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# Gaza war enters 12th month as death toll reaches 40,939

Turkish-American activist shot dead • Truce hopes slim • Hamas demands complete Zionist withdrawal



**GAZA:** An injured Palestinian man mourns over the bodies of family members who are victims of Zionist bombardment in Deir El-Balah in the central Gaza Strip. — AFP

**GAZA:** The war between Zionists and Hamas in Gaza entered its 12 month Saturday with little sign of respite for the Palestinian territory or hope for hostages still held captive. The chances of a truce that would also swap Palestinian prisoners jailed by Zionists for hostages held by Hamas appear slim, with both sides sticking doggedly to their positions. Hamas is demanding a complete Zionist withdrawal, but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insists troops must remain along the Gaza-Egypt border.

The United States, Qatar and Egypt have all been mediating in an effort to bring about a ceasefire in the war that authorities in the Hamas-run Gaza say has killed at least 40,939 people. According to the United Nations human rights office, most of the dead are women and children. October 7 attack resulted in the deaths of 1,205 people, mostly civilians including some hostages killed in captivity, according to official Zionist figures. Of 251 hostages seized by militants, 97 remain in Gaza including 33 the Zionist military says are dead.

Scores were released during a one-week truce in November. Zionist announcement last Sunday that the bodies of six hostages including a US citizen had been recovered shortly after being killed. Marking the anniversary, UN Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA) chief Philippe Lazzarini posted on X on Saturday: "Eleven months. Enough. No one can take this

any longer. Humanity must prevail. Ceasefire now." International pressure to end the war was further underlined by Friday's shooting dead in the West Bank of a Turkish-American activist demonstrating against settlements in the occupied territory. The family of 26-year-old Aysenur Ezgi Eygi has demanded an independent investigation into her death, saying on Saturday her life "was taken needlessly, unlawfully, and violently by the military". The UN rights office said troops killed Eygi with a "shot in the head".

Turkey said she was killed by "occupation soldiers", and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned the action as "barbaric". The United States called her death "tragic", and has pressed its close ally to investigate. Zionist settlements in the West Bank - where about 490,000 people live - are illegal under international law. Since Hamas' October 7 attack, troops or settlers have killed more than 662 Palestinians in the West Bank which Zionists occupied in 1967, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

At least 23 people from Zionist entity, including members of the security forces, have been killed in Palestinian attacks during the same period, officials say. Eygi's death came on the day forces withdrew from a deadly 10-day raid in the West Bank city of Jenin, where AFP journalists reported residents returning home to widespread destruction.

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## Etihad: No issues with engines of A350 fleet

**DUBAI:** UAE carrier Etihad Airways said it found no issues with the engines of its Airbus A350 fleet following inspections prompted by an engine fire on one of Hong Kong-based Cathay Pacific's flights. The Cathay incident prompted the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) to issue an emergency directive to airlines ordering mandated inspections on all A350-1000s, which are powered by Trent XWB-97 engines made by Rolls-Royce. Etihad Airways, which operates five of the Airbus A350-1000s, is the only airline in the United Arab Emirates that has this aircraft type in service.

"Etihad Airways initiated inspections of its Rolls-Royce engines across its A350 fleet proactively over the last 72 hours, and continues to do so in compliance with the EASA," the airline said in a statement on Friday. "Etihad has discovered no issues, nor experienced any similar events with the engine, so does not anticipate any impact on its operations," it added. Cathay, one of the largest operators of the long-haul A350 jetliner, grounded 48 planes for checks on Monday after a Zurich-bound flight had to return to Hong Kong shortly after take-off.

EASA said that the aircraft suffered an engine failure due to a high-pressure fuel hose failing. The agency said there was an "in-flight engine fire shortly after take-off", which was "promptly detected and extinguished". Rolls-Royce said it was launching "a one-time precautionary engine inspection program" which may apply "to a portion of the A350 fleet". The first A350 was delivered to Qatar Airways at the end of 2014. A total of 87 A350-1000 aircraft are currently in service worldwide. — AFP

## Palestinian-Canadian nurse recounts Gaza's worsening situation

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Times and Kuwait News invited one of the nurses who witnessed the events and conditions in Gaza from within its hospitals to create a video in both Arabic and English to share his experience on both fronts. This report captures the essence of the interview with the nurse who was brought from the heart of Gaza. Ahmed Kouta, a 23-year-old Palestinian-Canadian nurse provided a detailed account of his experience working in a hospital in Gaza.

## Violence flares in restive India state

**MUMBAI:** Fresh clashes in India's strife-addled northeast killed at least five people on Saturday, a local government official said, hours after a rocket bombardment prompted authorities to shut schools. Manipur state has been rocked by periodic violence for more than a year between the predominantly Hindu Meitei majority and the mainly Christian Kuki community. The conflict has simmered since then, splitting previously cohabitating communities along ethnic lines. Another round of clashes killed five people in Jiribam district, sitting on India's border with war-torn Myanmar.

"From morning, there has been fighting between the

## June-August 2024: The hottest ever recorded

**PARIS:** The 2024 northern summer saw the highest global temperatures on record, beating 2023's high and making this year likely Earth's hottest ever recorded, the EU's climate monitor said. The data from the Copernicus Climate Change Service followed a season of heatwaves around the world that scientists said were intensified by human-driven climate change.

Extreme weather struck around the globe — with

His testimony shed light on the deteriorating conditions and the overwhelming challenges faced by medical staff and patients alike. This report outlines the critical points of his experience and the broader implications for both the local population and the international community. Kouta described the situation in Gaza's hospitals as worsening by the day, with the majority of cases being children or individuals in need of immediate surgery.

The severity of the cases was such that many patients could not survive, not only due to the extent of their injuries but also because of the lack of essential medical equipment and supplies. He recounted seeing bodies that were severely burned and patients who eventually succumbed to their injuries. Initially, the hospitals were overwhelmed with patients, with every available space occupied. (See Page 3)

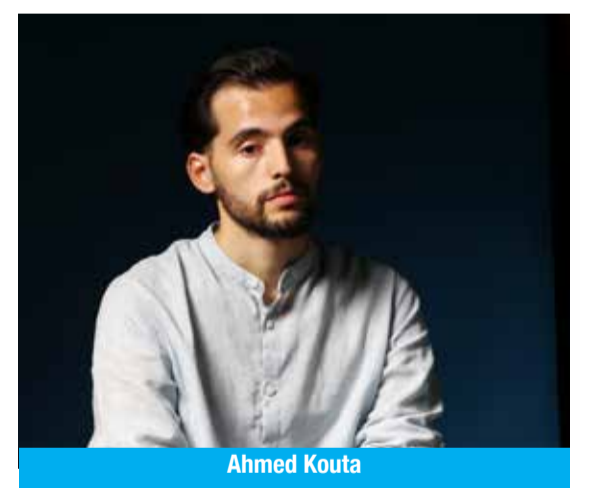
two communities in Jiribam. We have recovered five bodies and we are awaiting further details," a local government official, who declined to be identified said. One person was shot dead while sleeping and another four "armed persons" were killed in a "subsequent exchange of fire", the Press Trust of India reported. Saturday's violence comes after the deaths of two other people over the past week in separate attacks. Schools were ordered shut after a rocket attack by insurgents the previous day killed a 78-year-old man and wounded six others.

A local government notice said all schools in the state would be closed on Saturday, when classes are usually held, to protect the "safety of the students and teachers". Officers responding to the attack "were fired upon by suspected Kuki militants but the police team retaliated robustly and repelled the at-

some 1,300 dead during extreme heat at the hajj in Makkah, intense heat testing India's economy and electric system, and wildfire raging in parts of the western United States. "During the past three months of 2024, the globe has experienced the hottest June and August, the hottest day on record, and the hottest boreal summer on record," Samantha Burgess, deputy director of Copernicus, said in a report. "This string of record temperatures is increasing the likelihood of 2024 being the hottest year on record."

The average global temperature at the Earth's surface was 16.82C in August, according to Copernicus, which draws on billions of measurements from satellites, ships, aircraft and weather stations.

Continued on Page 6



tack", a police statement said. Local media reports said the elderly man was killed when a rocket hit the residence of the late Mairambam Koireng Singh, a former chief minister of Manipur.

The Indian Express newspaper, citing an unnamed security source, said that the rockets appeared to be "improvised projectiles" made using "galvanized iron pipes attached to explosives". Friday's attack also came days after insurgents used drones to drop explosives in what police called a "significant escalation" of violence in the state. A 31-year-old woman was killed and six others were wounded in that incident. Long-standing tensions between the Meitei and Kuki communities revolve around competition for land and public jobs. Rights activists have accused local leaders of exacerbating ethnic divisions for political gain. — AFP



**CALIFORNIA:** The thermometer screen at the Cavalry Church displays a temperature reading of 121 degrees in Woodland Hills, California. — AFP



## Local

# Educating youth on migrant worker rights key for better future: Activist

Project aims to highlight gaps in protecting workers' rights, engage people beyond the classroom

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Living in a world where migrant workers in Kuwait can safely unionize, speak for their rights, and advocate for themselves without external intermediaries reflects a life goal that Nourah Al-Sulaiman, manager of Ensaniyat Project, is dedicated to achieving. Through this youth fellowship program, she aims to change attitudes and perceptions towards migrant workers in the region and create environments whereby their rights are protected.

"Each of us must question our own privileges," Al-Sulaiman said. "Why are we, as citizens, able to represent ourselves and demand our rights more easily, while others cannot, especially when we all live on the same land?"

Kuwait, like many Gulf countries, has a significant population of migrant workers, particularly in low-wage sectors such as construction, domestic work, and the service industry. These workers are heavily dependent on their employers for their legal status and daily survival, which often leads to a range of challenges, vulnerabilities, and human rights violations.

"Delegating state responsibilities to employers has created gaps in enforcing workers' rights," Sulaiman pointed out. Addressing migrant workers' needs, she believes, requires a commitment from both state and non-state actors, calling for better implementation of laws to protect the individuals they target.

## Educating future employers

This is where Ensaniyat Project, launched in 2017 by Migrant-Rights.Org, a GCC-based advocacy group, plays a crucial role. It invites participants, ranging in age from 14 to their early 30s across all six Gulf countries, to gain a comprehensive understanding of migrant workers' rights from multiple perspectives — legal, historical, economic, political, and social.

The program raises awareness on various topics, including the history of migration, domestic worker laws, and healthcare access. Sulaiman acknowledges the power of younger generations as "the future employers and policymakers," and hopes that "by planting these seeds early, we could prepare them to be effective leaders and advocates." Over the years,



Nourah Al-Sulaiman

Ensaniyat reached over 170 fellows across 21 cycles of its program. It now includes diverse participants, both Gulf nationals and non-citizens.

Beyond the classroom, she believes that awareness has the potential to influence the broader society. "As a Kuwaiti, I recognize the importance of word of mouth and social gatherings like 'zawat' and 'diwanias' in shaping opinions and discussions," she said. "We strive to bring the topic of migrant workers into these spaces, engaging individuals who might not initially be interested in advocacy or human rights."



ENSANIYAT PROJECT

Since Ensaniyat also empowers migrant workers to safely share their experiences, needs, and concerns, Al-Sulaiman highlighted the issues they face, such as low wages, unfair treatment, and poor



housing conditions. Such challenges have led to tragedies like the recent Mangaf fire on June 12, which occurred in a building housing 196 migrant workers and tragically claimed the lives of 50 individuals. The cause of the fire is primarily linked to negligence in housing safety.

## 'They are invisible'

While the program addresses the needs of various migrant workers, there is a particular focus on domestic workers. As Sulaiman noted, "they are often invisible to society and lack access to resources needed to file complaints." Although mechanisms for filing complaints exist — through police stations, domestic workers' departments, or embassies — these are often inaccessible to them due to restrictions like not having days off, or not being able to leave their workplace — their employers' home.

Working closely with migrant community members across the GCC, Sulaiman brings to light rights outlined in variations of labour laws across the region that she seeks to have effectively implemented

equally to all workers. These rights include, and are not limited to, access to bank accounts, comprehensive health insurance, entitlement to annual leave, and a mandatory day off each week.

Workers should also benefit from wage protection systems and have contracts that are clearly understood and signed in all relevant languages. Their rights to being paid regularly, enjoying days off, decent work environments, being able to sponsor their families, decent housing and more need to be protected and actualized. In addition, existing prohibitions against passport confiscation should be enforced.

In a society where individuals are judged "based on nationality, religion, or occupation," Sulaiman hopes they will instead be evaluated "based on their morals, ethics, and positive contributions." She also aims to challenge the misconception that "conditions here are better than what workers might experience back home," as she believes this mindset has exacerbated the numerous challenges and complexities workers face.

## WHO commends Kuwait's efforts in fighting DMD

KUWAIT: The World Health Organization (WHO) on Saturday commended Kuwait's efforts to raise awareness about Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD) at various gatherings with a view to supporting progress in treatment. This came in a press release issued by the WHO's Representative in Kuwait Dr Assad Hafeez on the occasion of the World Duchenne Awareness Day, which falls on September 7.

Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy is a genetic disease which runs in families and mostly affects boys. It is seen in approximately 1 in every 3,500 live births and is estimated that up to half a million patients are present around the world at his time. In Kuwait, the prevalence of genetic disorders, including DMD, is a significant concern and many families have been documented to have this disease as listed in the official registry.

Hafeez said Kuwait played a key role in the promotion of this day at various events and organizations, including the United Nations (UN), to disseminate a deep understanding of rare genetic disorders, spur early diagnosis, and buttress progress in treatment and care. He also emphasized the importance of this awareness campaign, saying: "World Duchenne Awareness Day is a critical opportunity to amplify the voices of those affected by DMD. World Health Organization, as member of UN community, is committed to working with Kuwait and other member states to improve healthcare access, early diagnosis, and treatment advancements, ensuring that all affected families receive the support they need."



The WHO's representative underlined that this year's theme: "Raise your voice for Duchenne" emphasizes the importance of amplifying voices to advocate for the rights, inclusion, and wellbeing of people living with DMD and other dystrophinopathies. DMD is a rare progressive disorder. People with DMD are missing muscle-protecting proteins. This is due to a fault in the gene-producing dystrophin, which causes muscles to become weaker over time until it affects the whole body. It is caused by a mutation on the X-chromosome, that is why mainly males are affected. Recognizing that DMD is one of the most common pediatric genetic rare diseases, the UN General Assembly decided to designate September 7, the current World Duchenne Awareness Day, as a United Nations Day, to be observed every year beginning in 2024. — KUNA

## UAE-born Kuwaiti content creator wins award in Sharjah

SHARJAH: Kuwait's Eisa Alhabib won on Thursday the best content creator award as part of the 18+ category of 11th Sharjah Government Communication Award (SGCA), UAE's news agency (WAM) reported. Alhabib was born and raised in the UAE to Kuwaiti parents. He was on a scholarship from Kuwait to study medicine in Canada, first in Calgary and then in Halifax, when he won a photography award in 2014. Alhabib went on to graduate with a bachelor's degree in science from Canada without pursuing his medical education. During his time in Canada, Alhabib vlogged about his experience on Youtube and later created content for Instagram. In 2020, he joined an influencer training program helmed by blogger Nas Daily, which received online backlash for being a cover for normalization with the Zionist entity. The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement called for a boycott of the Palestinian blogger, whose name is Nuseir Yassin, for hiring a Zionist to train the influencers and for alleged attempts to whitewash the Palestinian struggle.

Alhabib went on to work with Nas Daily until 2024 and is now a presenter with Khaleej Times. He won the Young Creatives Award by the International Emmy Awards in 2017 for his short film Domestic Cycle.

Speaking in the ceremony, Tariq Allay, Director General of Sharjah Government Media Bureau (SGMB) said: "Over the past eleven years, SGCA has not only recognized outstanding efforts but has also been a catalyst for positive change." "It supports those committed to advancing government communication and aligns with Sharjah's vision to create a new paradigm in government communication, contributing to community development, he said, according to the agency.



SHARJAH: Kuwait's Eisa Alhabib (left) receives the award. — KUNA

Media personality Mona El Shazly, on behalf of the SGCA jury committee, said SGCA has consistently played a key role in improving the performance of government institutions and raising public awareness about the importance of transparent and innovative communication. She noted that the award "promotes best practices, encourages exchanging ideas and experiences, and elevates government messaging to be more effective and responsive to society's needs". She emphasized that SGCA recognizes communication as a universal language without borders, where the success stories of individuals and companies deserve recognition and celebration through this prestigious global platform. Some winners in varied categories have been honored as well.

Best Youth Initiative in Government Communication was won by Citizen's Office Initiative in Morocco. The Best Official Spokesperson category winner was Hussein Mohammed Al-Qahtani from Saudi Arabia, while the Best Research in Communication Sciences award was won by Mahmoud Shafei Abdel-Latif from Egypt. Lastly, in the Best Purposeful Digital Content Creator category, the winner under 18 was UAE's Aisha Humaid Al Khayyal, while the 18+ category winner was Kuwait's Alhabib.

## Kuwait, Hungary discuss expanding business relations

KUWAIT: Minister of Finance, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Noura Al-Fassam held talks on Thursday with the visiting Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Commerce Peter Szijarto on boosting relations at the trade and business levels, KUNA reported.

Minister Al-Fassam said in a statement to KUNA that the discussions with the Hungarian side touched on the State of Kuwait's economic vision, the high pace execution of mega development projects, in coordination with strategic partners, while maintaining the state financial sustainability.

The two sides affirmed their mutual aspiration to make the best results possible from the forthcoming fifth session of the joint commission for economic and technical cooperation, due in the Hungarian capital Budapest in October.

