienced widespread famine as recently as the 1960s. "China has undergone an epidemiological transition where diseases associated with under-nutrition have changed to an increase of those with unhealthy diets and sedentary lifestyles," said Christina Meyer, health policy analyst at RTI International in Seattle.

As consumers and workers adapt to the structural changes in an economy urbanizing rapidly in the coming decade, many overweight Chinese could cross the obesity threshold, doctors say. "The economic downturn in China could lead to an increase in the consumption of low-quality foods, such as fast food, due to income declines," said Jun Sung Kim, an economist at Sungkyunkwan University in South Korea.

"This, in turn, may contribute to obesity." China's fresh push to increase urbanization rates is a particular concern in light of its "996" culture of working 12-hour shifts, six days a week. Pui Kie Su, general practitioner at Raffles Hospital Beijing says some patients report eating to "de-stress" from work.

The proportion of obese boys in China jumped to 15.2 percent in 2022 from 1.3 percent in 1990, trailing the United States' 22 percent, but higher than Japan's 6 percent, Britain's and Canada's 12 percent and India's 4 percent. Obesity in girls rose to 7.7 percent in 2022 from 0.6 percent in 1990.

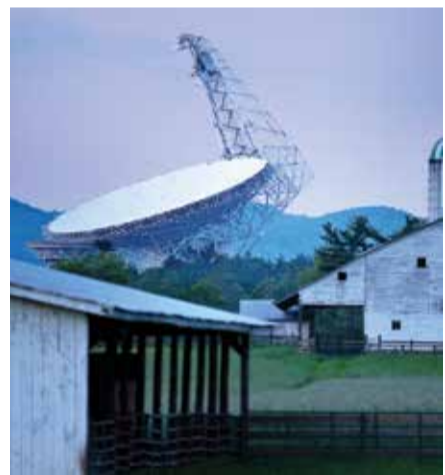
Many students buy snacks around the school gate or on their way home that are usually high in salt, sugar and oil, says Li Duo, chief professor of nutrition at Qingdao University. Li added that the government should "further communicate" with food companies, schools, communities and retailers about the risks of obesity caused by junk food or sweetened beverages. "China should ban the sale of junk food and sugary drinks in schools, and there should be no shops selling junk food within a certain distance around schools." — Reuters

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2024

## Inside the 'golden age' of alien hunting at the Green Bank Telescope



Bert Shou stands with his wife Diane Shou, who is now bedridden, traveled to the US National Radio Quiet Zone over 20 years ago to seek refuge from sensitivity to radio waves. — AFP photos



The Green Bank Telescope is seen near a farm in the Green Bank Observatory.



Green Bank Observatory's 140 foot decommissioned telescope is seen while being updated in the US National Radio Quiet Zone.

Nestled between mountains in a secluded corner of West Virginia, a giant awakens: the Green Bank Telescope begins its nightly vigil, scanning the cosmos for secrets. If intelligent life exists beyond Earth, there's a good chance the teams analyzing the data from the world's largest, fully steerable radio astronomy facility will be the first to know. "People have been asking themselves the question, 'Are we alone in the universe?' ever since they first gazed up at the night sky and wondered if there were other worlds out there," says Steve Croft, project scientist for the Breakthrough Listen initiative.

For the past decade, this groundbreaking scientific endeavor has partnered with a pioneering, US government-funded site built in the 1950s to search for "technosignatures" — traces of technology that originate far beyond our own solar system. The search for extraterrestrial intelligence, or "SETI," was long dismissed as the realm of eccentrics and was even cut off from federal funding by Congress thirty years ago.

But today, the field is experiencing a renaissance and seeing an influx of graduates, bolstered by advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning, as well as recent discoveries showing that nearly every star in the night sky hosts planets, many of which are Earth-like. "It feels to me like this is something of a golden age," says Croft, an Oxford-trained radio astronomer who began his career studying astrophysical phenomena, from supermassive black holes to the emissions of exploding stars.

### Is ET calling?

The story of the "National Radio Quiet Zone" dates back to 1958, when the US federal government designated a region in West Virginia to help astron-

omers shield their sensitive equipment from interference. This means no radio signals, no cellphone coverage, and limited WiFi for the surrounding community. Even the vehicles transporting staff to and from the telescope must run on diesel, as gas cars' spark plugs generate electrical interference.



David MacMahon, Breakthrough Listen Initiative Chief Engineer, Steve Croft, Breakthrough Listen Initiative Project Scientist, and Matt Lebofsky, Breakthrough Listen Initiative Lead System Administrator, pose for a portrait in the control room for the Green Bank Telescope.

"I think the community takes a certain pride in having a premier scientific facility right here," says Paul Vosteen, who has worked at the observatory for the past eight years. Standing on the highest platform of the 100-meter giant dish, Vosteen gestures toward the Allegheny Mountains, which act as a natural barrier for radio signals in this bowl-shaped valley. Radio astronomy began by happy accident when American physicist Karl Jansky discovered radio waves coming from the center of our galaxy, the Milky Way, in 1933.

Since then, it has allowed astronomers to peer beyond the planets, stars, and dust visible through optical tele-

scopes. From discovering pulsars to conducting sensitive observations of atomic hydrogen that shed new light on galaxy formation — and more recently, detecting fast radio bursts — radio astronomy has been key to numerous advances.

There's also a long-standing theory that if other civilizations exist, they

### 'Chances are improving'

Each year, for a week in late spring, Breakthrough Listen's team from the University of California, Berkeley, makes a pilgrimage to the telescope during a period of track maintenance for the 17-million-pound structure. "It's a relaxing time; every time I'm here, it's nice being in the National Radio Quiet Zone because there's no cellphone, no television—it's a kind of focused environment," says Matt Lebofsky, lead system administrator.

"Sometimes we need to metaphorically kick the tires, do things ourselves to get a ground truth about how our servers are behaving." Inside the server room, the sound of 6,000 whirring hard drives holding 40 petabytes of data — equivalent to 40,000 laptops — makes it impossible to speak without shouting. "We're essentially looking for 'weird things' in the data," Croft explains, something that suggests life forms might be trying to reach out, or that scientists are picking up their accidental transmissions.

There have been a few moments of heightened excitement in the SETI community, including the 1977 detection of the so-called "Wow!" signal from the constellation Sagittarius, which remains unexplained. More recently, in 2020, the team identified Breakthrough Listen Candidate 1 from the nearest star system, Proxima Centauri, but after extensive analysis, it was concluded to be human radio interference. "It's not deflating at all," insists Lebofsky. On the contrary, he feels more optimistic than ever, given the vast amounts of data now being collected and processed compared to the early days. "I feel like the chances are improving exponentially every year." — AFP

might emit radio waves, just as ours has since the dawn of radio communication in the 19th century. In Carl Sagan's novel "Contact," humanity is first alerted to extraterrestrial presence by a retransmission of Adolf Hitler's opening speech at the 1936 Summer Olympics — the first TV signal strong enough to escape Earth's ionosphere. A framework for estimating the number of detectable civilizations scattered across the galaxy is found in the "Drake Equation," devised by the legendary astronomer Frank Drake. Now one of the most recognized formulas in science, it's even a popular tattoo and T-shirt choice among alien enthusiasts.



Safely and motivational signs are seen in the machine shop at the Green Bank Observatory.



Children play softball in their school's field near the Green Bank Telescope.

## 'Russian spy' whale found dead in Norway

A Beluga whale whose strange harness sparked suspicions it was trained by Russia for spying purposes has been found dead in Norway, according to an NGO which tracks his movements. Nicknamed "Hvaldimir" in a pun on the Norwegian word for whale, hval, and its purported ties to Moscow, the beluga first appeared off the coast in Norway's far-northern Finnmark region in 2019. At the time, Norwegian marine biologists removed an attached man-made harness with a mount suited for an action camera and the words "Equipment St. Petersburg" printed on the plastic clasps.