She added that the two parties broached the investment relationship between the two countries, the desire to examine prospected opportunities in sectors of joint interest, in addition to the invita-



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti and Hungarian officials are seen during their meeting to discuss boosting trade relations. — KUNA photos

tion to the Hungarian companies to broaden investments in the Kuwaiti economy and benefit from the incentives granted to the foreign investors.

The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary to the State of Kuwait, Andras Szabo, the Managing Director of the Public Investment Authority Ghanem Al-Ghnam, the Assistant Undersecretary of the Public Budget and

the Ministry's Acting Undersecretary, Saad Al-Alati. The Hungarian-Kuwaiti Joint Economic Committee, which meets every two years, is set to meet in 2025 in Hungary, Kuwait Times previously reported.

The meeting was held during an official visit by Hungarian politicians to Kuwait. The two countries also signed on Thursday a number of accords for cooperation in various fields, including cybersecurity.



Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Noura Al-Fassam (right) is seen with officials at the meeting.



Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Commerce Peter Szijarto (left).

## Local

# Palestinian nurse recounts Gaza's deteriorating situation

## Horrors could spread to other regions if international community does not act, Ahmed Kouta warns

By Ghadeer Ghloom

**KUWAIT:** Ahmed Kouta, a 23-year-old Palestinian-Canadian nurse, has provided a detailed account of his experience working in a hospital in Gaza during a recent visit to Kuwait. His testimony, shared with Kuwait Times and Kuwait News shed light on the deteriorating conditions and the overwhelming challenges faced by medical staff and patients alike. This report outlines the critical points of his experience and the broader implications for both the local population and the international community.

### Gaza's hospitals

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza is severe, with famine hitting the population hard. Kouta described heartbreaking scenes of families stirring hot water as a means of providing a semblance of a meal to their children. Desperation for food is so intense that even the limited supplies reaching Gaza are sometimes feared to be tampered with, such as canned food potentially containing explosives.

Kouta described the situation in Gaza's hospitals as worsening by the day, with most cases being children or individuals in need of immediate surgery. The severity of the cases was such that many patients could not survive, not only due to the extent of their injuries but also because of the lack of essential medical equipment and supplies. He recounted seeing bodies that were severely burned and patients who eventually succumbed to their injuries. Initially, the hospitals were overwhelmed with patients, with every available space occupied. Patients and their families were found sleeping in stairways, hallways, and even under or between hospital beds. This overcrowding compromised the hospital's hygiene and overall environment, which also creates a breeding ground for diseases spreading among everyone including the medical staff. The extreme conditions took a toll on the medical staff. The lack of clean uniforms, gloves, and basic medical supplies forced doctors to operate in medically imperfect conditions, such as resorting to performing surgeries with bare hands after merely washing



**KUWAIT:** Ahmed Kouta is seen during his interview with Kuwait Times and Kuwait News. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Ahmed Kouta

them. This not only endangered the patients but also exposed the medical staff to diseases, with some doctors falling ill or losing their lives.

### Emotional toll

Emotionally, the situation has been devastating for everyone involved, Kouta said. Kouta emphasized the pervasive sense of despair, with many individuals, including himself, breaking down in tears as the situation unfolded. The close-knit nature of the Gaza community exacerbated this, as many people knew the victims arriving in ambulances, whether as relatives or colleagues. The constant threat of becoming a victim themselves added to the emotional strain. Kouta further elaborated on the difficulty of communicating with patients' families, especially when a patient's condition was critical but not immediately apparent to their relatives. He highlighted the challenge of explaining the inevitability of death to



Ahmed Kouta (center) is seen in a group picture with the Kuwait Times and Kuwait News team.

families who could see their loved ones still breathing, leading to disbelief and further emotional distress.

### More challenges

Kouta noted that many patients died due to frequent electricity cuts, further complicating the hospital's ability to provide life-saving treatment. Despite the dire circumstances, the medical staff strived to maintain hope, recognizing that they were seen as heroes by the community, even though they were struggling with the same fears and vulnerabilities.

Kouta expressed the deep sense of guilt felt by those who have left Gaza, knowing they have left their families and loved ones behind. Despite this, he continues to seek opportunities to return to Gaza through NGOs and medical teams to provide much-needed assistance.

He issued a message to the world, urging for immediate action and a ceasefire. He emphasized that the situation in Gaza is not just a local or regional issue but a matter of humanity. He warned that if the international community does not act, the horrors witnessed in Gaza could spread to other regions.

### In my view

## Is there what is more vulgar?!



By Hussain Sana

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Muthaffar Al-Nawwab is an Iraqi poet who was born in the 30s and passed away about two years ago. Like every Iraqi of his generation, his life story is a walk-through of Iraqi modern history and politics — a life filled with noble sorrow and tragedies, but also with the darkest sense of humor and the pleasant moments of a "belle époque".

He lived between Baghdad, Damascus, Beirut, European metropolises and other places, spending most of his life on the runway or in exile. His poetry is known to be "the smuggled poem" for the amount of lines he had to hide and smuggle out of prisons. It is said that his aristocratic Shiite family came to Iraq after his grandfather, a ruler in one of India's states was exiled by British colonialism. Muthaffar became a teacher of Arabic in an Iraqi school but was fired for his political leftist affiliation and stayed unemployed for a few years, paying the price for his opinions.

He was imprisoned during the Iraqi monarch rule and got tortured. After the coup in 1963, he escaped Iraq to the Iranian Kingdom, in the hope to reach the Soviet Union, only to get imprisoned and tortured by the Shah's intelligence and state security (SAVAK) who later returned him to the Iraqi authorities.

Back in Iraq, a court sentenced him to death by execution for one of his poems, but the ruling was reduced later to life in prison. He escaped prison (what a tragic comedy!) and hid in Baghdad. Then in Ahwar in Southern Iraq, hiding among farmers in the countryside, he joined a communist group which tried to topple the regime through a guerrilla warfare launched from the Ahwar, in a clear influence and inspiration of Castro's Cuban revolution.

Needless to say, their revolution failed, with the group members going on different paths between prison, death and exile. The Baathist regime would go further decades later by drying the beautiful Ahwar area to prevent any refuge of opposition in nature, where regime forces would find a hard time searching for and capturing dissidents.

Muthaffar was known for some of the most beautiful poetry that was turned into pop songs, writing about deep love, sorrow, heroism, separation, hope, dreams, hallucinations, pain endurance and other themes. In contradiction, he was also known for some of the most radical poems (like a typical communist!), and political poetry lines that are filled with rage, anger and curses.

At times, he cursed many Arab leaders and regimes for their failures and defeats. Other times, like in his poem "A Poem from the World of Cats", he sarcastically mocked Arab leaders. I guess you can only reach that level of sarcasm and mockery after hitting rock bottom in tragedy and despair.

One more thing Muthaffar was known for is extremely rude and vulgar poetry. Many Arab intellectuals and poets did not consider him one of them, arguing that his poetry is nothing more than lines of curses, insults and vulgarity (and it was!). In one of his late writings he wrote: "Forgive my sadness, my wine, my anger, my harsh words.

Some of you will say vulgar, it is fine. Show me a more vulgar position than the one we are at."

Speaking about the political and social reality of Arabs, he said:

"I was criticized for hyper focusing on Palestine in my writings, for sounding like a propagandist, for writing as if I am insulting sometimes. I do not intend that, I would love to be fair and just, to write beautifully and academically. But show me a more propagandist, a more insulting reality than the one we are at."

## Over 10,000 stateless residents remedy status over 14 years

**KUWAIT:** Over 10,000 stateless residents have amended their legal status and admitted to having another nationality over the past 14 years, a Kuwaiti government agency announced Saturday.

Kuwait's Central System for the Remedy of Situations of Illegal Residents (CARIRS), which was established in 2010 to address issues related to the country's stateless residents, known locally as bedoon, publicized the numbers in a KUNA statement.

There's an estimated 100,000 bedoons in Kuwait, according to EuroMed monitor. Most bedoon are descendants of nomadic tribes from across the Arabian Peninsula. When Kuwait gained independence in 1961 and subsequently started to register its nationals, around a third of the population were unable to register for a variety of reasons and were left stateless. Any child of a bedoon father is also stateless, regardless of whether the child is born in Kuwait and even if the mother is a Kuwaiti national. The Kuwaiti government classifies bedoon people as "illegal residents" from neighboring countries who are concealing their true nationalities and continuously calls on them to amend their status.

According to the CARIRS statement published Saturday, between 2011 and until August 2024, the statement said, 10,256 stateless residents reverted "to their original nationalities", according to the statement. There were 6,054 people who admitted to being originally from Saudi Arabia, 1,188 from Iraq, 868 from Syria, 131 from Iran, 53 from Jordan and 1,962 others to different nationalities. The statement added that these statistics include individuals with "parents or relatives with documents from different countries."

Due to the country's classification of bedoons as illegal residents, they have been deprived of many civil, political, and social rights, especially those pertaining to work, health care, education, and public services, as well as participation in public assemblies. Many live in relative poverty and social segregation.

The Kuwaiti government has recently intensified its crackdown. In July, the country announced it was suspending issuing temporary passports to bedoons until further notice, with the exception of cases in which the person requires the travel document for studying or treatment abroad. All passports given according to Article 17 of the citizenship law, through which some bedoons have been able to obtain travel documents, are now considered null and void. A statement said the decision was made to allow for further deliberation on the status of bedoon people by relevant authorities.

The UN Human Rights Committee has brought the bedoon issue to Kuwait's during its latest review of the human rights situation in the country. The UN agency has requested Kuwait to "provide information on measures to end all forms of discrimination against bedoon residents," according to an agency report dated November 29, 2022. It's also asked for Kuwait's comment on claims that "Bedoon seeking to renew their identity cards are subjected to pressure to renounce Kuwaiti citizenship claims in order to secure the renewal." A report by the Center for Civil and Human Rights, says Kuwait's UN delegates justify restrictions on bedoons "by arguing that illegal residents cannot enjoy some of the rights of their citizens, as they have no passports."

## Arab ministers review recommendations

**CAIRO:** Kuwait expressed its hopes that the Arab League's Economic and Social Council, in its 114th ministerial session in Cairo, would result in decisions that enhance joint Arab efforts in the economic and social fields. This came in a statement for KUNA by Acting Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance Talal Al-Nemash during his presidency of the Kuwaiti delegation in the meetings of the Economic and Social Council chaired by the UAE.

Al-Nemash said that the Arab ministers reviewed the recommendations of the Economic and Social Council issued by senior officials at their meeting, including the report of the Secretary-General of the Arab League on the follow-up of implementing the decisions of the 113th session of the Economic and Social Council. In addition to the activity of the economic and social sector in the General Secretariat during this period, as well as the measures taken to implement the Council's decisions in this regard, adding that the ministers agreed to these recommendations.

He pointed out that the Council discussed preparing the economic and social matter, which will be included in the agenda of the 34th Arab Summit scheduled to be held in Baghdad in 2025. In addition to the requirements for completing the

## Army Chief of Staff inspects military units, sites

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Bandar Al-Muzain on Saturday inspected a number of military units and sites, during which he was briefed on combat and administrative readiness and listened to a briefing on work progress. In a press statement during his inspection tour, the army chief stressed the need to maintain the highest levels of combat readiness.

He appreciated the efforts made by various army units' members, stressing the importance of continuing the hard work to maintain the homeland's security and safety. Lieutenant General Al-Muzain made a similar visit last week, KUNA reported.

Last month, Lieutenant General Al-Muzain, met with the military defense council and a number of army commanders to review the latest developments and discuss the future visions and strategies of the Kuwaiti army. Lieutenant General Al-Muzain stressed following up on the implementation of various tasks and duties and seeking to overcome various obstacles that may hinder the implementation of military plans, programs, strategies, and ways to develop them. The meeting was attended by the deputy chief of the General Staff of the Army, Major General Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, a number of members of the military Defense Council, and senior commanding officers in the army. — KUNA



Lieutenant General Bandar Al-Muzain



Acting Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance Talal Al-Nemash

Greater Arab Free Trade Area, which has achieved remarkable progress at the level of legislation and increased commercial exchange.

He noted that the council also discussed the developments of the Arab Customs Union and the initiatives and strategies presented by the member states and the Arab League's General Secretariat, including the Arab Reading Challenge Initiative, the Culture and Green Future Initiative, and the Space Initiative (MADAC). He added that the ministers also discussed the Arab strategy for lifelong learning, the strategy for the advancement of the Arabic language, and the Second Arab Decade for Literacy and Adult Education 2034-2025. — KUNA

### News in Brief

#### Authorities foil smuggling of 1.5 kg of pure heroin

**KUWAIT:** The Interior Ministry succeeded in foiling the smuggling of 1.5 kilos of pure heroin, said a statement on Friday. The Interior Ministry's criminal investigation arrested an individual, who has connections with international drug-smuggling networks in Asia, in coordination with Kuwait customs service, revealed the Interior Ministry's public relations department. While interrogating the suspect, he confessed to the crime and revealed that the illicit material was to be delivered to certain "associates" abroad for sale, it added. It affirmed that the suspect and confiscated material were handed to the narcotics prosecution department to implement further legal action against the defendant. — KUNA

#### Governors to get councils to improve work flow

**KUWAIT:** The Cabinet issued a decree to establish a council in each of Kuwait's six governorates, to be headed by the governor. The 'Governorate's Council' would include membership of the deputy governor, representatives of state departments to be nominated by the relevant minister in coordination with the governor, as well as three citizens who are residents of the governorate to be nominated by the governor. Each council would meet regularly to issue decisions related to services provided by the government within the governorate, and assist the governor in their duties. The Cabinet had recently approved a draft bill to 'activate the supervisory role of governors in implementing the state policy and the development plan'.

## Sidelined sports: The challenges of finding clubs in Kuwait

By Lea AlSabah

KUWAIT: Maya Abu Huwaj, a high school student in Kuwait, spent countless hours searching for a suitable badminton club. Most of the results online were outdated or limited to specific groups. She said that the few clubs she found were either too far away or had pricey membership fees. Even when she finally found a club, the scheduling conflicted with her school commitments. She still decided to visit the club but the limited equipment and unfriendly atmosphere made her feel out of place and unwelcome.

Abu Huwaj's experience is an example of the challenges you face when finding sports clubs in Kuwait. With limited options, high barriers to entry, and a lack of inclusivity, many young people are unable to pursue their athletic interests. In Kuwait, the spotlight has been directed heavily on soccer, with amazing programs dedicated to it, meanwhile other sports struggle to receive a fraction of the same energy. It's difficult to find good sports clubs, especially for less popular sports. Many programs online are either unreliable, too crowded, or not accepting new members. This can be a real challenge for athletes and enthusiasts who want to participate in structured activities.

Layan Sabagh, a student at Swift Academy, has also faced a long-standing challenge in finding sports clubs. A passionate volleyball player, Sabagh spent two years searching for a decent club. Her primary obstacle was the unreliability of online searches. Ultimately, she found a great volleyball club through a friend she had made during an event. Sabagh expressed her frustration with the limitations of school clubs. While they offer opportunities to play during the school year, practise is often restricted to the volleyball season. She questioned how she could continue pursuing her beloved sport beyond these limited timeframes.

While Kuwait boasts a vibrant soccer scene, other sports often struggle for recognition and resources. The limited availability of quality sports clubs, coupled with difficult entry requirements and a lack of inclusivity, can hinder athletic development and limit opportunities for social engagement. To address these challenges, Kuwait could benefit from increased investment in sports infrastructure, the encouragement of community-based sports programs, and greater support for diverse sports clubs. By fostering a more inclusive and accessible sports environment, the country can empower its youth, promote healthy lifestyles, and strengthen its sporting culture beyond soccer.

### Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: People walk inside The Avenues mall, Kuwait's largest shopping center, on September 4, 2024. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## KRCS to launch relief projects in southern and central Asia

Red Crescent to provide medical, housing support to people in 3 countries

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) announced the signing of several agreements to implement humanitarian projects in south and central Asia, specifically Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan, KUNA reported. The agreements, it said, are an extension of Kuwait's role towards afflicted societies and countries around the world and alleviating the suffering of people.

In Afghanistan, KRCS has signed an agreement with the Afghan Red Crescent Society to support a project which provides medical and surgical support to children with congenital heart defects, KRCS Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer told KUNA.

In Pakistan, the society signed a memorandum



KRCS Chairman  
Dr Hilal Al-Sayer

of understanding with the Pakistan Red Crescent to work on a housing project for families affected by floods. According to Islamic Relief, the ongoing 2024 monsoon season has caused significant devastation across Pakistan, particularly in the provinces of Balochistan, Punjab, and Sindh. Heavy rains have resulted in widespread flooding, landslides, and infrastructure damage. As of September 1, 2024, 306 people have died across the country, including 155 children. Additionally, 584 people have been injured, 212 of whom are children. The floods have damaged 20,646 houses and there has been significant infrastructure damage to bridges and roads.

The society has also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Tajik Red Crescent to provide the necessary relief supplies to those affected by the floods and rains in the central Asian country. Dr Al-Sayer said the agreements indicate the spirit of cooperation between humanitarian associations, pointing to the common denominators that bring together national societies in providing humanitarian aid to the needy.

He stated that the association's strategy in the



Kuwait Red Crescent Society

implementation of projects enhances the long-term effects of humanitarian aid to countries in need. Dr Al-Sayer said KRCS puts great emphasis on coordinating efforts among humanitarian societies and promoting the concept of partnership, which is one of the basic components of KRCS' vision.