Norwegian officials said Hvaldimir may have escaped an enclosure and may have been trained by the Russian

navy as he appeared to be accustomed to humans. Moscow has never issued any official reaction to speculation that he could be a "Russian spy". On Saturday, the beluga's lifeless body was discovered off the southwest coast at Risavika by Marine Mind, an organization that has tracked his movements for years.

"I found Hvaldi dead when I was scouting for him yesterday like usual," Marine Mind's founder Sebastian Strand told AFP. "We had confirmation of him being alive little more than 24 hours before finding him floating motionlessly," he added. Fredrik Skarbovik, maritime coordinator at the port of Stavanger, confirmed the beluga's death to the VG tabloid newspaper.

Strand said the cause of the whale's demise was unknown and no visible injuries were found during an initial inspection of Hvaldimir's body. "We've managed to retrieve his remains and put him in a cooled area, in preparation for a necropsy by the veterinary institute that can help determine what really happened to him," Strand added.

With an estimated age of around 14

Hvaldimir first appeared off Norway's coast in 2019. — AFP



or 15, Hvaldimir was relatively young for a Beluga whale, which can live to between 40 and 60 years of age. Beluga whales can reach a size of six meters (20 feet) and generally tend to inhabit the

icy waters around Greenland, northern Norway and Russia. Those include the Barents Sea, a geopolitically important area where Western and Russian submarine movements are monitored. It is

also the gateway to the Northern Route that shortens maritime journeys between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. — AFP

## Lifestyle



## NAIL MANICURE IDEAS CELEBRITIES ARE LOVING!

What type of manicure ideas do celebrities like to wear? Do they prefer long and bold acrylics, or are they into short and polished nails? It's good to have options, as well as different designs you can choose from. If you want to choose your next perfect manicure and you're excited to see what celebrities recommend, here are your options!

**Minimalistic**

Kim Kardashian is often spotted wearing short nails in either pink, beige, or clear shades. She doesn't like long nails as she's into simplicity. After all, being a workaholic and a busy mom does have its set of rules and restrictions. Once done by the right nail tech this manicure can look elegant, and almost Hollywood-like!

**Bold and bright**

Kim's sister Khloe Kardashian, on the other end, is a bit wilder and more flirtatious. In fact, she is into bold and bright colors and is often spotted wearing neon acrylics and electric blues.



She loves playful and long stiletto nails as they suit her character best. They are also the perfect party nails, as well as prom or graduation nails, birthday nails - you name it!  
PS: Heads up as these can be tricky to wear and maintain.

**Nail art**

Cardi B and Billie Eilish are mostly known for their love for dramatic and intricate nail designs. They love bold and fun ideas, as well as crystals and charms. You will often see gothic elements or precise and detailed artwork

on them when they're performing. However, finding a nail artist with such precision and attention to detail is tricky, yet paramount in making this work.

**Chrome nails**

Chrome or metallic nails have taken over the scene in 2024. They have been worn in different ways, while Gigi Hadid and Beyonce have gained the most amount of love and recognition. Chrome finishes can be gold, silver, as well as rose gold. They have a unique and futuristic vibe to them, and they will look the best when paired with some golden or silver jewelry.

**Matte nails**

Matte nails are perfect for celebrities who love quick and easy ideas, as well as celebrities who wish to recreate their perfect day-to-day manicure in the comfort of their home. Selena Gomez is often spotted wearing matte velvety nails in various shades, such as red, green, black, etc! With the right top coat, your matte manicure can last for weeks!

**French manicure**

The classic French manicure will never go out of fashion. It is sleek and elegant, as well as perfect for models. Speaking of models, Bella Hadid and actress Zendaya are big fans of this look. They sometimes opt for the classic white tip, and other times they add some glitter and sparkle. The oval nail shape will compliment this manicure the best.

Do you want to copy some of these cool and fun manicure ideas? Ready to recreate your favorite influencer design? Luckily, all of these nail trends will come in handy, plus they will suit different age groups, nail lengths, and even job occupations. Which one is your favorite?

Get more inspiration by visiting our Instagram @ dashebeautykw and website or follow up on our beauty blog. - Dashe Beauty Kuwait

## Tiger mauls handler at Australian theme park

An animal handler was mauled by a tiger at Australia's Dreamworld theme park on Monday, emergency services said, and rushed to hospital with deep wounds on her arm. Queensland Ambulance Service said the woman, in her 30s, suffered "lacerations to her arm" but was otherwise in a stable condition. "Dreamworld acknowledges an incident that occurred involving one of the park's tigers and a trained tiger handler," the theme park said in a statement. "Dreamworld's immediate focus is on the support of the team member.

"This was an isolated and rare incident, and we will conduct a thorough review accordingly." Located in Australia's Gold Coast tourist hub, Dreamworld says it is the largest theme park in the country. The park's "Tiger Island" houses nine Sumatran and Bengal tigers. Promotional material invites audiences to be "amazed by their might and raw power during feeding time". Four people died when Dreamworld's Thunder River Rapids Ride malfunctioned in 2016. — AFP

## British actor Ian McKellen feared he would die in London stage fall

British actor Ian McKellen said on Monday he feared he would die when he lost his footing and fell off a London stage mid-performance in June. McKellen, 85, was starring in "Player Kings", combining William Shakespeare's "Henry IV, Parts One and Two", in the capital's West End theatre district, when he tripped during a fight scene. The actor, who is best known for playing Gandalf in the film versions of "Lord of the Rings" and "The Hobbit" and was also Magneto in the "X-Men" movies, was taken to hospital. He did not return to the role for the rest of the tour.

"I am absolutely physically recovered," McKellen told BBC Radio. "It is emotionally that I've got some residue that I've got to deal with. I said to myself as I slid off the stage ... 'this is the end', these were the words in my mind." "Apparently I shouted out, 'My neck is broken, I am dying'. I don't remember saying that. So there was a lot going on in my head as the body responded to the fall." McKellen broke his wrist and chipped a vertebrae in the fall but said he was saved from more serious injury by the padding of the suit he was wearing to play the overweight character John Falstaff.

In a separate interview with BBC television, McKellen, whose stage career stretches back to 1961, said he had no plans to retire from acting and did not want anyone else to play Gandalf in the next instalment of the Lord of the Rings franchise, due in 2026. — Reuters



Romain Florentin works on the roof of a building in Paris.



Romain Florentin, a roofer and zinc worker, works on the roof of a building in Paris, on July 31, 2024. — AFP photos

## Paris zinc roofers seek elusive UNESCO heritage status

The zinc covering the roofs of central Paris has given the French capital's skyline its distinctive grey hue for almost two centuries. Now the roofs and the workers who create and care for them are aiming to enter a select heritage club to showcase a profession adapting to the challenges of climate change. The French culture ministry has chosen the zinc roofers as the country's entry for the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage to be decided at the UN body's session in Paraguayan capital Asuncion in December.

The craftsmanship of roofers and other ornamentalists who have sculpted the capital's skyline will be among 67 candidacies vying to join other iconic heritage sites such as India's Taj Mahal. According to the city's urbanism agency Apur, Paris has 128,000 roofs covering a surface area of 32 million square metres, of which 21.4 million are of the traditional zinc-covered variety. "Paris seen from above, it's obvious you're not in another city," said an enthused Delphine Burkli, mayor of the capital's ninth district. Burkli helped initiate the French bid and first proposed

in 2014 to add the roofs to UNESCO's heritage list.

But the plan has since changed as it is "very complicated", said Gilles Mermet, coordinator of the bid. The campaign to etch the roofs into the prestigious books of world heritage stumbled when Paris town hall withdrew its support. Mermet said it was "afraid" of "no longer being able to build in Paris without the agreement of UNESCO". "In the end, it was more interesting to showcase the profession itself" - which struggles to recruit - more than the roofs as such, to protect the beauty of the urban landscape, he added.

**Feeling the heat**

Every morning, Paris faces a shortage of about 500 roofers to complete the work needed, according to Meriadec Aulanier of the trade union bringing together companies in the plumbing and climate engineering industries. The French candidacy aims to encourage thinking about the future of the city and a craft forced to adapt in the face of climate change, adds Burkli.