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HYDERABAD: Flood-affected people walk past their make-shift tents along a roadside after heavy monsoon rains in Hyderabad, Sindh province on August 30, 2024. — AFP

## Kuwaiti students honored at AI Gulf Hackathon

MANAMA: Three Kuwaiti students won awards at the Gulf Hackathon contest in its second edition in Bahrain. In a ceremony organized at the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, Kuwaiti students Hawraa Al-Sharif and Ahmad Al-Sharika were honored for winning the first place. Their compatriot Abdulwahab Haider came third. Students at the hackathon competed at utilizing artificial intelligence in useful projects.

Speaking to KUNA in a statement on the sidelines of the ceremony, Mona Awadh, an official at Kuwait's Ministry of Education, expressed her happiness for the Kuwaiti students' outstanding performance in the competition and their wonderful achievement. The competition is a chance to get acquainted with

the expertise of participating teams which contributes to developing skills of students, she added.

Honored student Al-Sharif expressed her pride for raising Kuwait's flag by placing first in the contest. Al-Sharika, who also won first place, said his winning project aims at helping students pick a university major that's compatible to their hobbies, interests and skills. Haider, who came in third, said his project was designed to make the educational process in classrooms more interactive.

Head of Kuwait's cultural bureau in Manama Dr Mohammad Al-Doghaim commended the outstanding performance of Kuwaiti students in the competition which highlights the skills of Kuwaiti youth and their potential to excel in various fields. This scientific accomplishment is a source of pride for all, he said, congratulating all students on their win.

Bahrain's Minister of Education Mohammad Juma voiced his happiness for hosting this event, referring to the great attention paid by the Kingdom of Bahrain to artificial intelligence. Utilizing artificial intelligence has become essential for all fields, mainly education, he elaborated. — KUNA



Algerians head to the polls as Tebboune eyes easy re-election

## Rise in hate crimes against minorities dents Canada's welcoming image

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WHITE SANDS, US: NASA astronauts Mike Fincke (left) and Scott Tingle looking inside NASA's Boeing Crew Flight Test Starliner spacecraft after it landed uncrewed at White Sands, New Mexico. (Right) Boeing and NASA teams working around Starliner spacecraft. — AFP

# Boeing's beleaguered Starliner returns home without astronauts

## NASA astronauts Wilmore and Williams to return on SpaceX vehicle in Feb 2025

WASHINGTON: Boeing's beleaguered Starliner made its long-awaited return to Earth on Saturday without the astronauts who rode it up to the International Space Station, after NASA ruled the trip back too risky.

After years of delays, Starliner launched in June for what was meant to be a roughly weeklong test mission — a final shakedown before it could be certified to rotate crew to and from the orbital laboratory. But unexpected thruster malfunctions and helium leaks en route to the ISS derailed those plans, and NASA ultimately decided it was safer to bring crewmates Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams back on a rival SpaceX Crew Dragon — though they'll have to wait until Feb 2025.

The gumdrop-shaped Boeing capsule touched down softly at the White Sands Space Harbor in New Mexico at 0401 GMT Saturday, its descent slowed by parachutes and cushioned by airbags, having departed the ISS around six hours earlier. As it streaked red-hot across the night sky, ground

teams reported hearing sonic booms. The spacecraft endured temperatures of 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit (1,650 degrees Celsius) during atmospheric reentry.

NASA lavished praise on Boeing during a post-flight press conference where representatives from the company were conspicuously absent. "It was a bullseye landing," said Steve Stich, program manager for NASA's commercial crew program. "The entry in particular has been darn near flawless."

Still, he acknowledged that certain new issues had come to light, including the failure of a new thruster and the temporary loss of the guidance system. He added it was too early to talk about whether Starliner's next flight, scheduled for August next year, would be crewed, instead stressing NASA needed time to analyze the data they had gathered and assess what changes were required to both the design of the ship and the way it is flown.

Ahead of the return leg, Boeing carried out extensive ground testing to address the technical hitches encountered during Starliner's ascent, then promised

— both publicly and behind closed doors — that it could safely bring the astronauts home. In the end, NASA disagreed. Asked whether he stood by that decision, NASA's Stich said: "It's always hard to have that retrospective look. We made the decision to have an uncrewed flight based on what we knew at the time and based on our knowledge of the thrusters and based on the modeling that we had."

Even without crew aboard, the stakes were high for Boeing, a century-old aerospace giant. With its reputation already battered by safety concerns surrounding its commercial jets, its long-term prospects for crewed space missions hung in the balance. Shortly after undocking, Starliner executed a powerful "breakout burn" to swiftly clear it from the station and prevent any risk of collision — a maneuver that would have been unnecessary if crew were aboard to take manual control if needed.

Mission teams then conducted thorough checks of the thrusters required for the critical "deorbit burn" that guided the capsule onto its reentry path

around 40 minutes before touchdown. Though it was widely expected that Starliner would stick the landing, as it had on two previous uncrewed tests, Boeing's program continues to languish behind schedule.

In 2014, NASA awarded both Boeing and SpaceX multibillion-dollar contracts to develop spacecraft to taxi astronauts to and from the ISS, after the end of the Space Shuttle program left the US space agency reliant on Russian rockets. Although initially considered the underdog, Elon Musk's SpaceX surged ahead of Boeing, and has successfully flown dozens of astronauts since 2020.

The Starliner program, meanwhile, has faced numerous setbacks — from a software glitch that prevented the capsule from rendezvousing with the ISS during its first uncrewed test flight in 2019, to the discovery of flammable tape in the cabin after its second test in 2022, to the current troubles. With the ISS scheduled to be decommissioned in 2030, the longer Starliner takes to become fully operational, the less time it will have to prove its worth. — AFP

## NY judge delays Trump sentencing until after election

NEW YORK: The New York judge who presided over Donald Trump's hush money trial on Friday delayed sentencing until after November's US presidential election to "avoid any appearance" of impacting the vote. The Republican White House candidate had been scheduled to be sentenced on September 18 for falsifying business records as part of a scheme to silence a porn star who alleged they had a sexual encounter.

Instead, Judge Juan Merchan postponed it to November 26 — well past the November 5 election in which Trump faces Vice President Kamala Harris.

Trump said on social media that it was delayed because "everyone realizes that there was no case, I did nothing wrong!" His lawyers had sought the delay and Merchan, in a letter explaining his decision,



NEW YORK: US former President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks during a press conference at Trump Tower in New York City on Sep 6, 2024. — AFP

noted that prosecutors had not expressed opposition to a postponement.

Trump was convicted in May of 34 counts of doctoring business records to cover up hush money payments to porn star Stormy Daniels to stop her from going public on the eve of the 2016 election. He was originally scheduled to be sentenced on July 11

but that was delayed until September after the Supreme Court ruled that an ex-president has broad immunity from criminal prosecution.

Trump's lawyers asked that his New York conviction be tossed out following the Supreme Court immunity ruling, and Merchan said he would rule on the dismissal motion on Nov 12. In his letter, Merchan noted that Trump had asked for sentencing to be delayed "to avoid the potential 'politically prejudicial' impact that a public sentencing could have on him and his prospects in the upcoming election."

He noted the "unique" nature of the case and said to ensure public confidence in the judiciary, sentencing should be "entirely focused on the verdict of the jury" and not political distractions.

"Their verdict must be respected and addressed in a manner that is not diluted by the enormity of the upcoming presidential election," he said, adding that "the court is a fair, impartial, and apolitical institution." Merchan said sentencing would therefore be delayed "to avoid any appearance — however unwarranted — that the proceeding has been affected by or seeks to affect the approaching presidential election in which the defendant is a candidate." —

## Pakistani charged with plot to attack New York City

WASHINGTON: A Pakistani citizen living in Canada was arrested on Wednesday and charged with planning an attack in New York City in support of the Islamic State, the Department of Justice said on Friday. Muhammad Shahzeb Khan, 20, is accused of plotting a mass shooting at a Jewish center in Brooklyn around Oct 7, 2024, nearly one year after Hamas' attack in Zionist entity.

US Attorney General Merrick Garland said Khan, who is also known as Shahzeb Jadoo, aimed to kill "as many Jewish people as possible." The Department of Justice was not able to confirm if Khan had obtained legal counsel. Khan attempted to travel from Canada to the United States where he intended to use automatic and semi-automatic weapons to carry out the attack, according to the indictment.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police said in a statement on Friday they arrested Khan on Wednesday in Ormstown, Quebec, south of Montreal. He is set to appear in court in Montreal Sept 13.

Khan told two undercover law enforcement officers of his plans to create "a real offline cell" of Islamic State supporters to carry out an attack, the indictment alleged. He instructed them to obtain AR-style assault rifles, ammunition and other materials to carry out the attacks, and identified specific locations where the attacks would take place. Khan targeted New York City because it has "the largest Jewish population in America," prosecutors said. "We are deeply grateful to our Canadian partners for their critical law enforcement actions in this matter. Jewish communities — like all communities in this country — should not have to fear that they will be targeted by a hate-fueled terrorist attack," Garland said in a statement.

Khan faces up to 20 years in prison. Oct 7 would be the first anniversary of an attack by Hamas on Zionist. Communities across North America have since reported increases in anti-Semitic and Islamophobic attacks. — Reuters

## Families flee intense fighting near Khartoum

PORT SUDAN: Hundreds of families fled a northern suburb of Sudan's capital Khartoum on Saturday after fighting between the army and paramilitaries intensified around a key military base, witnesses told AFP. The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces attacked the Hattab base in Khartoum North, also known as Bahri, on Wednesday.

The army, led by de facto ruler Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, is locked in conflict with the RSF led by his former deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo. The war began in April 2023 and has killed tens of thousands of people, displaced millions and triggered one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

"Since this morning, the army has been firing artillery towards the south of Hattab while military planes are flying over" the area, one witness told AFP on Saturday, speaking on condition of anonymity. Nasr el-Din, a resident who asked that only his first name be used for security reasons, said the RSF "attacked houses south (of the Hattab base), capturing citizens and killing others".

"Since early morning, hundreds of families have left for the north, carrying their belongings on their heads", he added in an account corroborated by another witness. UN experts on Friday called for the deployment of an "independent and impartial force" to protect millions



TOKAR, Sudan: Sudanese army soldiers look on as people use a boat to leave in an inundated area in Tokar in the Red Sea State. — AFP

of civilians driven from their homes in Sudan. After an independent fact-finding mission mandated by the Human Rights Council, the UN experts said "harrowing" violations by both sides had been uncovered, "which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity".

Meanwhile more than 25 million people — upwards of half Sudan's population — face acute hunger, with full-blown famine declared in a camp for displaced people in the volatile western region of Darfur. World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Saturday began a two-day visit to Port Sudan, the de facto seat of government after fighting forced the authorities out of Khartoum. He met a health minister and will also meet other officials and visit health facilities, an AFP correspondent on the ground reported. — AFP

## Ukraine concerned at reports of Iranian missiles to Russia

KYIV: Ukraine's foreign ministry said on Saturday it was deeply concerned by reports about a possible impending transfer of Iranian ballistic missiles to Russia. In a statement emailed to reporters, the ministry said the deepening military cooperation between Tehran and Moscow was a threat to Ukraine, Europe and the Middle East, and called on the international community to increase pressure on Iran and Russia.

CNN and the Wall Street Journal reported on Friday that Iran had transferred short-range ballistic missiles to Russia, citing unidentified sources. Reuters reported in August that Russia was expecting the imminent delivery of hundreds of Fath-360 close-range ballistic missiles from Iran and that dozens of Russian military personnel were being trained in Iran on the satellite-guided weapons for eventual use in the war in Ukraine. On Friday, the United States, a key ally of Ukraine, also voiced concern about the potential transfer of missiles. "Any transfer of Iranian ballistic missiles to Russia would represent a dramatic escalation in Iran's support for Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine," White House National Security Council spokesperson Sean Savett said. Iran's mission to the United Nations in New York said on Friday that Tehran's position on the Ukraine conflict was unchanged. — Reuters

## International

# Algerians head to the polls as Tebboune eyes easy re-election

## Political pundits say the winner in presidential election 'known in advance'

ALGIERS: Algerians headed to the polls on Saturday in a presidential election widely expected to bring a second term for incumbent Abdelmadjid Tebboune whose main hope is for a high turnout.

Tebboune, 78, is heavily favored to see off moderate Islamist Abdelali Hassani and socialist candidate Youcef Aouchiche. In the capital Algiers on Saturday morning, the streets were generally quiet, with most voters expected to head to the polling stations after mid-day.

"I came early to exercise my duty and choose the president of my country in a democratic manner," Sidali Mahmoudi, a 65-year-old early voter, told AFP. Seghir Derouiche, 72, told AFP that not voting was "ignoring one's right". Voting began at 8 am (0700 GMT) and closed at 7 pm.

At 10 am ANIE, the electoral authority, said turnout was 4.5 percent nationwide. More than 24 million Algerians were registered to vote, and both of Tebboune's challengers have urged a large turnout. "Today we start building our future by voting for our project and leaving boycott and despair behind us," Aouchiche said on national television after voting.

Hassani told journalists he hoped "the Algerian people will vote in force" because "a high turnout gives greater credibility to these elections". Algerians abroad have been able to vote since Monday, and ANIE on Saturday put that turnout at 14.5 percent.

After voting in Algiers, Tebboune did not mention voter numbers, saying only that he hoped "Algeria will win in any case". He said that whoever wins "will continue the project" of what he often calls the New Algeria — the country that emerged following mass pro-democracy protests. The incumbent's main challenge is to boost voter turnout in the North African country, after he won in 2019 with 58 percent of the vote — but amid a record abstention rate of more than 60 percent.

The low turnout in 2019 followed the Hirak pro-democracy protests, which toppled former president Abdelaziz Bouteflika before they were quashed with ramped-up policing and the jailing of hundreds of people. Preliminary results could come as early as Saturday night, with ANIE announcing the official results on Sunday at the latest.

"The winner is known in advance," political commentator Mohamed Hennad posted on Facebook before voting began, referring to Tebboune. Tebboune's opponents stood little chance because of low support and the "conditions in which the electoral campaign took place, which is nothing more than a farce", Hennad wrote. "The president is keen to have a significant turnout," Hasni Abidi, an analyst at the Geneva-based CERMAM Study Center. "It's his main issue."

Campaign rallies have struggled to generate enthusiasm in the nation of 45 million, partly because of the summer heat. With young people more than half the population, all three candidates have courted their votes with promises to improve living standards and reduce dependence on hydrocarbons.

Tebboune has touted economic successes during his first term, including more jobs and higher wages in Africa's largest exporter of natural gas. His challengers have vowed to grant the people more freedoms. Aouchiche says he is committed "to release prisoners of conscience through an amnesty and to review unjust laws", including on media and terrorism.

Hassani has advocated "freedoms that have been reduced to nothing in recent years". Political analyst Abidi said Tebboune should address the major deficit in political and media freedoms as politics is "absent from the scene", with Algerians having "divorced from current politics" after the Hirak protests ended. Five years later, rights group Amnesty International said Algerian authorities were "committed to maintaining a zero-tolerance approach towards dissenting opinions". — AFP



ALGIERS: Algeria's incumbent President Abdelmadjid Tebboune preparing to vote in Algiers on Sept 7, 2024. — AFP

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## UK's Starmer in 'historic' visit to Dublin

DUBLIN: UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer was to meet his Irish counterpart Simon Harris in Dublin on Saturday, the first visit by a British leader to Ireland in five years, with London looking to reset damaged relations with European Union nations after Brexit.

The visit, described by Downing Street as a "historic moment for UK-Ireland relations", signals a further warming in bilateral ties that had frayed under the previous Conservative government. "It marks a new era of co-operation and friendship between Britain and Ireland," Starmer's office said in a statement announcing the visit across the Irish Sea. Harris, who became taoiseach (prime minister) in April, was the first international leader hosted by Starmer in the UK soon after his landslide election win in July. The pair chatted over pints of Ireland's national drink, Guinness, at the British prime minister's country residence, Chequers, northwest of London, before a larger meeting of European leaders.

After the Chequers meeting, the pair said the "time was right for a reset of the partnership", noting the "ties which bind both countries span geography and history". Ahead of Saturday's visit, which will focus on boosting economic growth, Starmer said the "UK and Ireland



DUBLIN: Ireland's Prime Minister Simon Harris and Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer pose for a photograph with their respective national football teams shirts. — AFP

share the strongest of ties" and the two leaders were "in lockstep about our future." The UK-Ireland relationship "has never reached its full potential but I want to change that", Starmer said in comments released by Downing Street. "We have a clear opportunity to go further and faster to make sure our partnership is fully delivering on behalf of the British and Irish people — driving growth and prosperity in both our countries," he added.

The focus on "resetting" Anglo-Irish relations marks a notable shift in language after the last few years saw tensions rise between Dublin and London. Britons narrowly voted to leave the EU in a landmark referendum in 2016 and the country finally left the bloc in 2020 after years of political division and stalemate. — AFP

Kosovo, where ethnic Serbs are the majority in several districts, outnumbering the ethnic Albanians who overwhelmingly populate the rest of the Balkan country. Justifying the move, Kosovo Interior Minister Xhelal Svecla said on Facebook "masked extremists" on the Serbian side of the border were "selectively stopping... citizens who want to transit through Serbia" to third countries.

"And all this in plain sight of the Serbian authorities," he complained. On Friday, dozens of demonstrators in Serbia blockaded the two border crossings to prevent traffic entering Serbia from Kosovo. They said they were protesting against the closure of parallel administrations that ethnic Serbs in northern Kosovo had set up to rival the official ones.

## June-August 2024: The hottest ever...

Continued from Page 1

The June and August global temperature broke through the level of 1.5C above the pre-industrial average — a key threshold for limiting the worst effects of climate change. Human-caused greenhouse gas emissions are warming the planet, raising the likelihood and intensity of climate disasters such as droughts, fires and floods.

Heat was exacerbated in 2023 and early 2024 by the cyclical weather phenomenon El Nino, though Copernicus scientist Julien Nicolas told AFP its effects were not as strong as they sometimes are. Meanwhile the contrary cyclical cooling phenomenon, known as La Nina, has not yet started, he said. A complete assessment of the impact of the temperature extremes will take time, but a study published in mid-August estimated that 30,000-65,000 people in Europe died from heat-related illnesses in 2023, mainly among the elderly.

Against the global trend, regions such as Alaska, the eastern United States, parts of South America, Pakistan and the Sahel desert zone in northern Africa had lower than average temperatures in August, the report said. But others such as Australia — where it was winter — Japan and Spain experienced record warmth in August. China logged its hottest August in more than six decades last month, its national weather service said, after the country endured a summer of extreme weather and heatwaves across much of its north and west.

China is the leading emitter of greenhouse gases, but with Beijing installing renewable capacity at record speed, and a construction slump dragging

## Thousands protest in France after Macron picks Barnier as PM

PARIS: Thousands of people took to the streets across France on Saturday to protest President Emmanuel Macron's decision to appoint centre-right Michel Barnier as prime minister with left-wing parties accusing him of stealing legislative elections. Macron named 73-year-old Barnier, a conservative and the European Union's former Brexit negotiator, as prime minister on Thursday, capping a two-month-long search following his ill-fated decision to call a legislative election that delivered a hung parliament divided in three blocs.

In his first interview as government chief, Barnier said on Friday night that his government, which lacks a clear majority, will include conservatives, members of Macron's camp and he hoped some from the left. Barnier faces the daunting task of trying to drive reforms and the 2025 budget, as France is under pressure from the European Commission and bond markets to reduce its deficit.

The left, led by the far-left France Unbowed (LFI) party, has accused Macron of a denial of democracy and stealing the election after Ma-

The Serbian government in Belgrade—which has never recognised the independence of Kosovo, its former southern province—finances a parallel health, education and social security system in Kosovo for the latter's ethnic Serb population. The Serbian demonstrators told the media their border blockade would last until Kosovo police were "withdrawn from the north of Kosovo and the usurped institutions are returned to the Serbs". They also demanded that the NATO-led peacekeeping force in Kosovo (KFOR) "take over control in the north of Kosovo".

The border blockade began a few days after police in northern Kosovo raided and then closed five administrative offices linked to the Belgrade government. On Saturday, Kosovo's foreign ministry urged people

down emissions-heavy steel production, there are signs the nation could hit the peak early, experts say. Globally, August 2024 matched that month's previous global temperature record from one year earlier, while this June was hotter than last, Copernicus data in the report showed.

July was slightly hotter in 2023 than this year, but on average the three-month period broke the record in 2024. Governments have targets to reduce their countries' planet-heating emissions to try to keep the rise below 1.5C under the 2015 Paris Agreement. Scientists will not consider that threshold to be definitively passed until it has been observed being breached over several decades. The average level of warming is currently about 1.2C, according to the World Meteorological Organization. Copernicus said the 1.5C level has been passed in 13 of the past 14 months.

The oceans are also heating to record levels, raising the risk of more intense storms. Copernicus said that outside of the poles, the average sea surface temperature in August was just under 21C, the second-highest level on record for that month. It said August "was drier than average over most of continental Europe" — noting the wildfires that struck countries such as Greece. But places such as western Russia and Turkey were wetter than normal, with floods in some places.

The eastern United States had more rain than usual, including areas lashed by Hurricane Debby. "The temperature-related extreme events witnessed this summer will only become more intense, with more devastating consequences for people and the planet unless we take urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions," Copernicus's deputy director Burgess said. Some researchers say that emissions in some of the biggest countries may have peaked or will soon do so, partly as a result of the drive towards low-carbon energy. — AFP

ron refused to pick the candidate of the New Popular Front (NFP) alliance that came top in the July vote. Pollster Elabe published a survey on Friday showing that 74 percent of French people considered Macron had disregarded the results of the elections with 55 percent believing he had stolen them. In response to the appointment of Barnier, whose centre-right Les Republicains party is only the fifth bloc in parliament with less than 50 lawmakers, left-wing party leaders, unions and student bodies called for mass protests on Saturday ahead of new action, including possible strikes on Oct. 1.

The LFI party said 130 protests would take place across the country. Barnier was continuing consultations on Saturday as he looks to form a government, a tricky job given he faces a potential no-confidence vote especially with an urgent draft budget for 2025 due to be discussed in parliament at the start of October. NFP and the far-right National Rally (RN) together have a majority and could oust the prime minister through a no-confidence vote should they decide to collaborate. The RN gave its tacit approval for Barnier citing a number of conditions for it to not back a no-confidence vote, making it the de facto kingmaker for the new government. "He is a prime minister under surveillance," RN party leader Jordan Bardella told BFM on Saturday. "Nothing can be done without us." — Reuters

to avoid trying to transit through Serbia because of the protests on the Serbian side. Foreign Minister Donika Gervalla told reporters on Friday the Serbian protests were "yet more proof" that Belgrade was trying to provoke and destabilize its southern neighbor. Animosity has persisted between Serbia and Kosovo since a war in the 1990s between Serbian armed forces and Kosovo's ethnic Albanian separatists. Kosovo declared independence in 2008. But Serbia has refused to recognize the move and has encouraged ethnic Serbs living in Kosovo to remain loyal to Belgrade.

Tensions ratcheted up a notch earlier this year, when Kosovo made the euro the only legal currency, effectively outlawing the use of the Serbian dinar. — AFP

## Kosovo closes two border crossings with Serbia

PRISTINA: Kosovo has closed two of its four border crossings with Serbia following protests on the Serbian side that have blocked cross-border traffic, the interior minister said on Saturday.

The Kosovo government shut the border at Brnjak and the larger Merdare crossing overnight from Friday to Saturday. Both are in the troubled north of

## Gaza war enters 12th month...

Continued from Page 1

The Jenin pullout came with Zionist entity at loggerheads with the United States over talks to forge a truce in the Gaza war. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said "90 percent is agreed" and urged Zionists and Hamas to finalize a deal. But Netanyahu denied this, telling Fox News: "It's not close." Hamas is demanding complete withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, saying it agreed months ago to a proposal outlined by US President Joe Biden.

AFP reporters said several air strikes and shelling rocked the territory overnight and early Saturday. Gaza's civil defense agency and the Palestinian Red Crescent said a Zionist airstrike killed four people near the Nu-seirat refugee camp in central Gaza. The civil defense and a witness said an air strike that targeted a flat in Bureij camp killed another four.

And in Jabalia, a Zionist airstrike killed four more Palestinians, civil defense officials said. They added that a woman and a child were also killed in an air strike north of Gaza City. Medics reported at least 33 Palestinians wounded in an air strike on a residential area in Beit Lahia and said they were being treated at Al-Awda, Kamal Adwan and Indonesian hospitals. In the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood of Gaza City, the civil defense said an airstrike on a school-turned-shelter for displaced people killed at least three people and wounded more than 20.

Zionist entity has also traded fire with Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah movement since the October 7 attack. On Saturday Hezbollah said it targeted two bases with Katyusha rockets. Lebanon's National News Agency said Zionists carried out air strikes and shelling of several areas of the country's south. The military said it detected missiles crossing from Lebanon, intercepting some of them. — AFP

## Weaponizing joy: Harris tries to beat Trump at his game

WASHINGTON: US presidential hopeful Kamala Harris appears to be taking a leaf out of rival Donald Trump's playbook by focusing on evoking emotion, rather than explaining policy, on the campaign trail — and she's hoping her appeal to "joy" will help her beat the Republican at his own game. Since taking over from President Joe Biden at the top of the Democratic Party's ticket in July, Harris has had to run her campaign in fast-forward, with just months to go before the November election.

With few exceptions she has avoided press conferences, interviews and lengthy discussions on policy. Instead, her official coronation at the Democratic National Convention focused on one pervasive theme: "joy." And the vibe-heavy approach appears to be working. While Biden was lagging behind Trump, Harris has pulled back into the race, with the two candidates running neck-and-neck in six key battleground states, according to the latest polls.

The shift to evoking a primarily emotional message, experts say, is effective political strategy. "We think we think like scientists, carefully and objectively weighing the evidence and facts before us," said Jennifer Mercieca, a communications professor at Texas A&M University. "But we actually think like lawyers, building a case for our preferred position." The appeal to so-called emotional truths — things that "feel true," even if they are not rooted in empirical evidence — is powerful, she said. "When speakers try to persuade based on affective truth it's harder to hold them accountable because it's difficult to argue against a feeling." — AFP

## International

# Rise in hate crimes against minorities tarnishes Canada's welcoming image

## Trudeau's Liberal govt faces flak as backlash against immigrants grows

**TORONTO:** A growing perception in Canada that immigration is to blame for some of the country's economic woes is fuelling a xenophobic backlash evidenced by a surge in reported hate crimes against visible minorities, advocates and community members say.

Long a nation that took pride in welcoming newcomers, Canada is facing a reckoning over a sharp rise in the number of "temporary residents" such as international students and workers in recent years. Opinion polls show a growing slice of the public believes Canada has too many immigrants, and many blame them for a worsening housing crisis and surge in the cost of living. That appears to have contributed to a slump in popularity of Justin Trudeau's minority Liberal government. A national election is due no later than October 2025 but may come sooner after the New Democratic Party this week withdrew its automatic support for the government.

Hate crimes reported by police more than doubled from 2019 to 2023, according to the latest figures from Statistics Canada, with 44.5 percent of incidents in 2023 motivated by race or ethnicity. Hate crimes can include anything from homicide and assault to mischief and public incitement of hatred.

The apparent growth in anti-immigrant sentiment runs counter to a long-standing consensus in Canada that the country welcomes newcomers on humanitarian and economic grounds. But concern over a shortage of housing and affordability appears to have weakened that consensus and given fresh life to years-old anti-immigrant tropes, said Peter Smith, a researcher with the Canadian Anti-Hate Network, an advocacy organization.

"People are looking for something to change, and people are also looking for someone to blame," he said. "The target, unfortunately - and, you know, a very easy one - is immigrants." Canada added more than 470,000 new permanent residents in 2023, or roughly 1 percent of its population. But the

biggest jump in immigration numbers comes from temporary residents, especially students and workers, whose ranks have doubled in just two years from 1.4 million in the second quarter of 2022 to 2.8 million in the second quarter of 2024, according to Statistics Canada. A Leger poll last month found 65 percent of Canadians surveyed believe the Canadian government's current immigration plan will admit too many people. Most said they believe current immigration rates are contributing to the housing crisis and stresses on healthcare services and called Canada's immigration policy "too generous."

Balpreet Singh, legal counsel for the World Sikh Organization of Canada, believes the perception that newcomers are behind the country's economic ills has prompted a xenophobic response. He said Sikhs were often targeted by the hate.

"When you're using the image of a Sikh to represent all the so-called problems of immigration, it's not a surprise that Sikh men - who are very visible because of their turbans, their beards - are the ones that are being attacked," he said. In July, for example, a Sikh man was heading home from his temple in the Scarborough area of Toronto when he said he had his turban snatched off his head by someone who jumped into a car and sped off. Police said they investigated but no arrests had been made as of Aug. 15.

The victim, Rupinder Singh, was deeply shaken. "I'm planning to go back home because of this incident. I don't feel safe," said Singh, who came to Canada from India as a student in 2022 and now holds a work permit. Racist and xenophobic posts targeting immigrants and visible minorities in Canada have proliferated online in recent years, said Queen's University political scientist Christian Leuprecht. He said the internet speeds the spread of these ideas and makes people espousing them feel part of a community. In an interview, Immigration Minister Marc Miller said Canada is not immune to anti-im-



**VANCOUVER, Canada:** Hundreds of people gather at the Vancouver Art Gallery to rally against anti-Asian hate crimes in this file photo.

migrant sentiment but its longstanding consensus around immigration, while challenged, remains part of the national identity. He said politicians need to be careful with their language.

"I'm not going to say there aren't any racists in Canada. There are," he said. "I don't think it's risen to the level we've seen in other countries. I think we have to be vigilant."

Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre, who polls say would win a majority if an election were held now, has called Canada's immigration system "out of control," "shattered," "chaos" and "ruined." The Liberals have said issues of housing and affordability are complex but that immigration is at least partly responsible for the housing shortage. With the Liberals well behind in public opinion polls, Trudeau's government has pledged to reduce the number of temporary residents to 5 percent of the overall population over three years from 6.8 percent in April.

To that end, Canada is tightening rules around

temporary foreign workers and international students. Miller has promised measures to further reduce the ranks of temporary residents. Trudeau has said he is considering reducing the number of new permanent residents as well. Stephanie Carvin, a Carleton University professor who researches national security and extremism, said the issue was likely to become more fraught as Canada moves into an election period. "I do worry this is going to get worse before it gets better," Carvin said. University of Ottawa law professor Jamie Chai Yun Liew said political leaders bear some responsibility for public sentiment around immigration. "You would hope they would be more responsible and careful with their language," she said.

As an example, she cited comments in May from Ontario Premier Doug Ford, who suggested without evidence that immigrants were behind a shooting at a Jewish school. Ford later said his comments were "meant to stress that there is more that unites us than divides us." — Reuters

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Mexico arrests drug boss over 43 missing students

**MEXICO CITY:** A suspected drug cartel boss allegedly linked to the disappearance of a decade ago of 43 college students was arrested in Mexico after being released from prison in 2019, authorities said Friday. Gildardo Lopez Astudillo, alias "El Gil," is an alleged leader of the Guerreros Unidos cartel, accused of being behind the disappearance and suspected murders of the students from Ayotzinapa teachers' college in 2014. — AFP

### German emergency services tackle massive forest fire

**FRANKFURT:** Firefighters and aircraft Saturday ramped up efforts to tackle a massive forest fire in the mountains of central Germany that has reportedly forced the evacuation of hundreds of people. Several blazes began in the Harz Mountains on Friday, and by the evening had joined together to form a huge forest fire. Around 150 firefighters, planes and helicopters were deployed on the Brocken mountain and the surrounding area was closed off, according to authorities in the district of Harz in the state of Saxony-Anhalt. — AFP

### France's newest nuclear reactor resumes operations

**PARIS:** France's newest nuclear reactor, plagued by massive delays and cost overruns, resumed operations on Saturday after shutting itself down automatically earlier this week. The European Pressurised Reactor (EPR) in Flamanville, Normandy — supposed to be the model for a new generation of nuclear plants pushed by President Emmanuel Macron for the coming decades — has been completed 12 years late at a cost of 13.2 billion euros (\$14.6 billion). — AFP

### Brazil's Lula fires minister accused of sexual harassment

**BRASILIA:** Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on Friday fired his human rights minister, Silvio Almeida, following claims that he sexually harassed several women. "Given the grave accusations against minister Silvio Almeida and after summoning him for a conversation... President Lula decided to remove the head of the human rights and citizenship ministry," the presidency said in a statement. The statement said the minister's position had become "untenable." — AFP

### Thousands protest lack of climate progress in S Korea

**SEOUL:** More than 30,000 protesters gathered in South Korea's capital in broiling heat on Saturday, demanding more aggressive action by the government to combat global warming. With temperatures exceeding 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit), protesters young and old marched in the country's biggest demonstration so far this year, snarling traffic in central Seoul. They waved large banners reading "Climate justice," "Protect our lives!" and "NO to climate villain (President) Yoon Suk Yeol's administration". — Reuters

## Kenya police probe school blaze that killed 18 boys

**ENDARASHA, Kenya:** Kenyan police stepped up their investigations Saturday into a prime school dormitory blaze that has now cost the lives of 18 boys, as families faced an agonizing wait for news of their missing loved ones. "It is a catastrophe beyond our imagination," government spokesman Isaac Mwaura said at a press briefing at the Hillside Endarasha Academy where the fire struck around midnight Thursday.

The flames engulfed a dormitory at the primary school where more than 150 boys aged between nine and 13 were sleeping. Mwaura said 18 children had died in the blaze at the school in the central county of Nyeri, up from a previous toll of 17 given by President William Ruto on Friday. "It is truly devastating for the nation to lose such a number of young and promising Kenyans. Our hearts are heavy," Mwaura said. Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua had said on Friday that 70 youngsters were still unaccounted for after the fire.

Mwaura said about 20 had now been accounted for as of Saturday, but declined to give any further details. The cause of the inferno is not yet known but homicide investigators and forensic experts are at the school, where media access has been blocked.

The charred bodies of victims, which police had said were burnt beyond recognition, were still in the dormitory, now a blackened shell with its corrugated iron roof completely collapsed.

"Today we want to begin the process of DNA testing," Kenya's chief homicide detective Martin Nyuguto told AFP. Ruto has declared three days of national mourning from Monday after what he described as an "unfathomable tragedy." "I pledge that the difficult questions that have been asked such as how this tragedy occurred and



**NYERI, Kenya:** Family members react after visiting the burned dorm room at the Nyeri county's Hillside Endarasha Academy in Nyeri county on Sept 6, 2024 after a fire broke out killing 17 children. — AFP

why the response was not timely will be answered: fully, frankly, and without fear or favour," Ruto said in a statement. "All relevant persons and bodies will be held to account." Kenya's National Gender and Equality Commission said initial reports indicated the dorm was "overcrowded, in violation of safety standards". The blaze has highlighted the issue of safety at schools in Kenya, after numerous similar disasters over the years.