The zinc covers almost 80 per-

cent of Parisian roofs has come under criticism for its role in overheating buildings. Darker roofs absorb more energy from sunrays - and that is bad news when summer heatwaves are becoming longer, more frequent and more intense as the planet warms up. An Apur study in 2022 found that 42 percent of roofs in Paris had a weak reflection capacity, meaning they absorbed more heat. These insulate poorly and "contribute to the rise in temperatures in homes", according to an assessment carried out by the Council of Paris in 2022 titled "Paris at 50C".

**Lack of insulation**

Roofscapes, a French start-up launched at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, put zinc under the spotlight in a test during the summer of 2023. The experiment used an eight-storey building covered in zinc with a technical void in the attic that acted as a thermic buffer zone. The study showed that a zinc roof heated the surrounding air during the day, up to 10 degrees Celsius above the home's temperature and 7C warmer

than the day's weather.

Nightfall brought little relief: the homes under the roofs heated 6C more than the temperatures on the lower floors. "At night, the zinc at the surface cools down. On the other hand, the heat continues to penetrate inside and that's where there's overheating in the homes," explained Eytan Levi, an architect and co-founder of Roofscapes.

But Mermet is adamant that the zinc itself is not the problem, rather the absence of insulation in old buildings. Training schools now teach budding roofers to pose the insulation, and the old zinc is recycled, he said. The "Paris at 50C" study raised the possibility of repainting the existing zinc roofs with a lighter-coloured paint to reflect the heat without harming their heritage value. Mermet, though, was unimpressed. Such an idea has "no interest" for him because "it will increase the price of restoring the roofs". "With the rain, your paint will end up burning and going to the sea." — AFP



Romain Florentin (center) flanked by Thierry Gesset-Parment, business manager of ATZ - L'Art du Toit company and president of CAPEB Grand Paris (right), and his apprentice (left), works on the roof of a building in Paris.



Romain Florentin (left) and his apprentice, cool off as they work on the roof of a building in Paris.

Lifestyle

# Almodovar back at Venice with stars Julianne Moore, Tilda Swinton

Spain's Pedro Almodovar returns to the Venice Film Festival Monday with his first feature film in English, "The Room Next Door", starring Julianne Moore and Tilda Swinton. A meditation on death and friendship set in New England, "The Room Next Door" sees regular Almodovar collaborator Swinton as a war correspondent suffering from terminal cancer, with Moore as her friend, a successful novelist who agrees to be at her side in her final moments.

Actor John Turturro completes the leading trio in the film that translates into English what the director has been developing for more than a decade in his native language — an increasingly melancholy cinema prone to analyzing the fear of death or physical decline. "My insecurity disappeared after the



Actress Julianne Moore (right), Spanish director Pedro Almodovar and actress Tilda Swinton attend the photocall of the movie "The Room Next Door" presented in competition during the 81st International Venice Film Festival at Venice Lido, on September 2, 2024. — AFP

first table read with the actresses... The language wasn't going to be a problem," Almodovar has said of his latest film, which has its world premiere on

the Lido Monday evening. "People talk a lot in my films... In 'The Room Next Door' Tilda Swinton and Julianne Moore carry the weight of the

whole film on their shoulders, and they are a spectacle," he said. It is not Almodovar's first foray into English-language filmmaking. His first, the short-format "The Human Voice", premiered at Venice in 2020, featuring Swinton as an abandoned lover. At Cannes last year, the director presented "Strange Way of Life", another short-format film, this time a Western starring Ethan Hawke and Pedro Pascal.

An iconic voice in Spanish cinema, Almodovar began with kitschy black comedies, such as "Pepi, Luci, Bom and Other Girls on the Heap" or "What Have I Done to Deserve This". His breakout film was 1988's "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown", which won the award for best screenplay at Venice and the Academy Award

for best foreign language film. But with time, the more circumspect streak of the prolific Spanish director has prevailed, developing from films such as 2002's "Talk to Her" — which won Almodovar the Oscar for best original screenplay, a rare feat for a non-English film — and 2004's "Bad Education" to the more recent "Pain and Glory" from 2019, about his career as a filmmaker. "Parallel Mothers", the story of two women who give birth the same day, won a best actress award for Penelope Cruz at Venice in 2021. Almodovar's film is one of 21 competing for the prestigious Golden Lion prize, to be awarded on September 7. — AFP

## Brazil's military dictatorship in spotlight at Venice

Director Walter Salles revives the ghost of Brazil's military dictatorship with "I'm Still Here", a tribute to the crusading wife of Rubens Paiva, an engineer and politician who disappeared in 1971. The film premiering Sunday by the director of 2004's "Motorcycle Diaries" and "On the Road" from 2012 is one of 21 in competition for the top Golden Lion prize at the prestigious Venice Film Festival. "I'm Still Here" is based on the 2015 book of the same title by well-known Brazilian writer Marcelo Rubens Paiva, whose father was a left-wing deputy until he went into exile after the rise of the military in Brazil.

After returning to his country, the elder Paiva resumed his career as an engineer, without abandoning his contacts with the underground. When the situation worsened in Brazil, with attacks and kidnappings by far-left groups opposed to the dictatorship, and a bitter repression by the military, Paiva was arrested in January 1971 and was never seen again.

His wife, Eunice, was also detained along with one of their daughters and spent twelve days being interrogated before being released. Played by Fernanda Torres in the film, Eunice never gives up in the search for her husband, even as she seeks to shield her five children from the realities of the politi-

cal situation - and the fate of their father for as long as she can.

"Eunice's story blended with the story of Brazil during the very horrible years that we lived, 21 years," Salles told a press conference Sunday ahead of the film's premiere. "It was an extraordinary story of family enduring an act of violence, and a woman really finding herself in the middle of it," he said. Through tireless efforts, Eunice was finally able to write this book at that time because as you see all over the world democracy is at risk," he added.

### Resurgence of far right

The younger Rubens Paiva, who is also a well-known columnist, said that when his mother years later became ill with Alzheimers, he felt compelled to write about her. "It was very important to write this book at that time because as you see all over the world democracy is at risk," he added.

Salles called film "a great instrument against oblivion." Work on the film started even before Brazil's far-right president, Jair Bolsonaro, came into power in 2019, ruling until last year. "I never thought that my generation... would see the resurgence of the extreme right," said Salles. "It's so vivid now." "I feel the anguish of the times we live in." — AFP



(From left) Author Marcelo Rubens Paiva, Brazilian actress Fernanda Torres, director Walter Salles and Brazilian actor Selton Mello attend the photocall of the movie "Ainda estou aqui (I'm Still Here)" presented in competition during the 81st International Venice Film Festival at Venice Lido, on September 1, 2024. - AFP



Ian Alcock (center), performs as Liam Gallagher, and Paul Mitchell (right), performs as Noel Gallagher as the Oasis tribute band 'Definitely Mightbe' plays at Swarcliffe Working Mens Club in Leeds, northern England on August 30, 2024. - AFP

## Oasis fans' fury sparks UK govt review of dynamic pricing

The British government has said it will probe surge pricing after furious Oasis fans faced huge hikes in ticket prices for the Britpop band's much-anticipated reunion. Fans were left frustrated on Saturday when sales websites crashed due to sheer weight of demand. But many who eventually made it to the front of the online queue hours after sales began were also dismayed to find their tickets had more than doubled in price.

Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy called the inflated prices "depressing" Sunday, adding that the practice would be reviewed as part of the government's upcoming consultation on consumer protections in ticket sales and resales. "We will include issues around the transparency and use of dynamic pricing, including the technology around queuing systems which incentivize it," Nandy said. On Ticketmaster — one of the official Oasis

sales websites — standing tickets originally priced at around £150 (\$197) were being sold for over £350 labelled as "in demand standing tickets". The company said artists decide whether or not to opt for the practice, where the value of the ticket changes based on the demand.