In a statement from the Vatican on Saturday, Pope Francis said he was "deeply saddened" at the loss of young life and expressed his "spiritual closeness to all

who are suffering the effects of this calamity, especially the injured and the families who grieve". On Friday, tensions were running high among families gathered at the school, anxious for news of their missing children.

Many broke down after officials took them to see the bodies in the destroyed dorm. "Please look for my kid. He can't be dead. I want my child," one woman cried in distress. The Kenya Red Cross said it was on the ground assisting a multi-agency response team and providing psychosocial support to traumatized pupils and families. — AFP

## Super Typhoon Yagi hits Vietnam after leaving deadly trail

**HAI PHONG, Vietnam:** Super Typhoon Yagi uprooted thousands of trees and swept ships and boats out to sea, killing one person, as it made landfall in northern Vietnam on Saturday, after leaving at least 23 dead through southern China and the Philippines. The typhoon hit Hai Phong and Quang Ninh provinces, packing winds exceeding 149 kilometers (92 miles) per hour, Vietnam's National Centre for Hydro-Meteorological Forecasting said.

In the Hai Duong province, a man was killed when heavy winds brought down a tree as the storm approached landfall, according to state media. In Hai Phong, AFP reporters encountered streets filled with fallen trees, metal roofing and broken signboards that had been ripped off properties.

"It has been years since I witnessed a typhoon this big," said Tran Thi Hoa, a 48-year-old woman from Hai Phong. "It was scary. I stayed indoors, after locking all my windows. However, the sound of the wind and the rain was unbelievable," she told AFP.

Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said Yagi brought winds of more than 230 kilometers (143 miles) per hour, uprooting trees and prompting the evacuation of around 460,000 people. At least three people were killed and 95 injured in southern China after the storm hit Hainan and Guangdong provinces on Friday, state news agency Xinhua said, citing local authorities.

Before hitting the mainland of Vietnam, the typhoon unrooted hundreds of trees on Co To island, about 80 kilometers from mainland Quang Ninh. Several office buildings, schools and houses on the



**HAI PHONG, Vietnam:** Motorcyclists struggle from the strong wind of Typhoon Yagi in Hai Phong city on Sept 7, 2024. — AFP

island were unroofed by the powerful winds.

Signboards lay scattered around the island, while electrical lines were snapped and tangled by the wind. Local authorities said the typhoon was the most severe to hit the island in decades. Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh called on local authorities to evacuate residents from dangerous areas before the storm hit. He also urged other residents to stay indoors.

Around 20,000 people have been evacuated and moved to safer, higher ground in the north of Hai Phong, Thai Binh, and Hanoi, local authorities reported. Many are being sheltered in schools, kindergartens, and other public buildings. More than 457,000, many of who are professional men, were mobilized by the Ministry of Defense's rescue and relief department to deal with the fallout from the typhoon. Some 2,000 vehicles and six planes have been sent to deal with the situation.

Northern Vietnam has been experiencing heavy rains and strong winds since Friday evening, including in the capital, Hanoi. Four airports in northern Vietnam, including Hanoi's Noi Bai International Airport, have been closed, while sailing has been banned since Friday. — AFP

## Indian plane lands in Turkey after false bomb threat

**ISTANBUL:** A bomb threat that forced a flight operated by India's Vistara Airlines to make an emergency landing in the eastern Turkish city of Erzurum on Friday was false, the local governor said. Turkish officials had said a piece of paper with "bomb on board" written on it was found in a lavatory on the aircraft, prompting bomb disposal teams to search the plane and evacuate its 234 passengers and 13 crew.

A Vistara spokesperson had said flight UK27 from Mumbai to Frankfurt diverted due to "a security concern." The flight landed at Erzurum at 4.30pm local time (1330 GMT). "As of 23:30, we have completed all search and examination operations. As a result of the work we carried out, we found that the bomb threat was unfounded," Erzurum governor Mustafa Ciftci told reporters at the airport.

Ciftci also said a precautionary halt to landings and take-offs at the airport was lifted after inspections were completed. "All flights coming or leaving from our province will now be able to fly comfortably," he said. Vistara said in a post on X that customers, crew and the aircraft were cleared by security agencies and that all necessary checks were conducted. The airline also said it was sending an alternate aircraft to Turkey by 12:25 local time on Saturday to take the passengers to Frankfurt. — Reuters

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2024

# China stops short of Africa debt relief as it pledges more cash

## Green energy, central bank swap lines part of deals



BEIJING: China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi (back center) addresses a press conference as his counterparts, Senegal's Yassine Fall (back left) and Congo's Jean-Claude Gakosso (back right) look on during the FOCAC in Beijing. — AFP

NAIROBI/BEIJING: China stopped short of providing the debt relief sought by many African countries this week, but pledged 360 billion yuan (\$50.7 billion) over three years in credit lines and investments.

The Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) launched in 2000 took on an enhanced role after the 2013 inception of President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to recreate the ancient Silk Road for the world's second largest economy and biggest bilateral lender to Africa. "China is moving back on to the front foot in terms of overseas deployment of capital in the emerging markets," said Tellimer's Hasnain Malik, while adding it was not yet at pre-COVID levels.

China has also sought to use FOCAC to counter growing competition in Africa from the United States, the European Union, Japan and others. In Beijing, diplomats and delegates from around the world mingled in the Great Hall of the People in Tiananmen Square as leaders from more than 50 African countries and Chinese officials led by Xi gathered for a group photo.

The new financial pledge is more than what Beijing promised at the last FOCAC in 2021, but below the \$60 billion of 2015 and 2018, which marked the peak of lending to Africa under the Belt and Road Initiative. During those peak years, Beijing bankrolled the construction of roads, railways and bridges. But a drying up of funds since 2019 has left Africa with stalled construction projects.

The new funds will go towards 30 infrastructure projects to improve trade links, China said, without giving details. The 54-nation continent of more than 1 billion people has an annual infrastructure funding deficit estimated at \$100 billion, and needs transport links to make a new giant pan-African trade bloc (AfCFTA) a reality. Beijing has in recent years cut funding for such projects as it shifted focus to "small and beautiful" projects, mainly due to its own domestic economic pressures and an increase in debt risks among African countries.

Asked how the new commitments fit into China's current cautious overseas lending strategy, a foreign

ministry spokesperson said there was no contradiction. "The cooperation between China and African countries, including the specific implementation of projects, is discussed and determined by both sides," Mao Ning, a foreign ministry spokesperson told a regular news conference on Friday.

China also said it will launch 30 clean energy projects in Africa, offer co-operation on nuclear technology and tackle a power deficit that has delayed industrialization efforts. "The outcomes of the FOCAC summit signal an impetus for green projects and especially for renewable energy installations," said Goolam Ballim, head of research at South Africa's Standard Bank.

China has become a global leader in wind and solar energy, Ballim said, controlling significant supply chains and reducing production costs. Others were skeptical. "The issue is not so much about the size of the investments, it's been about the lack of transparency around the terms of the debt," said Trang Nguyen, global head of emerging markets credit

strategy at French bank BNP Paribas. Success was less clear-cut for countries owing a large share of their debt to China, which made no express offer of assistance to those struggling with repayments.

Beijing instead urged other creditors "to participate in the handling and restructuring of African countries' debts under the principle of joint actions and fair burden-sharing". African leaders hoping to bask in large deals for their countries had to settle for less splashy announcements. Ethiopia and Mauritius announced new currency swap lines with China's central bank. Kenya said it made progress on talks to reopen the lending taps for key projects like its modern railway to link the region.

Still, there was optimism from some, as they welcomed China's increased commitments to Africa's security, humanitarian challenges and other non-financial affairs. "After nearly 70 years of hard work, China-Africa relations are at their best in history," Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu said on her X account. — Reuters

## US gov't recovers \$1.3 billion from wealthy taxpayers

WASHINGTON: The US government said Friday that it has recovered \$1.3 billion from wealthy taxpayers since late 2023, as part of efforts to ensure that high-income individuals are paying taxes owed.

Between 2010 and 2018, the audit rate for millionaires fell by 80 percent, according to excerpts from a speech that Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is due to deliver in Texas. "And during the previous administration, as audit rates on high-income taxpayers fell, the share of audits on taxpayers with incomes under \$200,000 increased," Yellen added in prepared remarks, referring to former president Donald Trump's administration.

Tax policy has come into focus as November's presidential election draws close. Both Democrat presidential hopeful Kamala Harris and her Republican rival Trump have been seeking to woo taxpayers with proposals to ease their financial burdens. Harris, who is also Vice President under the current US administration, has pushed for higher taxes on wealthy individuals as well.

These proposals come atop of current efforts to collect unpaid taxes.

"In 2019, the top one percent of Americans was estimated to owe over one-fifth of unpaid taxes, leaving ordinary Americans to shoulder the burden," Yellen notes in her speech.

On Friday, the US Treasury said that since officials launched an initiative in late 2023 to pursue high-income individuals who failed to pay their recognized tax debt, nearly 80 percent of 1,600 millionaires have since made a payment. This meant a recovery of over \$1.1 billion. Another effort launched in early 2024 to go after high-earners who had not filed taxes since 2017 has separately returned \$172 million in taxes, the Treasury said. — AFP

## How a taxi driver in El Salvador got rich with Bitcoin

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador: Napoleon Osorio is proud of being the first taxi driver to have accepted payment in bitcoin in the first country in the world to make the cryptocurrency legal tender: El Salvador. He credits President Nayib Bukele's decision to bank on bitcoin three years ago with changing his life.

"Before I was unemployed... and now I have my own business," said the 39-year-old businessman, who uses an app to charge for rides in bitcoin and now runs his own car rental company. Three years ago the leader of the Central American nation took a huge gamble when he put bitcoin into legal circulation in a bid to revitalize El Salvador's dollarized, remittance-reliant economy.

He invested hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money in the cryptocurrency, despite warnings about volatility risks from global institutions. Osorio credited the US founder of the NGO My First Bitcoin, John Denehy, with encouraging him to accept payment in the cryptocurrency. He now has 21 drivers working for his Bit-Driver brand and has made enough profit from the currency's rise to be able to buy four rental vehicles.

## US job gains miss expectations as labor market cools

WASHINGTON: US hiring bounced back in August but missed expectations while the jobless rate crept down, government data showed Friday, paving the way towards central bank rate cuts in the coming weeks. The world's biggest economy added an estimated 142,000 jobs last month, an increase from July's figure which was revised notably lower to 89,000, said the Department of Labor.

June jobs gains were also revised significantly down. The August number came in below economists' expectations of 165,000, according to a Briefing.com consensus forecast.

The unemployment rate meanwhile declined slightly from 4.3 percent to 4.2 percent, a shift that should assuage some policymakers' fears. Overall, the figures reaffirm per-

ceptions of a cooling labor market, adding to analysts' anticipation that the Federal Reserve will begin to lower rates from decades-high levels this month. With a solid payroll increase, lower jobless rate and rise in earnings, analysts see a higher chance that the Fed opts for a smaller cut of 25 basis point rather than 50. "With inflation back down close to normal levels, it is important to focus on sustaining the historic gains we have made for American workers," President Joe Biden said in a statement.

Brendan Boyle, top Democrat on the House Budget Committee, added that the US economy has "made significant progress on inflation, and now the Fed must secure this progress by lowering interest rates" at this month's policy meeting. Analysts have been eyeing the jobs market as high interest rates bite while inflation cools, with some arguing the Fed has waited too long to lower the benchmark lending rate. On Friday, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump called the jobs numbers "terrible" while the Republican National Committee took aim at the downward revisions on job growth. How well the market holds up could affect the size of Fed rate cuts following its

A divorced father of two teenagers, he also no longer struggles to pay for their education. Launching bitcoin as legal tender on September 7, 2021, Bukele said he wanted to bring the 70 percent of Salvadorans who do not use banks into the financial system and promptly began plowing public money in cryptocurrencies. To spur Salvadorans to use bitcoin he created the Chivo Wallet app for sending and receiving bitcoin free of charge and gave \$30 to each new user.

His grand ambitions for bitcoin fell foul of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which hesitated to grant El Salvador a \$1.3 billion loan because of its official use of the cryptocurrency. In August, however, the IMF announced a preliminary loan agreement with El Salvador, while saying it needed to mitigate "potential risks."

While Osorio has grown relatively wealthy with bitcoin, a study by the University Institute for Public Opinion showed that 88 percent of Salvadorans had yet to use it. "From the beginning... it was clear that it was clearly an ill-advised measure that the population rejected," the director of the institute, Laura Andrade, told AFP. One-quarter of Salvadoran GDP comes from remittances sent home by family members, mostly from the United States.

But in 2023 only one percent of the transfers were made in cryptocurrencies. In an interview with Time magazine in August, Bukele acknowledged that while "you can go to a McDonald's, a supermarket, or a hotel and pay with Bitcoin" it had "not had the widespread



Taxi driver Napoleon Osorio leaves the NGO My First Bitcoin headquarters in San Salvador on Sept 4, 2024. — AFP

adoption we hoped for." He added that "the positive aspect is that it is voluntary; we have never forced anyone to adopt it. We offered it as an option, and those who chose to use it have benefited from the rise in Bitcoin."

He also confirmed that he had around \$400 million in bitcoin that is kept in a public "cold storage wallet"—a way of storing bitcoin offline. Bitcoin's fortunes have been mixed.

This week it was trading at around \$52,000, down from a peak of \$73,616 on March 13. In November 2022 it fell as low as \$16,189. Independent economist Cesar Villalona told AFP that Bukele himself had hobbled bitcoin's take-up by stripping it of the usual functions of a currency. —AFP



SAN GABRIEL, US: A cyclist rides past a "Now Hiring" sign posted on a business storefront in San Gabriel, California on Aug 21, 2024. — AFP

September 17-18 gathering. "The large downward revision to payroll gains in the prior two months and the continued narrow concentration in payroll advances underscore that the labor market is losing steam rather quickly," said Nationwide chief economist Kathy Bostjancic. — AFP



## Business

# Gulf Bank's Wise platform revolutionizes global investments, supports women

## Al-Ashwak: The platform helps clients achieve their investment goals and grow their wealth

**KUWAIT:** As part of the GB Talks series, Gulf Bank's Assistant Investment Manager, Hanan Al-Ashwak, discussed the variety of investment options available through Gulf Bank and Invest GB, with a special focus on women. Al-Ashwak emphasized that the Bank's digital investment platform, the most innovative in Kuwait, follows a Nobel Prize-winning investment strategy and offers many advantages to clients in global markets. The platform offers an investment solution that is easy, transparent and cost efficient. Clients can achieve long-term, risk-adjusted returns by investing in diversified international portfolios, while also having the ability to monitor their investments anytime, from anywhere.

In 2023, the platform achieved remarkable returns, exceeding client expectations despite difficult economic and geopolitical conditions. Conservative portfolios saw an average return of 10.7 percent, while high-risk portfolios delivered 20.9 percent. The Islamic portfolio "Wise" returned 22 percent, and the income portfolio achieved a return of 9.2 percent, supported by annual dividends of 6 percent.

Al-Ashwak emphasized that the Wise platform is the top choice for global market investments due to its competitive advantages. It consistently offers clients effective solutions for reaching their

investment and savings goals by utilizing carefully curated and geographically diverse investment opportunities. The platform offers customized portfolios designed to align with clients' financial goals, investment timelines, and risk preferences. It provides access to a diverse range of investment options and tools, including Sharia-compliant choices, empowering clients to grow their wealth and achieve their financial objectives.

Clients can fully control their portfolios, adjust investments, or withdraw funds as needed. They can also monitor portfolio performance from their mobile phones and choose to reinvest or withdraw profits. As a digital investment tool, Wise allows clients to invest in globally diversified portfolios with a long-term outlook. After clients complete a straightforward questionnaire to outline their financial goals, risk tolerance, and investment horizons, the platform recommends a tailored portfolio. Gulf Bank's investment managers then continuously monitor and review these portfolios to safeguard and enhance clients' wealth, ensuring that investment performance aligns with their objectives.

The Wise platform is accessible to both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti clients who have accounts with Gulf Bank, with a minimum investment of \$10,000 required to open a portfolio.



Hanan Al-Ashwak speaks during the GB Talks session.



WASHINGTON: US Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell holds a news conference after a Federal Open Market Committee meeting at the Federal Reserve in Washington, DC. — AFP

## Fed policymakers ready to start cutting rates

**WASHINGTON:** Federal Reserve policymakers on Friday signaled they are ready to kick off a series of interest rate cuts at the US central bank's meeting in two weeks, noting a cooling in the labor market that could accelerate into something more dire in the absence of a policy shift.

Their remarks were widely seen as endorsing a quarter-percentage-point reduction in the Fed's policy rate, and leaving the door open to further and perhaps bigger moves should the job market continue to slow down. Policymakers have kept the Fed's benchmark borrowing rate in the current 5.25 percent-5.50 percent range since July 2023 after an aggressive rate-hiking campaign that began 18 months earlier in response to a surge in inflation. Inflation by the Fed's preferred measure is now well down from its mid-2022 peak of around 7 percent. The unemployment rate, at 3.5 percent when the Fed stopped raising rates, has now risen to 4.2 percent, and monthly job growth has slowed.

U.S. central bankers have turned the monetary policy page, completing their shift to a focus on supporting jobs from what had been a singular focus on bringing down inflation. "It is now appropriate to dial down the degree of restrictiveness in the stance of policy by reducing the target range for the federal funds rate," New York Fed President John Williams said at a Council on Foreign Relations event. Speaking at the University of Notre Dame, Fed Governor Christopher Waller went further, saying he could support back-to-back cuts, or bigger cuts, if the data suggests the need.

"I was a big advocate of front-loading rate hikes when inflation accelerated in 2022, and I will be an advocate of front-loading rate cuts if that is appropriate," Waller said. Chicago Fed President Austan Goolsbee, who has for months signaled he thinks rates need to come down, also said he wants to calibrate policy based on data as it comes in. "I don't think what happens at the next meeting alone is what's the most important," Goolsbee said in an interview with CNBC, adding that it would be critical for the Fed to understand the trend of the data over the next several policy meetings.

Analysts said the message was clear. "Fed leadership sees a 25-basis-point cut as the base case for the September meeting but is open to 50 basis-point cuts at subsequent meetings if the labor market continues to deteriorate" Goldman Sachs economists said in their summary of what will be the last public remarks on monetary policy by Fed officials before their Sept 17-18 meeting. Two weeks ago, Fed Chair Jerome Powell touched off intense speculation about the size of a September rate cut when he said "the time has come" to ease policy. Waller echoed Powell's choice of phrase on Friday, and added that "it is likely that a series of reductions will be appropriate."

Data published earlier on Friday showed monthly job gains have averaged 116,000 in the June-August period, below what many economists estimate is needed to meet the job-growth needs of an expanding population. The latest employment report, along with other recent data, "reinforces the view that there has been continued moderation in the labor market," Waller said.

The data indicates softening but not deterioration, and the economy does not look to be headed to recession, he said. Still, "the current batch of data no longer requires patience, it requires action." All three policymakers noted progress on bringing inflation down, with Waller saying it is now on the "right path" to get to the Fed's 2 percent goal. Underlying inflation, based on the change in the core personal consumption expenditures price index, is averaging 2.6 percent when measured on an annualized six-month basis and 1.7 percent on an annualized three-month basis. — Reuters

## Dutch match US export curbs on ASML machines

**THE HAGUE:** The Dutch government announced Friday broader restrictions on exports of semiconductor-making machines produced by sector heavyweight ASML, aligning itself with US curbs on technology at the centre of trade tensions with China.

The measure, which will take effect on Saturday means ASML will be able to apply for export licenses directly with the Dutch authorities instead of the US government to export the equipment outside the European Union. The Netherlands had previously not applied restrictions on certain equipment that was under US export controls, forcing the Dutch company to request licenses from US authorities.

"I've made this decision for reasons of security," foreign trade minister Reinette Klever said in a statement on the measure. "We see that technological advances have given rise to increased security risks associated with the export of this specific manufacturing equipment, especially in the current geopolitical context," Klever said, without directly mentioning China.

The new restrictions will apply to "more types of equipment" on top of curbs that have been in force since September 2023, the government said. ASML said in a statement that the measure "will harmonize the approach for issuing export licenses".

"Since this is a technical change, this announcement is not expected to have any impact on our financial outlook for 2024 or for our longer-term scenarios," the company said. Shares in ASML were down 1.5 percent in early afternoon trading on the Amsterdam stock exchange.



VELDHOVEN: An employee makes his way in a laboratory at ASML, a Dutch company which is the largest supplier in the world of semiconductor manufacturing machines via photolithography systems in Veldhoven. — AFP

## Stocks slump after dismal US jobs data

**NEW YORK:** Global stock markets slumped Friday and oil prices tumbled following weaker than expected US jobs growth that pointed to a slowing economy. The world's biggest economy added an estimated 142,000 jobs last month, an increase from the poor July figure, but below analysts' estimates. The unemployment rate meanwhile declined slightly from 4.3 percent to 4.2 percent.

Investors initially took the report as a glass half full, with stocks pushing higher, but then sentiment turned and shares tumbled. The broad-based S&P 500 ended at 5,408.42, down 1.7 percent for the day and 4.2 percent for the week. The lackluster job growth "played right into the market's worries about (economic) slowing," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare, who noted that September has been a historically tepid period for equities.

The report comes as markets eye an expect-

ed Federal Reserve interest rate cut. Following the data, futures markets increased the odds of a smaller 25-basis-point reduction in rates instead of one twice that size. Friday's data was consistent with "a weakening labor market, but not weak yet," said Steve Sosnick of Interactive Brokers.

There's been a shift in mood and sentiment is now against stocks, Sosnick said, "and it's never 100 percent clear why markets shift their mood like this." Earlier, European stocks also closed decisively lower after having wobbled in afternoon trading. Tokyo's stock market was weighed down Friday by a strong yen, which has picked up against the dollar on bets of a Fed rate cut and growing expectations that the Bank of Japan would continue hiking its own borrowing costs. Oil prices finished down more than two percent with major contracts hitting fresh multi-month lows despite a move by OPEC+ exporters to delay a planned production boost. The exporter group's "decision to defer their planned increases in supply has not been sufficient to halt the bleed," said a note from TD Securities that pointed to "continued deterioration in demand sentiment." Among individual companies, Broadcom slumped 10.4 percent on disappointment over the chip company's revenue forecast. — AFP

The Netherlands and Japan have previously joined the United States in imposing certain export restrictions on advanced chip-making equipment aimed at preventing China from acquiring sensitive inputs that could be used in cutting-edge weapons and tech such as AI. Responding to the latest measures, the Chinese foreign ministry said: "China has always been opposed to this wrong practice of politicizing normal economic and trade relations and abusively linking them to issues of national security." "Trying to set up a technological blockade against China and artificially disrupt the stability of global production and supply chains will only lead to damage to its own interests," it said in a statement to AFP. The ministry added that China would "closely follow" developments and "resolutely safeguard its legitimate rights and interests".

The Dutch government said Friday the equipment can be used to produce advanced semiconductors which "in turn play a key role in advanced military applications." "Thus, the uncontrolled export of this type of manufacturing equipment has implications for the Netherlands' security interests," the statement said.

Dutch export licenses already existed for other types of DUV systems as well as its extreme ultraviolet (EUV) lithography machines, which are used to make more advanced semiconductors. The government said Friday it would "assess applications on a case-by-case basis, so this is not an export ban". The Netherlands has a unique, leading position in this area. This entails certain responsibilities, which we take seriously," Klever said. "We have proceeded in a careful and targeted manner, so as to minimize the disruption to global trade flows and value chains," she said. The move comes a day after the United States tightened its own restrictions on certain technology. The US Commerce Department said Thursday it was implementing worldwide export curbs on specific types of items such as quantum computers and machines needed to make advanced semiconductor devices. — AFP

## Renault CEO says sector could face billions in fines

**PARIS:** Europe's autos industry could face fines of 15 billion euros (\$17.4 billion) for carbon emissions due to slowing demand for electric vehicles, Renault CEO Luca de Meo said on Saturday.

Automakers face tougher EU CO2 targets in 2025 as the cap on average emissions from new vehicles sales falls to 94 grams/km from 116 g/km in 2024. "If electric vehicles remain at today's level, the European industry may have to pay 15 billion euros in fines or give up the production of more than 2.5 million vehicles," de Meo told France Inter radio. "The speed of the electric ramp-up is half of what we would need to achieve the objectives that would allow us not to pay fines," de Meo, who is also president of the European Automobile Manufacturers Association (ACEA), said of the sector.

Exceeding CO2 limits can lead to fines amounting to 95 euros per excess CO2 g/km multiplied by the number of vehicles sold. That could result in penalties of hundreds of millions of euros for large carmakers. "Everyone is talking about 2035, in 10 years, but we should be talking about 2025 because we are already struggling," he said. "We need to be given a little flexibility. Setting deadlines and fines without being able to make that more flexible is very, very dangerous." — Reuters



A general view of the Renault automobile plant in Moscow on April 26, 2022. — AFP

## Canada jobless rate rises to 7-year high

**OTTAWA:** Canada's unemployment rate rose to 6.6 percent in August, its highest level since May 2017 - excluding peak COVID-19 pandemic years - the national statistical agency said Friday. The result, an increase from 6.4 percent in July, was despite little change in the total number of jobs for a fourth month in a row. Statistics Canada noted that the jobless rate has been generally trending up since April 2023. Analysts said this is likely to add pressure on the Bank of Canada to continue lowering interest rates, after three successive cuts, in order to prevent the economy from stalling as it seeks to throttle inflation.

"With population growth strong once again and labor force participation rebounding, hiring in August wasn't enough to keep the unemployment rate from rising two ticks," Desjardins' Royce Mendes commented in a research note. Overall, he said, the data points to the economy "continuing to stagnate in the third quarter." Desjardins pegged economic growth at just one percent from July to September versus the central bank forecast of 2.8 percent. "This was a slightly softer than expected (jobs) report consistent with continued steady interest rate cuts from the Bank of Canada," concluded CIBC analyst Andrew Grantham.

The Bank of Canada, on the heels of two recent cuts, this week trimmed its key lending rate to 4.25 percent. Inflation, meanwhile, has fallen to 2.5 percent - at the higher end of the central bank's 1-3 percent target. According to Statistics Canada, employment rose in August in educational services, health care and social assistance, and finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing. It declined in "other services" such as personal and repair services, as well as professional, scientific and technical services, utilities, and natural resources. — AFP

## Business

# Burgan Bank receives prestigious LEED Gold certification for head office building

## Recognition reflects bank's commitment to ESG, its leading role in ESG practices

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced that it has been awarded the prestigious Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design - LEED v4.1 O+M: EB (Operations and Maintenance - Existing Buildings) Gold Certification by the US Green Building Council (USGBC) for operations and maintenance at its head office building in Kuwait City. This notable achievement underscores the Bank's commitment to sustainability, operational excellence, and environmental stewardship while adhering to the highest standards of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices in banking.

"Obtaining the LEED Gold certification for our existing building is a testament to our rigorous efforts to retrofit and optimize the operational performance of our head office, improve our staff's health, and protect the environment," Fadel Abdullah, Chief Executive Officer - Kuwait at Burgan Bank, said. "This certification demonstrates that our building meets the highest standards for energy consumption, lighting, water and materials use, along with sustainable practices and strategies. Stemming from our commitment to the welfare of our community and the health of our environment, we spare no effort to ensure that Burgan Bank reduces its carbon footprint and contributes effectively to the global movement for environmental preservation, which echoes our commitment and strategy for long term sustainability."

"The journey to receiving the LEED Gold certification for Burgan's head office building was marked by meticulous planning and dedication", Fadel noted. "Retrofitting the head office to meet these stringent standards required a comprehensive approach that included several initiatives, such as implementing updated energy savings systems and water-saving



Fadel Abdullah, Chief Executive Officer - Kuwait, and Eng Saud Al Hadbah, Deputy General Manager - General Services Administration, with the LEED Gold certification.



Fadel Abdullah

fixtures and enhancing indoor air quality. Other initiatives that focused on reducing the environmental footprint through optimizing energy efficiency include the installation of motion sensors for lighting,

solar panels for external signages, and electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, in addition to minimizing the reliance on single-use plastics at the Bank."

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification is a globally recognized symbol of excellence in green building design and architecture, awarded for projects that meet certain criteria for electricity cost savings, lower carbon emissions, and building healthier living, working, and learning environments, and is valid for three years. The key metrics that projects are evaluated on to receive the certification include energy and water use, waste management, air quality, user comfort, and staff commuting. On this premise, the certification was awarded to Burgan Bank in recognition of its efforts in



optimizing the head office and its overall building performance, enhancing the quality of the indoor environment, and reducing environmental impact through sustainable practices in operations and maintenance. It serves to note that Burgan Bank remains a dedicated champion of environmental awareness and a committed advocate of ESG standards. In addition to its outstanding performance in operations and maintenance to meet

global standards, Burgan Bank continues to innovate digital banking products and services that contribute to its efforts in reducing its carbon footprint, such as introducing virtual bank cards, constantly advancing "Banki" chatbot the virtual assistant, and enabling customers to open new accounts conveniently through Burgan Bank's digital banking portals, among a wider range of digital transformation initiatives and innovations.

## VW factory threat stress-tests German economic model

BERLIN: Having lost cheap energy from Russia and facing uncertainty over its once-lucrative trade ties with China, big German business is now facing a crunch point over a third ingredient in its long-time formula for success - consensual industrial relations. Together, Germany's industry leaders, trade unions and politicians for decades sought and found agreement over production and labor decisions that in turn provided the underpinning for the country's post-war economic development.

Volkswagen's taboo-breaking threat to shutter German factories for the first time ever is a direct test of whether that consensus model can survive and still deliver in a global environment some see as existentially challenging. "De-industrialization is happening in Germany," Volkswagen works council head Daniela Cavallo said this week, demanding solutions to ensure "there will still be industrial jobs in Germany in the future".

Manufacturing still accounts for 27 percent of total employment in Germany - down from 32 percent from 20 years ago. International Labour Organization figures show, but still a far larger share than in most advanced economies. About 120,000 of the VW brand's 200,000-strong workforce is in Germany.

The same consensual structures for labor relations that over the years have bought industrial peace and provided job security will now be put to work in negotiations between management and unions due to start next week. Those talks take place as Volkswagen and other legacy European car giants, including Stellantis and Renault, struggle with high labor and energy costs as well as rising competition from lower-cost Asian rivals shipping more cars to the region.

The fact that worker representatives have half the votes on VW's supervisory board make it hard for the group to force closures. Union leaders want a negotiated solution but management say the scale of the challenges means something has to give. "If we carry on like this, we won't succeed in the transformation," Chief Financial Officer Arno Antlitz told workers at the carmaker's Wolfsburg headquarters.

"It is our joint responsibility to improve the cost efficiency of the German sites." IG Metall has said it could consider moving to a four-day week as an alternative to closures - a move put in place in the 1990s for over a decade as part of an earlier cost-cutting drive that included smaller cuts in pay. Volkswagen has remained tight-lipped on whether this could



WOLFSBURG: Employees of German carmaker Volkswagen (VW) protest at the start of a company's general meeting in Wolfsburg, northern Germany. — AFP

work in today's environment.

A separate strand is what role the state should have. There is a lack of public investment to help develop markets, said Olaf Lies, economy minister of Lower Saxony, where Volkswagen's headquarters and most of the factories affected by the end of the job security program are based.

The state is also Volkswagen's second-biggest shareholder, and holds two of the 20 seats on its supervisory board. "This is putting many companies, and therefore Germany as a place to do business, in a very difficult situation," Lies told Reuters.

This has not escaped the notice of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition in Berlin. "Anything to do with industrial production which goes away will not come back," a source inside the coalition told Reuters.

Both Economy Minister Robert Habeck and Finance Minister Christian Lindner acknowledge Germany faces structural problems as a business location, but they differ on what to do - even down to what role electric vehicles play in Germany's future. While Habeck - from the ecologist Greens - said politicians must offer state guarantees to support the transition to EVs, Lindner - a pro-market Free Democrat - this week described "the fixation" with EVs as a mistake and rejected government measures to help the sector.

Scholz's unpopular coalition, whose component

said Carsten Brzeski, ING's global head of macro.

The recent weakening of sentiment indicators also suggests that there will be no rapid turnaround for the better, Commerzbank's senior economist Ralph Solveen said. "There is a growing risk that the German economy will continue to contract slightly in the third quarter," Solveen said.

Production dropped by 8.1 percent in the automotive industry, weighing on the overall result. In June, automotive production rose 7.9 percent. On a less volatile three month on three month comparison, production in May-July fell 2.7 percent compared with the February-April period.

"Weakness in German industry is one of the main reasons why we expect the German economy will broadly stagnate in the rest of this year," said Franziska Palmes, senior Europe economist at Capital Economics. The statistics office revised the figure for June to a 1.7 percent increase on the month from

parties have just been battered by the far-right in east German regional votes, faces a general election next year. The Volkswagen move piles pressure on them to finally set clear policy, some argue. "If such an industrial heavyweight really does have to tighten its austerity program and close plants, it is perhaps an overdue wake-up call that the economic policy measures taken so far need to be significantly increased," said Carsten Brzeski, global head of macro at ING.

Volkswagen is not alone. Thyssenkrupp, which for decades avoided a major restructuring at its steel division due to stiff labor opposition, has also changed tack. Its new CEO Miguel Lopez has departed from the strategy of predecessors which kept relations with IG Metall stable to demand a comprehensive revamp he says has been long overdue. Likewise, chemical giant BASF CEO Markus Kamieth said a series of plants have competitive difficulties. "We must therefore also consider further plant closures."

For now, however, even those who argue that German businesses have been far too late to spot trends in the global economy and react quickly insist it is too early to call the demise of Deutschland AG and its industrial heavyweights. "We need forward-thinking ideas," said Christiane Benner, chair of IG Metall nationwide. "VW has survived difficult situations before." — Reuters

1.4 percent previously. Despite the upward revision, the slide in July more than reversed June's increase. "Industrial production is unlikely to come out of recession unless the external picture improves," said Melanie Debono, senior Europe economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics. "The sharp drop in the trade surplus in July, the second in a row, does not suggest this is happening."

The foreign trade balance showed a surplus of 16.8 billion euros in July, down from 20.4 billion euros in June. German exports rose by 1.7 percent in July compared with the previous month, while imports rose by 5.4 percent on the month. "The trends in manufacturing, imports and exports still look recessionary, highlighting the risk that the economy is now falling into a technical recession," Debono said. The German economy contracted in the second quarter, sparking fears of another recession, marked by two consecutive quarters of contraction. — Reuters

## UK says Google 'anti-competitive' over online ad tech

LONDON: US tech titan Google employs "anti-competitive practices" with regards to online advertising, Britain's competition watchdog concluded Friday in provisional findings of a two-year long investigation.