UK's Advertising Standards Authority regulator said on Monday it received 450 complaints about Ticketmaster ads for the gigs accusing them of making "misleading claims about availability and pricing". The regulator said it was "carefully assessing" the complaints. Dynamic pricing is widely used by airlines and is becoming increasingly common in concert ticket sales. However, with a limited supply of tickets, and huge demand for the Oasis reunion tour, fans slammed the practice as "greedy", "disgusting" and a "rip off". One reason given for using dynamic

pricing is to prevent touts from buying and reselling tickets at higher prices. Oasis had previously warned that "tickets sold in breach of the terms and conditions will be cancelled" after some pre-sale tickets bought on Friday appeared on resale sites at heavily inflated prices, some as high as £6,000. In Ireland, where reselling tickets above face value is illegal, Deputy Prime Minister Michael Martin slammed the "price gouging" as some tickets were sold for over 400 euros (\$440) due to surge pricing.

Oasis, whose hits include "Wonderwall", "Don't Look Back In Anger" and "Champagne Supernova", are scheduled to play 17 dates in the UK and Ireland, 15 years after warring brothers Liam and Noel Gallagher's last performance together. — AFP

## 'Deadpool' leads again as North American box office closes summer strong

"Deadpool & Wolverine" led the North American box office again this weekend, taking in an estimated \$15.2 million and helping boost domestic August totals well above pre-pandemic levels for a strong summer finish, analysts said Sunday. The superhero comedy from Disney and Marvel has led domestic ticket sales nearly every weekend since its release six weeks ago, partly on the draw of popular stars (and pals) Ryan Reynolds and Hugh Jackman.

Its domestic total now stands at \$603.8 million - making it only the 16th

film to surpass the \$600 million mark, 11 of them produced by Walt Disney Studios, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported. Sci-fi horror film "Alien: Romulus," from Disney-owned 20th Century Studios, tallied a solid score of \$9.3 million in its third weekend to place second for the Friday-through-Sunday period.

Set decades after the original "Alien," the franchise's latest entry stars Cailee Spaeny and David Jonsson as space colonists who have their own encounter with deadly xenomorphs. Sony's "It Ends With Us," a romance drama based

on the popular Colleen Hoover novel of the same name, had \$7.4 million in ticket sales to place third over the traditionally quiet US Labor Day weekend. Blake Lively stars and co-produced the film.

"Reagan," a biopic about the 40th US president from ShowBiz Direct and MJM Entertainment, took in \$7.4 million, a "good domestic opening for a political biography," said analyst David A. Gross, as approving audiences ignored tepid reviews. Arriving by design as the race to be the 47th president rapidly heats up, the film - based on Paul Kengor's book "The Crusader

- stars Dennis Quaid in a sympathetic treatment that traces Reagan's arc from childhood to the Oval Office.

And in fifth place, "Twisters" - Universal's follow-up to 1996's popular "Twister" - garnered an estimated \$7.2 million in ticket sales. Glen Powell plays a charming down-home storm chaser intrigued by a mysteriously prescient rival (Daisy Edgar-Jones) as they are battered by an astonishing series of tornadoes. The North American box office, hit first by Covid and then by strikes, started the summer slowly. But strong showings by "Deadpool," "Alien," "Inside Out

2" and "Twisters" have helped produce a dramatic reversal, and Tim Burton's "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" is expected to provide a further boost next weekend.

**Rounding out the top 10 were:**  
"Blink Twice" (\$4.7 million)  
"The Forge" (\$4.6 million)  
"Despicable Me 4" (\$4.1 million)  
"Afr AI d" (\$3.7 million)  
"Coraline" (15th anniversary re-release, \$3.2 million). — AFP



(From left) Kevin Feige, President, Marvel Studios, Ryan Reynolds, Shawn Levy, Hugh Jackman, Emma Corrin, Dafne Keen, Jennifer Garner, Chris Evans, Channing Tatum and Wesley Snipes speak onstage during Marvel Studios: The Ultimate Deadpool & Wolverine Celebration of Life in Hall H at SDCC in San Diego, California.



(From left) Hugh Jackman, Ryan Reynolds, and Shawn Levy speak onstage during Marvel Studios: The Ultimate Deadpool & Wolverine Celebration of Life in Hall H at SDCC in San Diego, California on July 25, 2024. - AFP photos

## Sports

# 'Great moment' as Mbappe scores first La Liga goal for Real Madrid

## French striker silences critics as Real overpower Real Betis 2-0

MADRID: Kylian Mbappe answered his critics in style as he netted his first La Liga goals to give Real Madrid a 2-0 win over Real Betis at the Santiago Bernabeu on Sunday which sends them second in the table. Since scoring in the UEFA Super Cup against Atalanta, new signing Mbappe had failed to find the back of the net in Madrid's opening three games in La Liga, prompting criticism in the Spanish press. Mbappe was made to wait for his goals as he squandered a series of chances, finally finding the back of the net in the 67th minute, sweeping the ball past the Betis goalkeeper with his left foot after a well-timed back-heel from Fede Valverde.

Eight minutes later the France captain added a second from the penalty spot and was cheered off the field when he was replaced by Luka Modric in the 84th minute. "It's a great moment," Mbappe told Spanish television after the match. "I was really hoping to score at the Bernabeu, in this mythical stadium, the best in the world. But the most important thing was to win. After the match against Las Palmas, we knew we had to win. And that's what we did today, in a difficult match. But we're Real, and in the end we win, and with style."

The smile on Mbappe's face was in contrast to the concern that had been shown since scoring his first goal and winning his first trophy in Warsaw on August 14. On Saturday, coach Carlo Ancelotti had hit back at the criticism, insisting that his star recruit was settling in well and he reasserted at the press conference after the match that "we never put Mbappe under pressure to score goals". "He

was very effective in the box, he had many opportunities. I think it is important for him to score, but we appreciate more the work for the team," added Ancelotti, who confirmed that Vinicius let the French striker take the penalty.

### 'Desire, motivation'

Ancelotti also spread his praise across the entire team which has taken a while to gel this season. "Anxiety, frustration, we don't have them," said Ancelotti. "We have desire, motivation to try to do better. Today we did better. I think we deserved to win. It was a good game, much more supportive among all, and we arrive at the (international) break feeling good." Madrid's win takes them second in the table with eight points, four behind early leaders Barcelona who eviscerated Real Valladolid 7-0 on Saturday to make it four wins from four in La Liga under new coach Hansi Flick.

Atletico Madrid are third after a late victory in Bilbao on Saturday while Villarreal are fourth, both of them also on eight points. Girona are fifth after picking up their second win of the season in Seville. Ivan Martin put Girona ahead in the 41st minute with Abel Ruiz wrapping up a 2-0 win over Sevilla with a penalty in the 73rd minute. Goals from Carlos Vicente and Luka Romero gave Alaves a 2-0 win over Las Palmas while Osasuna are in seventh after an exciting 3-2 win at home against Celta Vigo.

Ante Budimir teed up Flavian Boyomo to put the home side ahead after 21 minutes but the lead was short-lived as Borja Iglesias levelled for Celta. A



MADRID: Real Madrid's French forward #09 Kylian Mbappe shoots the ball during the Spanish league football match between Real Madrid CF and Real Betis at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid. — AFP

Carlos Dominguez own goal just before the break put Osasuna back in front with Abel Bretones adding a third just after the hour. Celta were reduced

to 10 men when Alfonso Gonzalez was sent off four minutes from time but an own goal from Moi Gomez was small consolation in the last minute. — AFP

## Juventus held by Roma in a drab goalless draw

TURIN: Juventus were held to a goalless draw by Roma on Sunday, ending Thiago Motta's perfect start as coach of the Serie A giants. A match short on action and goalmouth incident left Juve on seven points from their first three matches of the new campaign. Motta's team are behind champions and league leaders Inter Milan on goals scored after a much less inspiring performance than the two three-goal wins which preceded it.

"It was an even match and the right result," said Motta to Sky Sport. "We're only on our third game and today we played a team which is hard to play against, with a good coach and good players... There are lots of things we can improve. It's very early in the season, let's see where we are at the business end of the season, for now it's too early to talk about

our objectives for the season." A draw at Juve, where Roma traditionally struggle, gives coach Daniele De Rossi some breathing room for the international break after a difficult opening fortnight.