The probe has focused on so-called ad tech -- the system that decides which online adverts people see and how much they cost. The US Department of Justice and European Commission are carrying out similar investigations into Google. In Britain, the Competition and Markets Authority "provisionally found that Google is using anti-competitive practices in open-display ad tech, which it believes could be harming thousands of UK publishers and advertisers", the CMA said in a statement Friday.

The regulator, which launched its probe in May 2022, said it would "carefully consider representations from Google before reaching its final decision". In a statement to media on Friday, Google VP of Global Ads, Dan Taylor, said the CMA's "case rests on flawed interpretations of the ad tech sector."

"We disagree with the CMA's view and we will respond accordingly". He added that Google's "advertising technology tools help websites and apps fund their content, and enable businesses of all sizes to effectively reach new customers. "Google remains committed to creating value for our publisher and advertiser partners in this highly competitive sector", Taylor said.

The CMA said it had "provisionally found that, when placing digital ads on websites, the vast majority of publishers and advertisers use Google's ad tech services in order to bid for and sell advertising space". The watchdog "is concerned that Google is actively using its dominance in this sector to preference its own services. "Google disadvantages competitors and prevents them competing on a level playing field to provide publishers and advertisers with a better, more competitive service that supports growth in their business".

The UK's Competition Appeal Tribunal recently ruled that a multibillion-pound claim against Google for alleged anti-competitiveness in digital advertising can proceed to trial. The £13.6 billion (\$17.9 billion) claim, brought by the Ad Tech Collective Action LLP, accuses the company of abusing its dominant position and causing significant losses to UK online publishers.

Juliette Enser, interim executive director of enforcement at the CMA, noted on Friday that "many businesses are able to keep their digital content free or cheaper by using online advertising to generate revenue. "Adverts on these websites and apps reach millions of people across the UK -- assisting the buying and selling of goods and services", she said in the CMA statement. — AFP



## German industrial output slumps, fuels recession fears

FRANKFURT: German industrial production fell more than expected in July, driven mainly by weak activity in the automotive sector, spurring fears that Europe's largest economy could contract again in the third quarter. Production fell by 2.4 percent compared with the previous month, the federal statistics office said on Friday. Analysts polled by Reuters had predicted a 0.3 percent fall.

"Friday's data is a cold shower for everyone hoping for a speedy recovery. In fact, it suggests that the bottoming out of industry still has a long way to go,"

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2024

## Diva to junta: The singer praising West African putschists

Popular Ivorian artist Aicha Kone who filled venues singing about political freedom for Africa 30 years ago now wins fans singing the praises of West African junta chiefs. The 67-year-old has more than half a million followers on Tik Tok, where she released her latest song on August 26, applauding the military regimes of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. The track lauds the leaders who formed a defence pact, the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), after seizing power in coups between 2020 and 2023.

"AES, the march towards freedom! AES, you are right!" go the song's lyrics set to a catchy melody and featuring a photo montage of their leaders. "I want my oil, I want my diamond, I want my gold," she sings. In another 2022 song dedicated to the Malian leader, the Ivorian diva -- who fans affectionately call Mama Africa -- pays tribute to the Malian Armed Forces, or the Fama.

"Fama, strength to you!" she sings in a smooth, joyful tone. The juntas in the three insurgency-hit Sahel states have turned their backs on former colonial power France and sought support from Russia instead to battle jihadist violence. They also have stormy relations with some of their neighbours, including Ivory Coast, who are deemed to be too close to Paris. In her song for Mali's interim leader Colonel Assimi Goita, Kone celebrates Russian President Vladimir Putin.

### 'Majestic diva'

Her career began in the 1970s with an appearance on Ivorian state television RTI, during which then-star presenter Georges Tai Benson was struck by her "pure, limpid" voice and clear "enunciation". Rising from back-up singer to soloist, Kone moved in the same circles as some of Africa's greatest artists at the time. In her heyday, she rubbed shoulders with the likes of South African legend Miriam Makeba -- her "role model" -- Cameroon's Manu Dibango, Congolese singer Tabu Ley Rochereau and Senegalese musicians Youssou N'Dour and Ismael Lo.

Kone is "a musical personality who does not go unnoticed", her renowned arranger Boncana Maiga said, adding her impact had been felt "across the continent". Her music draws on that of the Mandinka people, a West African ethnic group. Kone mainly sings in the dioula language but has replaced traditional instruments with the guitar, piano and brass. "She deserves to be a diva!" said TV host Benson. "When she's on stage, she's majestic."



Aicha Kone, the Ivorian singer who supports and sings for Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali leaders, holds a photo of herself and Niger's leader General Abdourahmane Tiani at her residence in Abidjan.—AFP

### 'Happy to meet with me'

The walls of Kone's Abidjan home exhibit her long-standing ties with heads of state -- friendships that pre-date the wave of recent military coups. Framed photos show the diva posing with former Ivorian presidents Felix Houphouet-Boigny and Henri Konan Bedie -- both of whom she says supported her financially -- as well as Laurent Gbagbo. But Kone has since traded the suits and ties of politicians for the uniforms of military officers.

Niger leader General Abdourahmane Tiani in August met the artist in Niamey after she played several concerts in the capital. A video she shared of Burkina Faso's 36-year-old President Ibrahim Traore -- whom she calls her "son" -- greeting her with a kiss on the cheek hit a million views. "They were all happy to meet with me, I gave them my support," the singer told AFP in an interview. "We all want to be independent," she said, commending the leaders of the former French colonies. "These are young boys who have had the courage to stand up and say loud and clear that they want to take their destiny into their own hands." "And I say bravo," she added.—AFP

## 'Beautiful thing': Hijab-wearing singer looks to inspire

In a Dubai recording studio, hijab-clad Ghaliaa Chaker tunes her guitar and belts out original songs as she builds a career that is turning heads for more than just her music. The 26-year-old Syrian, who was raised in the United Arab Emirates, has become a social media sensation, with 437,000 followers on Instagram and millions of views on her YouTube channel.

She offers not only a unique sound but also an unusual look in a region where artists who wear the hijab, the head covering characteristic of Muslim women, are few and far between. "I hope that I have paved the way for other" hijabi singers, Chaker told AFP at the studio.

"It is a very beautiful thing to know that you have... given a push to a girl who has many dreams and is unable to achieve them because she has never seen another girl do the same thing."

Chaker, a keen motorbike rider who is part of an all-hijabi biker squad in Dubai, began composing and writing lyrics at the age of 16. She drew inspiration from Nedaa Shrrara, a veiled Jordanian singer who won "The Voice", the Arabic version of the popular TV talent show, in 2015.

Shrrara had stirred controversy among some Arab fans who were not accustomed to seeing a singer wearing the head covering. But for Chaker, who says she often receives criticism online, Shrrara was a symbol of "self-confidence".

After seeing her, "I said to myself that I can do it too", Chaker said.

### 'Negative comments'

Chaker's first song, composed in English, was picked up by Dubai radio stations in 2018, marking the start of her musical career. She now sings mostly in



Musician Ghaliaa Chaker poses for a picture at a recording studio in Dubai.

Arabic, at a time when the regional music scene is witnessing the rise of young talents with innovative sounds.

The green-eyed singer said the headscarf has never been an obstacle in her life. "There is nothing that I have wanted to do and not done because I wear the veil," Chaker said. However, the issue of women singing has always been controversial in conservative Islamic societies.

Although the Koran does not explic-

itly prohibit singing, or ban women from performing music, some religious scholars frown upon the idea, viewing it as immodest. Chaker said her immediate family has always supported her, but relatives in Syria were "very surprised at first", mainly because they feared how people would react.



Syrian singer Ghaliaa Chaker performs during her concert in Beirut.—AFP photos

She said she receives a lot of "negative comments" on social media, including from family and friends. "It bothers me of course, but I try to remember the positive comments and how much people love my music," she said.

### 'Rich' mixture

Chaker traces her artistic influences to her early upbringing in Al Ain, a former desert oasis and now a city in Abu Dhabi,

one of the UAE's seven sheikhdoms.

At home, her father blasted Arab singers such as Fairouz, an iconic Lebanese singer, and Egyptian diva Umm Kalthoum. Chaker's mother preferred Western music including Elvis Presley.

"The music mixture in the house was always rich," she said, influencing her sound which she describes as a mix of R&B, hip hop, electro pop, indie and jazz. A multi-instrumentalist, Chaker credits her father with her love of the drums, guitar and piano, all instruments that she plays. Instead of gifting her toys as a child, he would buy her new instruments, she said. The Middle Eastern darbuka drum is "the closest to my heart because I often played it with my father who loves it very much and it is the basis of oriental rhythm", she said.

In addition to Arabic and English, Chaker sometimes sings in Turkish, Armenian and Persian. The singer, who performed in the Lebanese capital Beirut in August, said she wants to take her music beyond the Middle East.

"It is very important to me that my music is heard in Europe, in America, in Australia, in the whole world, maybe even in Latin America," she said, adding that she aspires to "collaborate with many artists from different countries". "It is time for the Western world to know how beautiful our music is."—AFP



Musician Ghaliaa Chaker poses with a keyboard at a recording studio in Dubai.

## Punk band English Teacher win prestigious Mercury Prize

English post-punk band English Teacher won the UK's prestigious Mercury Prize on Thursday for their debut album "This Could Be Texas" in a ceremony at London's legendary Abbey Road studios. The jury said in its citation that the album by the group from the northern city of Leeds "reveals new depths on every listen; the mark of a future classic".

The band pipped favourite Charli XCX, whose single Brat was a summer hit in Britain, to the prize. But the jury said that English Teacher's album stood out "for its originality and character". "A winning lyrical mix of surrealism and social observation, alongside a subtle way of wearing its musical innovations lightly, displays a fresh approach to the traditional guitar band format."

The four band members -- singer Lily Fontaine, Lewis Whiting, Douglas Frost and Nicholas Eden -- looked stunned when collecting their award, and a £25,000 (\$33,000) first prize, on the

stage at the live ceremony broadcast on the BBC. They "didn't really plan this far" ahead, said one. "We just thought we'd make a band," said Fontaine in disbelief. "What do we do now?"

Despite its success, the band remains relatively unknown to the British public. They met at Leeds Conservatory and formed in 2020, releasing their first successful single, "R&B", in 2021. The contenders for the Mercury Prize were dominated by women, who made up eight of the 12.

Those included Portishead singer Beth Gibbons, with her first solo album "Lives Outgrown" and former Grammy Award winner and soul singer Corinne Bailey Rae with "Black Rainbows".

Providing a mix of established acts and young talents, the Mercury Prize contenders this year included eight artists nominated for their debut album. Last year, Londoners Ezra Collective were the first jazz band to win the Mercury Prize with "Where I Meant to Be".

With their afrobeat influence, they are due to release a new album and have sold out Wembley Arena for a gig in November. The Mercury Prize was created in 1992 to rival the Brit Awards, which take place in March, and recognises the best British or Irish album of the year. Previous winners include PJ Harvey and the Arctic Monkeys.—AFP



(From left) Lewis Whiting, Lily Fontaine, Douglas Frost and Nicholas Eden of English Teacher after winning the Mercury prize.—AFP

## Debut Oasis album tops UK charts 30 years after original release

"Definitely Maybe", the debut studio album by Oasis, topped the UK charts again on Friday, 30 years after its original release and fresh from the British music legends announcing a reunion tour. The Official Charts Company, which announced the news, said it was the first time in 14 years the band has topped its albums ranking.

The beloved record -- which debuted at number one on its release in September 1994 -- was back at the chart summit following a 408-percent week-on-week spike in sales and streams, it added. It was helped by the release of a 30th-Anniversary Deluxe Edition, which includes originally discarded recording sessions at Wales's Monnow Valley Studio and Cornwall's Sawmills Studios, as well as an alternative demo version of "Sad Song".

The feat comes just over a week after the 1990s Britpop pioneers delighted fans by announcing they will reunite for a series of concerts next year, after brothers Noel and Liam Gallagher ended an infamous 15-year feud. Reacting to the top spot announcement, the band wrote on X: "A massive thank you to everyone who's supported Oasis this week."

Ticket sales for the gigs however have been marred by controversy. The chaotic scramble for the prized tickets last Saturday saw sudden big price hikes -- known as dynamic pricing -- hours-long waits online and hopes dashed for some by technical glitches on the Ticketmaster site. The debacle prompted the UK government and the country's competition watchdog to promise investigations into the ticket sales website and its practices.

### Irish probe

Ireland's competition regulator also announced a probe into ticket pricing against Ticketmaster Ireland after re-

ceiving more than 100 complaints.

"If we find that consumer protection laws were broken, we will take action," Competition and Consumer Protection Commission chair Brian McHugh said in a statement issued Friday.

The band subsequently announced two extra tour dates at London's Wembley Stadium next September, aimed at fans who missed out. Martin Talbot, CEO of the Official Charts, congratulated the Gallagher brothers on their chart-topping triumph.

"As if the huge demand for their tour



A mural created by artist Scott Wilcock aka Snow Graffiti, depicting Liam Gallagher (left) and Noel Gallagher (right) members of the British rock band Oasis, and painted outside the pub Whitefield, near Heaton Park, in Manchester, northern England.—AFP

dates wasn't evidence enough, the enduring power of Oasis is underlined by the success of 'Definitely Maybe' this week," he said. The reunion tour announcement helped renew interest in the band's other albums too, with two further records in this week's top five.

The 2009 hits compilation "Time Flies... (1994-2009)" claimed third spot while 1995 release "(What's the Story) Morning Glory?" was in fourth.—AFP

## Lifestyle



Austrian pop song-writer Nino performs to the crowd of several hundreds of music fans during his open-air concert at the Vienna Central Cemetery in Vienna.



Austrian pop song-writer Nino performs to the crowd of several hundreds of music fans during his open-air concert at the Vienna Central Cemetery in Vienna.



Several hundreds of music fans listen to Austrian pop song-writer Nino Mandl, better known as "Nino from Vienna", as he performs during his open-air concert at the Vienna Central Cemetery in Vienna.—AFP photos

## Vienna cemetery celebrates 150 years with graveyard concerts

Hundreds of revellers flocked to Vienna's Central Cemetery on Friday to attend a graveyard concert commemorating the famous site's 150th birthday, doing justice to the local expression "Death must be a Viennese". The vast cemetery on the outskirts of the Austrian capital is Europe's second largest, comprising around 330,000 graves spread out over 2.5 square kilometres (620 acres). Tens of thousands of tourists as well as locals visit the Central Cemetery each month to stroll along the tree-lined avenues and tombs of many famous figures.

But as night fell Friday, Nino Mandl, a

local singer-songwriter known as "Nino from Vienna", performed the last of three "cemetery sessions" to celebrate the anniversary. Marianne Kaufmann, a 69-year-old retiree, was among the 750 concert-goers who attended. The Viennese have a "special relationship" with death, she told AFP, as mourning was not necessarily considered "sad" but could include "laughing and singing" at funerals, since "life must go on".

Conny Maehlich, 53, said she was excited about experiencing the unique atmosphere, while admitting that it felt "a little bit spooky" to attend a concert in a cemetery. "Every month, around

30,000 people enter through our main gate alone -- and exit it again," said Renate Niklas, managing director of the Vienna cemeteries.

"They don't just come to visit their graves, to attend a funeral, but to go for a walk, a run, ride a bike or simply relax," Niklas said. The events to mark the 150th anniversary, which included yoga sessions and concerts, were an effort at "bringing life to the cemetery, to honour our deceased once again", she said. "For us in Vienna it is an incredibly comforting approach to say that our deceased were not laid to rest in a place where it is dark, sad and cold, but in a

place where life happens."

One of Vienna's macabre tourist attractions, the Central Cemetery serves as a final resting place for around three million people, outnumbering the city's living residents by one million. Notable composers and musicians such as Ludwig van Beethoven, Johann Strauss, Johannes Brahms and Johann Nestroy are laid to rest there. Some of them arrived after a "layover" in their initial graves before being reinterred at the Central Cemetery after it opened in 1874, in a bid to boost its image.

Vienna's residents are said to have a peculiar fascination with death, as many

in the city still wish to go out with a bang.

Opulent funeral services featuring performances of Mozart's Requiem, or customised funeral corteges attended by as many mourners as possible, are still regarded as the proper way to end one's earthly journey. Austria is largely Catholic, but the cemetery has sections for Protestants, Jews, Muslims and Buddhists. Between the main entrance and the honorary graves section, allotments for urban gardening can even be booked for people to grow their own fruits and vegetables.—AFP

### Bossa nova 'Mas Que Nada' star Sergio Mendes dies 83

Brazilian music legend Sergio Mendes, who helped catapult bossa nova onto the global stage in the 1960s with hits including "Mas Que Nada," died in Los Angeles at the age of 83, his family said Friday. Mendes's family said the composer and pianist "passed away peacefully" Thursday at his home, surrounded by his wife and children.



Grammy Award-winning Brazilian musician Sergio Mendes gives a free concert in support of the Blu-Ray and DVD release of the animated film "RIO: The Movie" on August 4, 2011, at the Americana on Brand in Glendale, California.—AFP

"For the last several months, his health had been challenged by the effects of long-term COVID," the statement added. The three-time Grammy winner, who trained as a classical pianist, arrived on the scene as bossa nova -- Brazil's silky mix of samba and jazz -- was taking the world by storm, popularized by Joao Gilberto's "The Girl From Ipanema" among other hits.