His team showed a level of defensive discipline which had been lacking in their first two fixtures of the campaign but offered very little else for fans to cheer about. The closest the away side came to scoring was a speculative distance effort in the final minute from full-back Angelino which whistled past the post. "We're under a lot of pressure for right now and it was important to get away from here with a point," said De Rossi. "This is a good starting point. It wasn't the best performance as we could have done better with the ball, but Juve brought on some brilliant players in the second half and we held out." Earlier Fiorentina came back from two goals down to draw 2-2 thanks to Moise Kean and debutant Robin Gosens, who looped in his new team's equalizer in the sixth minute of stoppage time. Como fell to a 1-0 defeat at Udinese - who won of four teams level with Inter - after Patrick Cutrone smashed a stoppage-time penalty wide, leaving Cesc Fabregas' promoted side bottom of the division on a single point. — AFP



TURIN: Juventus' Dutch midfielder Teun Koopmeiners heads the ball during the Italian Serie A football match against Roma at Allianz Stadium. — AFP

## Record-breaker Mueller scores as Bayern beat Freiburg

MUNICH: Bayern Munich veteran Thomas Mueller scored on the day he became the German giants' all-time record appearance maker in a 2-0 Bundesliga home win over Freiburg on Sunday. Mueller, in his 710th match for Bayern, came off the bench in the 59th minute with the hosts leading 1-0 thanks to a first-half penalty from Harry Kane.

With 12 minutes remaining, Mueller collected a Serge Gnabry pass on the turn and blasted in, the ball skipping off the ground and past Freiburg goalkeeper Florian Mueller. Mueller, who played his first game for the club in 2008, moved past former goalkeeper Sepp Maier to outright first on the appearance list in all competitions. "Records don't matter that much to me... more important is that today I could score a pretty nice goal - one which was technically outstanding," the veteran said with a smile.

Kane had converted a 38th-minute penalty to give Bayern the lead after a VAR review showed the ball hit the arm of an unsighted Freiburg captain Christian Guenter. Guenter told DAZN his side were brought down by "an insane penalty, really an insane penalty". "When you jump, of course your arms go up - if that's handball, I'll stop playing because it's nonsense. Maybe the German FA can start teaching us to jump without our arms." Kane's goal was his first so far this league season, with the England captain receiving an award for topping the Bundesliga goalscoring charts with 36 last season.

## PSG top of Ligue 1 after beating Lille

LILLE: Paris Saint-Germain are two points clear at the top of Ligue 1 already after coming through their biggest test of the season so far on Sunday, winning 3-1 away to fellow Champions League contenders Lille. Vitinha put PSG ahead on a stiflingly hot night in northern France with a penalty and Bradley Barcola doubled their lead. Edon Zhegrovca pulled one back in the second half to give the home side hope at the Stade Pierre-Mauroy, but Randal Kolo Muani's stoppage-time header wrapped up the win for the defending French champions. Luis Enrique's side appear to be coping just fine since the departure of their all-time leading scorer Kylian Mbappe, with PSG having won all three games so far this season, scoring 13 goals in the process.

They head into the September international break with a two-point lead at the top of the table from Marseille, Nantes, Monaco and Lens, and on this form it will take something special to knock them off the summit. PSG's Spanish coach said his team's start to the campaign had been "magnificent". "This was an away game, with all the difficulty that comes with that, against a team who have qualified for the Champions League and played

In the fifth minute of stoppage time, Joao Palhinha gave away a penalty for handball on his Bundesliga debut for Bayern, but Freiburg's Lucas Hoeler fired the spot-kick over the crossbar. After the match, Mueller climbed into the stands to celebrate with the club's ultras, giving away both his boots. "I told them they need to work hard this year because they'll need extra vacation days - we've got a lot ahead of us this year," Mueller said.

The win continued Vincent Kompany's perfect record in charge of Bayern, having won three from three in all competitions to start the season. Kompany, who was on the opposite side playing for Hamburg when Mueller made his Bundesliga debut in 2008, praised the "incredible" Mueller. "I experienced his first match - I was on the pitch with Hamburg at the time. 710 later, it's unbelievable," said the Belgian. "He gave 100 percent in every one of those games but also does so in training, which is what makes Thomas so special." Freiburg have never won at Bayern in the league, a run of 25 games dating back to 1993.

### Heidenheim go top

Teenage Bayern loanee Paul Wanner scored a penalty and set up a goal as Heidenheim thrashed Augsburg 4-0. The 18-year-old forward, who has three goals in three games in all competitions this season, stepped up to score a penalty after nine minutes, becoming the youngest player to convert a spot-kick in Bundesliga history. Wanner created a goal for Adrian Beck, while Leo Scienza and Maximilian Breunig also got on the scoresheet in the dominant home win. Heidenheim, promoted to the top division for the first time ahead of last season, will host Premier League side Chelsea in the Conference League in November as part of their debut European campaign.

### Champions League level

Meanwhile, Lille coach Bruno Genesio was left to regret the decision to deny his side a late equalizer, when Tiago Santos scored but the goal was disallowed by VAR for an extremely tight offside. "It was quite a balanced game before the penalty. But these are Champions League games, the real top level, and you really need to avoid making mistakes and be even more clinical," said Genesio.

Lille could be forgiven for feeling the effects of their Champions League play-off second leg away to Slavia Prague in midweek, when they weathered a storm to make the league phase of Europe's elite club competition. Despite that they almost went ahead when Bafode Diakite struck the post from a Zhegrovca cutback in the first half, but PSG then won a penalty just after the half-hour mark when Ousmane Dembele was fouled in the area. Vitinha rolled in the spot-kick, and Barcola then exchanged passes with Marco Asensio to run through and make it 2-0 on 36 minutes with his fourth goal of the season already.

Lille pushed after the break and were given hope when Zhegrovca drilled in low from outside the box 12 minutes from the end. They then thought they had drawn level when Santos netted, only for the offside flag

Wanner played a key role in Thursday's Conference League play-off win over Swedish side Hacken, scoring a goal and laying on an assist. The victory sent Heidenheim, who won their opener at promoted St Pauli, to the top of the table at the end of the round for the first time in their history. Heidenheim are ahead of RB Leipzig and Bayern on goal difference, making the trio the only clubs to have won their two opening fixtures. Leipzig on Saturday won 3-2 at Bayer Leverkusen which was the German champions' first league loss in 35 matches dating back to May 2023. — AFP

to cut short the celebrations. Kolo Muani made sure of PSG's win in stoppage time when he headed home from a cross by recent signing Desire Doue. PSG will begin their Champions League campaign in mid-September at home to Girona and will also take on Arsenal and Manchester City, amongst others, in the league phase.

Lille, meanwhile, can look forward to hosting Mbappe's Real Madrid and Juventus in the coming weeks, although first they will go to Lisbon to play Sporting. Marseille won 3-1 at Toulouse on Saturday with Mason Greenwood netting twice, while Nantes beat Montpellier by the same score away from home. Monaco and Lens drew 1-1 on Sunday as Przemyslaw Frankowski netted a stoppage-time penalty to secure a point for the visitors in the principality. Denis Zakaria had headed Monaco in front late on, but he handled in the box to allow Lens to leave with a draw.

Monaco will be in the Champions League after finishing last season as runners-up in Ligue 1, and the principality side will begin their campaign at home to Barcelona on September 19. Elsewhere on Sunday, Nice claimed their first win of the season as Evann Guessand scored twice in a 4-1 victory at Angers, who have lost all three matches since returning to the top flight. Le Havre came from behind to beat Auxerre 3-1 in Normandy, while Japan's Junya Ito and Ivory Coast forward Oumar Diakite found the net as Reims recovered from the loss of an early goal to defeat Rennes 2-1. — AFP



Manchester United's Dutch manager Erik ten Hag

## Ten Hag under pressure after brutal reality check

LONDON: Erik ten Hag is already back under extreme pressure at Manchester United after flunking his first big test since the club decided to keep faith with their Dutch manager. United's chastening 3-0 home defeat at the hands of Liverpool on Sunday left them languishing 14th in the Premier League table just three games into the season. Co-owner Jim Ratcliffe, seated alongside the new Old Trafford hierarchy, had his head in his hands as United showed all their old failings against their bitter rivals. Ten Hag's side went toe to toe with Arne Slot's men for the first half an hour but costly errors from Casemiro and clinical finishing from Luis Diaz put the visitors in total command at half-time.

Mohamed Salah scored his customary goal against United in the 56th minute and Liverpool saw out the game with relative ease in a rapidly emptying stadium. For long-suffering United fans, it appears to be a case of rinse and repeat. The club, who have not won the Premier League since Alex Ferguson's final season in charge in 2013, appear to be stuck in a seemingly endless cycle of mediocrity despite multiple changes of personnel on and off the pitch. Ten Hag was handed a contract extension in July but only after United had considered alternatives following a season in which they finished a lowly eighth in the Premier League.

United's 2-1 victory against Manchester City in the FA Cup final in May proved vital after it seemed likely the Dutchman would be sacked. The embattled Ten Hag was forced to defend himself after Sunday's defeat, which followed a last-gasp win against Fulham and a defeat at Brighton. "It is just the third game in the season, we have to build a new team," said the 54-year-old. "I explained this so many times, we will build this new team, we have young players and players to build in. It is clear we have to improve but at the end of the season I am confident we will have a big chance to lift another trophy."

### New signings

The former Ajax boss can point to mitigating circumstances - Manuel Ugarte, United's new midfield recruit from Paris Saint-Germain, was not available while another recent arrival, defender Leny Yoro, is injured along with Mason Mount, Luke Shaw and Rasmus Hojlund. But United looked short of ideas and quality against Liverpool, who have won all three of their Premier League games under new boss Slot. Former Real Madrid midfielder Casemiro was at fault for both of Diaz's goals and was hauled off at half-time while forward Marcus Rashford looked desperately short of form and confidence. United's paucity of options was laid bare by the fact that Ten Hag was forced to turn to 20-year-old Toby Collyer, making his Premier League debut.

Ten Hag pleaded for patience over Ugarte. "We have to build him in the team, it will take time," he said. "It is not like I'm Harry Potter, that is what you have to acknowledge. If you see Manuel Ugarte, he didn't play so far in the season, not one match minute." Whether or not United now regret their decision to stick with Ten Hag, former Manchester United captain Gary Neville, a Sky Sports pundit, believes he will be given until Christmas to turn things around. — AFP

Sports

# Scheffler crowns dominant season with FedEx Cup title

## First player to win 7 PGA Tour events in a year since 2007

WASHINGTON: World number one Scottie Scheffler crowned his remarkable season by winning the PGA Tour's season-ending Tour Championship and with it the \$25 million FedEx Cup title with a four-stroke win at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta on Sunday. Scheffler began the final round with a five-stroke lead over Collin Morikawa but saw that advantage cut to just two after back-to-back bogeys on the 7th and 8th but he recovered to secure his seventh win on the PGA Tour this season.

He is the first player to win seven PGA Tour events in a year since Tiger Woods in 2007 and his remarkable season has also included a Masters win and an Olympic gold. For the past two years, Scheffler had entered the Tour Championship as number one in the rankings but had failed to close out and clinch the FedEx Cup and having led the standings for most of this year he was delighted to get his reward. "I try not to think too much about the past or think too much about the future," he said.

"But I think two years ago was pretty tough, having a good lead going into the last round and not playing my best and then losing. And then last

year I just had a pretty off week so was fairly disappointing. "So to come in with a lead for the third time and be able to finish it off is definitely pretty sweet," he added. Scheffler began the week on 10 under-par under the staggered scoring system used for the season finale and he ended the week on 30 under after closing with a 67.

Morikawa would have beaten Scheffler by two strokes in a regular format and for a moment he put his rival under real pressure. Scheffler shanked a bunker shot on the eighth making his second straight bogey as Morikawa made a birdie to reduce the gap to two. But as so often Scheffler did not let the setbacks turn into a real momentum shift as he proceeded to make three straight birdies from the ninth and then his eagle on the par-5 15th put Morikawa out of sight.

Scheffler praised his caddie Ted Scott for helping him recover and make sure of the win. "Nine was a huge turnaround. Teddy gave me a nice pep talk there on the back of the 8 green because I kind of looked at him like, 'man, I don't know about this, this isn't looking so hot right now'.

"He kind of gave me a little pep talk and then I was able to hit a really nice iron shot in there and got things rolling," he said. "He really is a huge part of the team. I don't know if I'd be able to do any of this without him on my bag."

Morikawa, who collected \$12.5 million for his second place, was pleased with his effort but said Scheffler provided the perfect example of how to close out a golf tournament. "Nothing fazes him. Whether I was close in gaining some ground or he was gaining ground, it didn't change how he walked or how he played or how he went through every shot," he said. "That's something to learn. I think his mental game is a lot stronger than a lot of people know."

"It's amazing what he's been able to do for this entire season, and over this past three years now. It's been really cool to watch him, and hopefully I can draw something from that," he said. Sahithi Theegala finished third for a \$7.5 million reward, six shots off the lead while Xander Schauffele, Russell Henley and Australian Adam Scott ended tied for fourth on 19-under. Henley lept into fourth with an eagle on the 18th hole where he chipped in from 36 yards. — AFP



ATLANTA: Scottie Scheffler of the United States celebrates with his son Bennett and the FedEx Cup trophy after winning the FedEx Cup and the TOUR Championship at East Lake Golf Club on September 01, 2024. — AFP



## Ascend Boulder Battle 2024 climbs to new heights

KUWAIT: The Ascend Boulder Battle 2024 brought together 100 athletes from 13 countries for an intense competition in Kuwait. Over two days of thrilling climbs and fierce competition, 12 male and female semifinalists battled it out to

secure a spot in the finals. The event concluded with a spectacular showcase of talent, with Nasser Burjaib from Kuwait taking first place in the male category, followed by Saud Alzahli and Ahmad Almahrooqi from Oman.

In the female category, Kuwait's Haya Al-sulaibi claimed the top spot, with Hazel from Singapore and Haneen from Jordan completing the podium. The atmosphere was electric, thanks in part to MAD Recovery, the event's Recovery Partner, who provided athletes with much-needed support and innovative recovery treatments. Their cool and cutting-edge

approach to athlete care was a game-changer, ensuring that climbers were in peak condition throughout the competition.

Spectators and participants alike enjoyed delicious offerings from Food Partners China Garden, Frank's, and Karak Cafeteria, making the event not just a test of athletic prowess but also a celebration of culture and community. The Ascend Boulder Battle 2024 was more than just a competition — it was a convergence of sport, innovation, and camaraderie, uniting climbers from around the world in an unforgettable experience.

## Ryu thumps Ko in playoff at FM Championship

WASHINGTON: South Korea's Ryu Hae-ran bounced back from a shocking third round to beat compatriot Ko Jin-young in a playoff to win the LPGA's FM Championship at TPC Boston on Sunday. Ryu had shot a superb 10-under-par 62 on Friday but followed it with a six-over 78 that threatened to undo all her good work, leaving her four shots off overnight leader and 15-time LPGA winner Ko. But she showed no signs of that round affecting her focus as she went out and promptly birdied the first four holes on Sunday, reaching the turn at six-under on her way to a round of 64. Ryu's lone bogey on the par-three 16th dropped her back into a tie with Ko at 15-under and an anxious wait to see if her compatriot could make a birdie over her final two holes.

Ko began the day with a two-shot lead and she built on that with an eagle at the par-five second and another at the par-four fourth. But after a bogey on the 10th she only managed one further birdie at the 14th. After a two-hour rain delay, she missed a nine-foot putt in wet conditions on the final green that would have given her victory. The pair went back down the par-five 18th, but Ko missed from 30 feet for par and Ryu tucked in a 12-foot birdie putt to secure her second victory on the LPGA Tour.



MASSACHUSETTS: Haeran Ryu of South Korea poses with the trophy after the final round of the FM Championship 2024 at TPC Boston on September 01, 2024. — AFP

"The second win was so hard for me because this year I got many chances before, but I missed out a couple of times," said Ryu. "But today, I don't want to miss again. I was so nervous at the playoff, but maybe Ko Jin-young was the same," she added. China's Liu Ruixin finished a shot behind on 14-under after an eight-under 64 that began in remarkable fashion with birdies at each of her first seven holes. It was a second straight round of 64 for Liu - her lowest round in her career. American Alisen Corpuz and Thailand's Athaya Thitikul finished a further shot back on 13-under after both carding 67s. — AFP

## Atkinson stars as England thrash Lanka by 190 runs

LONDON: Gus Atkinson continued his Lord's love affair by taking five wickets as England thrashed Sri Lanka by 190 runs in the second Test on Sunday to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in a three-match series. Sri Lanka, set what would have been a new Test record fourth-innings winning total of 483, were dismissed for 292 after tea on the fourth day despite fifties from Dinesh Chandimal (58), Dimuth Karunaratne (55) and captain Dhananjaya de Silva (50).

Fast bowler Atkinson, who scored his maiden first-class hundred in England's first-innings 427, led the attack with 5-62. Player-of-the-match Atkinson secured a fifth mention on the dressing room honors boards in just his second Test at Lord's after taking 12 wickets on England debut against the West Indies in July. He also became just the third England cricketer after Tony Greig and Ian Botham to score a century and take five wickets in an innings of the same Test. Atkinson followed India's Vinoo Mankad (against England in 1952) and Botham (against Pakistan in 1978) as the only men to have achieved that double at Lord's.

The 26-year-old Surrey pacesman's latest impressive return helped England seal a seventh successive win over Sri Lanka following their five-wicket success in last week's first Test at Old Trafford. "To get on both honors boards is incredible," Atkinson

told Sky Sports. "It will take a while to sink in." This game was also a personal triumph for Joe Root. For the first time in 145 matches at this level, Root made hundreds in both innings - 143 and 103 - to set a new record of 34 Test centuries by an England batsman. Sri Lanka have little time to regroup before the third Test at The Oval starts on Friday. De Silva admitted he had erred in opting to field on a good batting pitch after winning the toss.

"Definitely. I got it wrong," he told the BBC, before adding: "We have got to improve on the first innings whether we bat or bowl first, that's what I will be telling my boys is that we've got to start better." Sri Lanka resumed Sunday on 53-2, with the odds stacked against them given the highest winning fourth-innings total in any Test is the West Indies' 418-7 against Australia at St John's in 2002/03. But Root - who on Saturday had taken his 200th Test catch - retrieved Karunaratne when dropping a tough one-handed slip chance from the opener's edged cut off Atkinson.

### Stone strikes

Karunaratne, 36, drove and pulled Atkinson for fours off successive deliveries on his way to a 98-ball fifty including seven boundaries. The left-hander, however, was out shortly before lunch when injury-plagued fast bowler Olly Stone, in his first Test for three years, produced a rising 87 mph (140 kmh) delivery that Karunaratne could only glove down the legside to wicketkeeper Jamie Smith. Chandimal counter-attacked early in the afternoon on his way to a dashing 42-ball fifty including 40 runs in boundaries before Atkinson had him caught at short leg off bat and pad. — 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
Ayoum Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

#### Hospitals

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

### Change of Name

I, **Safdar** Faruq Ahmed, holder of Indian Passport No. W0778014, having permanent address at Arathi, Taluka Shriwardhan, Dist: Raigad, Maharashtra - 402110, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Safdar Faruq Ahmed and (surname) Khamkar. (#6162 03/09/2024)

I, **Munira**, holder of Indian Passport No. M9152772, having permanent address of Rajasthan, India, residing

in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Munira and (surname) Master. (#5916 03/09/2024)

I, **Basha** Peerzade Sayed Sameer Sayed, holder of Indian Passport No. M9914793, having permanent address Dakhni Mohalla, Manki, Karwar, Karnataka - 581348, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: (given

name) Sayed Sameer and (surname) Peerzade. (#6161 02/09/2024)

I, **Yashoda**, holder of Indian Passport No. V9394108, having permanent address # 1-81/16 Janani, Punkemar Kulur, Mangalore, Dakshina Kannada - 575013, Karnataka, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: (given name) Yashoda Krishna and (surname) Banger. (02/09/2024)

## Amputee sprinters burst into action

### Britain chases China's medal haul at Paralympics



PARIS: (Left to right) Silver medalist Spain's Marta Gomez Frances, gold medalist Megan Richter and bronze medalist Hannah Moore celebrate during the victory ceremony for the women's PTS4 para triathlon event at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games at the Pont Alexandre III on September 2, 2024. (Right) An overview shows USA's and Japan's players competing in the Women's Wheelchair Basketball Preliminary Round Group B Game #21, during the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games at the Bercy Arena in Paris on September 02, 2024. — AFP



PARIS: The Paralympic amputee sprinters burst into action and Britain chased China's medal haul with a golden success in the pool and on the track. There was a setback though for the organizers who were forced to delay the triathlon events by 24 hours due to concerns about the water quality of the River Seine after heavy rain. The triathlon will now take place on Monday after tests proved the water quality was at acceptable levels following a warm and sunny day in the French capital on Sunday.

China set the pace again on the fourth day of competition to amass 33 gold medals but Britain moved onto 23 golds after bagging 12 golds on Sunday, the country's best performance on a single day at a Paralympics this century. The USA and Brazil both have eight golds. One of the outstanding British successes came from wheelchair racer Hannah Cockcroft who made it four titles in the women's T34 100 metres in four Paralympics

stretching back to London 2012. Cockcroft said she had been boosted by the roars of the estimated 50,000 crowd at the Stade de France.

"My wheels were vibrating!" she said. "They said 'On your marks' and it didn't go quiet. "I was afraid I wasn't going to hear the gun. But this is what we want, it's fantastic." "I means so much to get a fourth gold," she added, and pledged to keep competing until the 2028 Los Angeles Paralympics - but her immediate priority is her wedding to fellow British Paralympian Nathan Maguire later this year. In the pool, British swimmer Maisie Newton Summers won her second gold medal of these Games by taking the SB6 100m breaststroke title. Britain also won three golds in the track cycling as well, but China's excellence across a wide range of sports kept them out in front, with eight golds so far in swimming alone. Yang Hong winning the men's SB6 breaststroke title was among their haul in the pool.

#### Setting the pace

Italy's Maxcel Amo Manu set the pace when the amputee sprinters strapped on their blades and roared into action, while social media sensation Hunter Woodhall scraped into the final. Manu, who won the world title last year, set a new Paralympic record of 10.69sec to lead all qualifiers in the men's T64 100m. Woodhall had to run flat out to finish third from the outside lane in a time of 11.02sec and book his place in Monday's final. The 25-year-old American is one half of an Olympic-Paralympic super couple with his wife Tara Davis-Woodhall, who was crowned Olympic women's long jump champion in the same stadium just weeks ago.

The couple's Instagram account charting their adventures at the Olympics and their life since had attracted more than half a million followers. Woodhall, who was given a special roar from the crowd when he was introduced, said: "It's just so

special that the Paralympics are getting this much excitement and hype. I'm just glad people showed up and I'm hoping to give them a good show tomorrow." He said his wife will be in the crowd for the final: "She wouldn't miss it." Britain's Jonnie Peacock, a two-time champion in the event, also progressed after finishing third in the first heat.

The water quality of the Seine, an issue that has dogged both Olympic and Paralympic organizers this summer, caused fresh problems. The 11 triathlon races were to take place early Sunday but after heavy rain which can stir up pollution in the river, organizers and governing body World Triathlon decided to postpone until Monday. Meanwhile, the blind football competition kicked off at the foot of the Eiffel Tower with the players guided by a rattle in the ball. Brazil, who have not lost a single match since the event was introduced in 2004, breezed past Turkey 3-0 in their opening game and face host nation France next. — AFP

### Refugee Paralympian Al Hussein brings 'message of hope'

PARIS: Refugee Paralympic Team triathlete Ibrahim Al Hussein said Monday he had come to "give a message of hope" after taking part in his third Paralympic Games. Born in Syria, Al Hussein fled the civil war in his homeland, first seeking refuge in Turkey before settling in Greece in 2014. But prior to his managing to flee Syria, the future Paralympian was injured during the war and lost his right foot as well as the joint of his left foot in 2012.

"I came to give a message to everyone, a message of hope," said Al Hussein after completing his race at the Paris Paralympics. "Everyone, from where we are in the world, is going through a difficult time. Everyone can reach their destination. "With serious work, with hard work, everyone can achieve their goal. It's not just the athletes. Everyone can achieve their goal." Al Hussein overcame the hardships of war, injury and displacement to participate in para-swimming at Rio 2016 and then at the Tokyo Games three years ago.

Now in his third Paralympics, the 35-year-old competed in the triathlon, finishing sixth in the men's PTS3 race — the category for athletes with significant disabilities. "I am very happy. It was a very good result for me. It was my goal to be in the top six," said Al Hussein after recording a time of 1hr 12min 34sec. "I want to thank the International Paralympic Committee for giving me this opportunity," he added. "And I want to thank the UN Refugee Agency for believing in me." — AFP

### Australia claim Paralympic wheelchair rugby bronze

PARIS: World champions Australia claimed wheelchair rugby bronze at the Paralympics on Monday by beating defending gold medalists Britain 50-48 in Paris. Two-time former winners Australia lost out on the chance to fight for gold after semi-final defeat by Japan on Sunday. In a tight contest with the British, the Australians claimed victory to go one better than their fourth-place finish in Tokyo three years ago.

"It was nice to win convincingly in the final minute," Australia captain Chris Bond told reporters. "We missed out on the gold medal match, which I think we were good enough to be in. "We used that pain to fuel us today." Britain had started their title defense with victory over Australia in their opening group match on Thursday. "In the end there were too many errors really in the game," Britain's Gavin Walker said. "We go into another rebuilding process, another four years ahead of us and looking towards LA now." Two-time bronze medallists Japan face the USA, who won three of the sport's first Paralympic gold medals in 1996, 2000 and 2004, later on Monday in the final. — AFP

### Second Paralympics a 'university' for Kenyan rower Muhammed

PARIS: Kenya's Paralympics rower Asiya Sururu Muhammed says being at her second Games is like "university" compared to her "school-like" debut in Tokyo three years ago. Sururu Muhammed lost both her lower legs and some fingers in a train accident aged just two and became the first woman to represent her country in the sport in an Olympics or a Paralympics in 2021. Despite finishing in 12th place on Sunday for a second straight Games in the PR1 single sculls, she finished two minutes quicker than in Japan.

"There is a great improvement personally in terms of timing. In Tokyo I was still a learner but now I fully understand what I need to be doing," the wheelchair user told AFP. "This is like university, more advanced (compared to school)," she added. After the rail accident, further tragedy struck Sururu Muhammed as she was orphaned aged nine years old. She was brought up by her cousin and aunt. She turned to sport, trying tennis first before switching to rowing and made her competitive debut in 2019.

In May 2022, she started to learn to walk with prosthetic legs. "The French say 'magnifique' and it's real-

### Paralympics: Ukrainian orphans reunited with 'second mother'

PARIS: One of the consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been to scatter Ukrainians all over the world, separating families and friends. But the Paralympics in Paris produced one emotional reunion of a teacher and two orphans. Badminton duo Oksana Kozyna and Oleksandr Chyrkov left Dnipro soon after the invasion in February 2022, finding sanctuary in France.

Svitlana Shabalina, the teacher whose kindness in bringing them much-needed food to school and sparked the two of them to take up para sports, left for Sweden earlier this year. Both were not orphans in the strictest sense. Kozyna was born without a fibula in one leg and her parents felt they could not afford to care for her, although they were reunited with her aged 15.

Chyrkov was hit by a car and seriously injured at the age of eight. His mother visited him just twice in the two years he was in hospital and then abandoned him so he ended up in the orphanage, which catered for between 60 and 70 disabled children. Badminton team coach Dmytro Zozulya said he was astonished by the state of the orphanage when he went there to try and recruit children when badminton was admitted as a Paralympic



VAIRES-SUR-MARNE: Kenya's Asiya Muhammed Sururu competes in a heat of the PR1 Women's Single Sculls as part of the rowing competition during the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. — AFP

ly magnificent," a smiling Sururu Muhammed said. "I'd never walked before so I started walking when I was 30. "Every experience is once in a lifetime, it's a big thing, like when a baby takes its first steps, I'm a big baby." "Every step is a celebration," she added. The Mombasa native is a huge sports fan and keeps a keen eye on Formula One, and welcomes the reports of a Grand Prix return to

Africa, in Rwanda. "Imagine it! I think it would be fun," she said. "Rwanda is two days by road or 45 minutes by plane from Kenya, so it's very easy to get to," she added.

With her Games as a competitor over, Sururu Muhammed will remain in Paris to watch her compatriots and visit some tourist sites. "I'll be in athletics, where most of the Kenyans are," she said. — AFP

sport for the 2020 Tokyo Games. "When I went to that place, I was shocked," he said on Sunday. "It's such a dirty place, so stinky. I'm like, oh my God."

Amid both the personal angst and the misery of the orphanage, the kindness and thoughtfulness of Shabalina - who taught crafts at a school affiliated to the orphanage - made her a "second mother" to Kozyna. "I was their teacher, but I cared for them because they were orphans," Shabalina said, speaking through an interpreter. "So when they come to me, I would do things for them. Like I would give Oleksandr food. "I did have, like, favorite pupils. So they were two of them. "So I just loved it and I loved what I did. And they were my kids, because I really think they are like my kids."

#### 'Apocalypse, tsunami'

There are four children from that time competing in Paris and Shabalina's eyes twinkle as she thinks of how they have succeeded despite the trauma of their own circumstances and then the ravages of war. Kozyna made history by becoming the first Ukrainian para badminton world champion in 2022 while Chyrkov, 28, won a silver medal at the European championships last year. "I feel a lot of emotions, really a lot," she said. "I'm so excited and I'm so proud of them." She recalls them both being leaders at the school. "Sasha (Chyrkov) was a leader," she said. "He organized everything like a sports team. "He was always in charge. He gathered people around him. "Oksana was also trying to gather kids around her. They were like competitors already from this age."

Kozyna, who reached the semi-finals, and

Chyrkov, who went out in the pool stage, is all that remains of around 20 para badminton players who Zagulya had under his wing. "Some go out of the country, some move to another region, because (the war) is so scary. Very, very scary," said Zagulya. "The first time it was... I never cried, but I started to cry every day when it happened, because I have three young children." Suddenly, she explained, you have to "stop working, you cannot buy food, it's impossible, you have car, but you cannot buy gas (fuel), it's impossible".

"Children cannot go to school, and we don't have bomb shelters, you have to stay at your home, and of course everyone is shocked, like panic. "It's like apocalypse, tsunami." Thus Kozyna, Chyrkov and Zagulya, along with his family, now live in northern France, made possible by Christophe Guillerme, who answered the coach's plea for help via a France-based mutual Ukrainian acquaintance. "We got them out of Ukraine, and then we managed to organize three or four training sessions per week," said Guillerme, who also persuaded companies to finance their housing costs.

"They had to get points for this target that was Paris 2024, so we financed them to go to Canada, to go to Ireland, to play tournaments again, and to be able to score points for the race to Paris." They succeeded in achieving that, paying the way for the emotional reunion. However, Kozyna, 29, had not seen Shabalina for "approximately four years" and her presence in Paris clearly threw her. "At first I didn't recognize her, but when I did, I just couldn't believe it. It's like a dream." — AFP