Mendes's mastery of jazz brought him to the attention of American saxophonist Cannonball Adderley, who chose the Brazilian's group "Sexteto Rio" to record his album "Cannonball's Bossa Nova" in 1963. Three years later, Mendes became an international sensation in his own right with his album "Sergio Mendes & Brasil 66," which featured the now legendary "Mas Que Nada" -- his adaptation of a Jorge Ben standard.

Throughout his career, Mendes skillfully blended samba rhythms and jazz grooves with bossa nova harmonies and Californian pop to produce a deceptively simple but hugely popular style dismissed by some as "easy listening." He recorded more than 35 albums in total and toured with some of America's jazz greats, including Frank Sinatra.

Mendes was the Brazilian with the most songs (14) in the Top 100 of the US charts, according to the Brazilian presidency. In 1993, he received the Grammy Award for Best World Music Album for "Brasileiro," which included several compositions by his compatriot Carlinhos Brown.

Two decades later, the pair was nominated for an Oscar for the song "Real in Rio" from the animated film "Rio." "Rest in peace, dear genius," Brazilian music legend Milton Nascimento, one of the first celebrities to react to Mendes's death, wrote on Instagram.—AFP



US actress and singer Jennifer Lopez attends the world premiere of "Unstoppable" during the Toronto International Film Festival at the Roy Thomson Theatre in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, on September 6, 2024.—AFP photos



Jamie Lee Curtis attends the premiere of "The Last Showgirl".



US actor Matt Damon attends the world premiere of "Unstoppable".



US actor Pamela Anderson (left) poses with US director Gia Coppola during the world premiere of "The Last Showgirl".

## Jennifer Lopez slays TIFF red carpet as she unveils 'Unstoppable'

Jennifer Lopez infused the Toronto film festival with a dose of A-list glamour Friday at the world premiere of her new movie, true-story sports drama "Unstoppable," which earned a rousing ovation. The 55-year-old actress, singer and dancer was making her first red carpet appearance since the announcement of her divorce from Ben Affleck, who co-produced the film with best friend Matt Damon but was not in attendance. And she did not disappoint, wearing a skin-baring metallic silver gown with seemingly nothing but giant black velvet bows holding it together, her hair long and loose. Sky-high silver platform heels finished the look.

In "Unstoppable," Lopez plays Judy, the mother of high school wrestler Anthony Robles (Jharrel Jerome) who, though born with only one leg, doggedly pursued

-- and achieved -- his dream of becoming a US university champion. Oscar nominee Don Cheadle and Michael Pena play his demanding coaches, and Bobby Cannavale plays his abusive stepfather, who repeatedly puts the family in jeopardy.

"Unstoppable" tells Robles's inspiring story while also delving into the difficulties of his family life, and showcasing his close relationship with his mother. The film had several applause moments in the buildup to Robles's winning run to a college championship for Arizona State University. Then, as the credits rolled, Robles himself, in the theater, earned a standing ovation from the crowd at Roy Thomson Hall.

"When I read the script, I felt like so many women, including myself, could relate to the struggles that she had gone through in her life," Lopez said in

a question-and-answer session after the screening. "This story being a Latino story, being so inspiring -- it was just something that kind of grabbed me."

Jerome said he trained for five months, including with Robles on the wrestling mat. "As an actor, it is one of the most daunting tasks to portray somebody that is real," he said. "Unstoppable" was one of the marquee events of day two at the Toronto International Film Festival, the largest in North America, which offers a mix of Oscar-bait movies, feel-good family fare and searing documentaries.

This year marks a return to normal for the event, after twin strikes by actors and writers kept top talent from promoting their work here last year. Lopez is just one of the major stars visiting Canada's biggest city for the festival. Ben Stiller, Orlando Bloom and Katy Perry hit

the red carpet on Thursday night. Also expected are Angelina Jolie, Elton John, Bruce Springsteen, Salma Hayek, Cate Blanchett and Nicole Kidman. Earlier, Gia Coppola debuted her latest effort behind the camera, "The Last Showgirl," starring Pamela Anderson as veteran Vegas performer Shelley, who is left in despair when her show is abruptly canceled. After a 30-year run dancing half-naked in sequins and high heels in a traditional Sin City show, Shelley must figure out what the future holds. Coppola -- the granddaughter of legendary director Francis Ford Coppola -- goes beyond the bright lights of America's favorite gambling playground to show the harsh realities of the entertainment industry and what happens to those it discards, especially women.—AFP



(From left) Xenia Tan, actor Lee Kang-Sheng, director Yeo Siew Hua, actor Wu Chien-Ho, actress Anicca Panna and Vera Chen attend the photocall of the movie 'Stranger Eyes' presented in competition during the 81st International Venice Film Festival.—AFP

## Seeing and being seen in Venice's first Singapore film

Singapore's first film in the Venice Festival's main competition, Yeo Siew Hua's "Stranger Eyes", is a complex reflection on voyeurism, surveillance and fractured visions of people's lives. The director -- winner of a best film award at the 2018 Locarno Film Festival for "A Land Imagined" about poor immigrants in Singapore -- said his latest thriller has a "number of layers, all in relation to looking and being seen".

"We never get a real whole picture," Yeo said, rather "a pastiche of perspectives, of points of view." "Maybe we're

just used to scrolling these days, instead of looking to see someone intently, sincerely. And maybe we should," he told a press conference ahead of the film's world premiere on Thursday.

The prestigious festival on the swanky Lido is poised to award its Golden Lion for best film on Saturday to one of 21 contenders, among them "Stranger Eyes." The film begins with the disappearance of a toddler in broad daylight in a Singapore park.

Her parents, a young couple, fruitlessly search for her with the help of the grandmother who lives with them -- be-

fore one day mysterious DVDs appear under their door, with recordings of the whole family in their apartment in happier times. Although the police close in on the voyeur spying on them, the truth is more complex than it seems.

"Stranger Eyes" stars two well-known Taiwanese actors, Anicca Panna and Wu Chien-Ho. As they search desperately for clues about the disappearance of their daughter, they soon realise they have a tool that is also a trap -- surveillance cameras.—AFP

## Venice film questions Sicily's mafia boss on the run

The mafia makes its presence felt at the Venice Film Festival this year, with a film inspired by boss Matteo Messina Denaro, who died last year after three decades on the lam.

That long period as a fugitive -- aided by family, loyalists and likely even more powerful political forces -- is "a black page in the history of Italy", said Fabio Grassadonia, who along with director Antonio Piazza directed "Sicilian Letters", which premiered Thursday at the festival.

The two Sicilian filmmakers told AFP they sought to understand how Messina Denaro was able to live and operate underground for so long before his arrest in January 2023 and death from cancer in September while in prison.

Those reasons "are not only due to the intelligence or skill of the fugitive, but have very deep roots in the system that revolves around him, in the system of little ones who help him, but also strong powers who supported him," Grassadonia said.

Messina Denaro was one of the most ruthless bosses in Cosa Nostra, the real-life Sicilian crime syndicate depicted in the "Godfather" movies.—AFP

Lifestyle



People wear "Vote" t-shirts as they attend the "Fashion For Our Future" rally to raise awareness about the importance of voting in the upcoming election, during Fashion Week in New York City. — AFP photos



US First Lady Jill Biden speaks during the "Fashion For Our Future" rally to raise awareness about the importance of voting in the upcoming election.



People wear "Vote" t-shirts as they attend the "Fashion For Our Future" rally.

## New York Fashion Week opens with call to vote from Jill Biden



British-US editor-in-chief of Vogue Anna Wintour and US fashion designer Thom Browne attend the "Fashion For Our Future" rally.

US First Lady Jill Biden called for the protection of "freedoms" Friday during a "get out the vote" march that opened New York Fashion Week. Biden was joined by a number of high-profile US fashion designers, including Thom Browne, Michael Kors and Tory Burch.

The march was organized by the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) for the first day of the week-long fashion event showcasing looks for the upcoming Spring/Summer 2025 season. Though the event was intended

to be nonpartisan, the surprise presence of the Democratic first lady -- whose appearance had not been announced -- set the tone for the event, during which she gave a speech at a park in the heart of New York City.

"I know that you care about the freedom to make your own choices, be who you are, love who you love... your freedom of creative expression," Biden said to applause from the crowd of fashion industry insiders. "These freedoms are at risk because of court decisions, book bans, shrugs of apathy when people for-

get the power of the vote," she continued. The US presidential election, set for November 5, pits Democrat Kamala Harris against Republican nominee Donald Trump. Jill Biden's husband, US President Joe Biden, had been set to be the Democratic nominee until he dropped out of the race on July 21 and threw his support behind his vice president.

"So let's remember this: the next president, your next president, will likely appoint new Supreme Court justices," the first lady said.

"Your next senators will confirm them

and our children and our grandchildren will have to live with those consequences." Prior to the march, Jill Biden attended the Ralph Lauren fashion show on Thursday evening and paid tribute to Anna Wintour, the editor-in-chief of Vogue magazine and high priestess of the US fashion industry.

Wintour featured Jill Biden on the cover of the magazine's August issue and has organized several fundraisers for the Democratic Party. — AFP

## Johannesburg art fair shows clout of African buyers

Africa's leading annual art fair, FNB Art Joburg this weekend, is increasingly attracting buyers from across the continent as artists cater less to foreigners in their work, exhibitors said Saturday. The show, which started in 2008, has 500 works from 100 artists across the continent on display in Johannesburg.



South African writer Niq Mhlongo poses for a portrait in Johannesburg.

Organisers don't like to talk money, but last year most works sold out fetching prices of up to 20 million rand (\$1.1 million, one million euros). "Our paintings were regarded as primitive back in the day, because it was like you only find it in caves," said Zimbabwean painter Gresham Tapiwa Nyaude. His piece 'MCMLXXX' won the fair's top prize.

The title in Roman numerals in 1980, the year of Zimbabwe's independence. The piece plays with local idioms to depict drug use, worries about artificial intelligence, and other intensely modern concerns. "Our African painting is very esoteric and is very intelligent, because we speak about social issues, we speak about things that happen to us and also in an authentic voice," he said.

"It's not about the decorations and the stuff, and the sun sets, but something real, and something real that affects us on a daily basis." His work is part of a changing dynamic, where African artists are finding more buyers on the continent as they address more local concerns. "Definitely there are more Africans

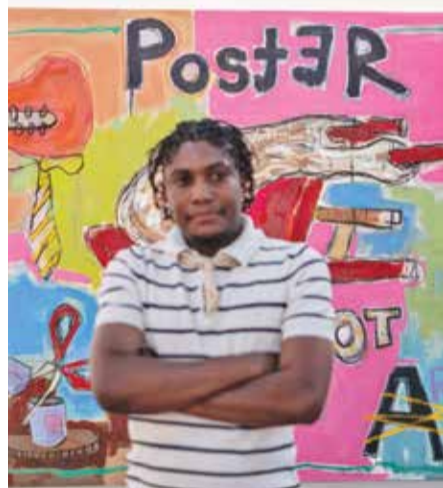
starting to collect African art and this is the most exciting development we have," said Valerie Kabov, director of First Floor Gallery Harare, which exhibited Nyaude's work. "The support of local collectors is really meaningful, as they feel represented by the art and also the work they love and choose is distinctly different to that preferred by non-Zimbabwean collectors," she said.

The art market took a hit last year globally, but a report by London-based analysis firm ArtTactic found that Africa has weathered that turbulence better than most other areas.

Sales of modern and contemporary African art fell by 8.4 percent in 2023, while the broader market fell by 18 percent, it said. The report did not divulge the value of those sales, but noted the strong presence of African buyers.

At auction house Sotheby's, for example, African buyers accounted for two-thirds of their sales of African art.

"There's a renaissance of sorts on the African continent," said Kampamba Mabuluki of Modiz Arts Gallery in Zambia. "This fair is testament to that. It's a very good example of what's happening in the region." — AFP



Zimbabwean painter Gresham Tapiwa Nyaude, winner of the 2024 FNB Art Prize, poses for a portrait in front of his painting at the FNB art fair in Sandton. — AFP

out of 93 people who tried. Clearing the hurdle was part of "a happy summer break", she said. Fugu is often served raw at high-end restaurants in Japan, where chefs must hold a licence proving they can safely slice around organs that contain a lethal poison.

Occasionally, unlicensed individuals eat fugu caught in the sea and die. Yamaguchi does not have an age limit to take the fugu test, but in Kumamoto Kimura can only prepare fugu dishes when accompanied by a licensed adult. Tabira's interest was piqued by news that a sixth grader in another region passed the test, and she trained since February at Fukunari, a Kumamoto-based farm and wholesaler.

She used a hammer to drive her butcher's knife through the fugu's tough bones, and "had to stand on a platform to use the kitchen counter", Fukunari executive Yuki Hirao told AFP. "Even our adult staff can fail the test. For a 10-year-old to clear the test first time, it's amazing," she said. — AFP

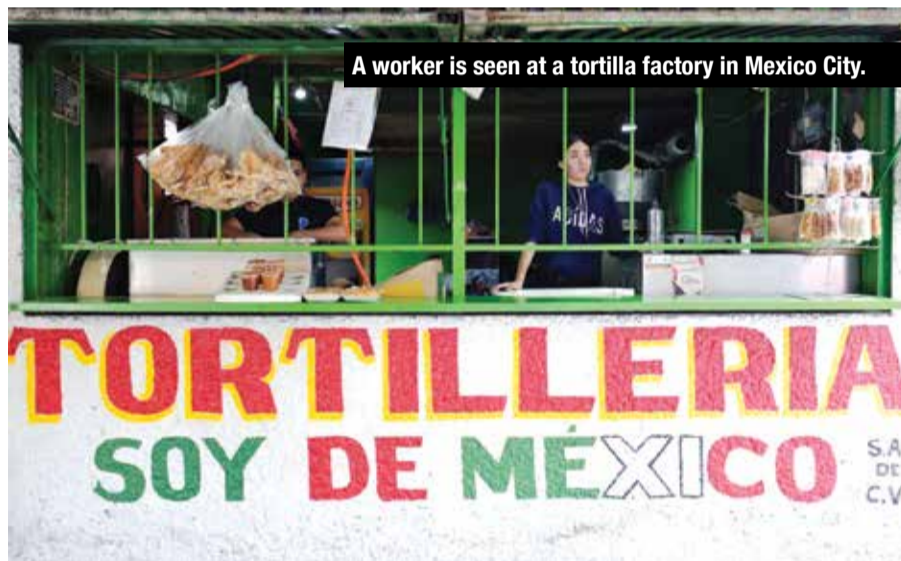
## Puffed up with pride: Japanese 10-year-old passes deadly fish test

A Japanese 10-year-old has become the youngest person authorised to prepare "fugu" pufferfish -- a delicacy that can kill if its poisonous parts are not properly removed. Fifth grader Karin Tabira passed a test this summer that means she is now certified to slice and gut the fish for consumption.

She recently used her new skills to serve a platter of paper-thin slices of fugu sashimi to the governor of southern Kumamoto region where she lives.

"I was happy when the governor said 'oishi'," meaning delicious in Japanese, she told reporters at an event where Takashi Kimura ate the dish.

Tabira was among 60 people -- mostly professional chefs -- who passed the test in Yamaguchi region this summer,



A worker is seen at a tortilla factory in Mexico City.



A worker handles tortillas over a sign with information about an app to buy tortillas at a tortilla factory in Mexico City.

## App helps Mexican tortilla makers join digital economy

Long marginalized by the banking industry, Mexico's neighborhood tortilla producers are cautiously embracing financial technology, in a country where cash is still king for many.

The National Tortilla Council and technology firm Finsus have developed a mobile application that allows vendors of the staple food to charge customers using cards, QR codes or a cellphone number. "It's revolutionizing the industry," said the organization's president, Homero Lopez Garcia, whose ambitious goal is for 90 percent of tortilla makers to use the app within three years.

The feedback from those who have tried it has been positive: "They say 'I like it, I understand it,'" he said. The hope is that the app will also enable tortilla producers to generate additional income by offering their clients cellphone top-up and bill payment services.

For many, the app is their first link to the formal financial industry. Only around half of Mexico's 129 million inhabitants have a bank account and most tortilla shops operate informally.

Although it is still in the testing phase, the app is already making life easier for tortilla producer Abel Garcia, who has been in the business for 25 years. The 60-year-old said that he started out using family savings after failing to get a bank loan, and now owns several stores.

"It was difficult to get credit -- very, very difficult!" Garcia said, in the work-

ing-class district of Iztapalapa. His success finally gave him access to banks, but with restrictions that put him off using them. "That's why we tore up the checkbook," he said.



A man shows the operation of an app to buy tortillas in Mexico City. — AFP photos

Hall show. Without access to the formal financial system, many of them prefer dealing in cash.

A 2021 survey by the banking regulator CNBV found that 64 percent of Mexicans preferred notes and coins over debit or credit cards. Maria Adelaida Francisco, who works in a tortilla shop in Mexico City, had never used a financial application until her boss Jorge Ramirez suggested she try the new one. Now the 40-year-old uses it to pay her electricity bill, she said.

Some tortilla producers avoid banks for fear of paperwork or debts. "They're a bit scared of the tax issue or they don't know about it," said Ramirez, 35.

Several of his eight employees now use the application to collect their salaries. The change reflects a wider embrace of financial technology in Latin America's second-largest economy.

According to a study by the Inter-American Development Bank and the venture capital company Finnovista, Mexico is home to 20 percent of the region's financial technology ventures, behind only Brazil.

The number of fintech startups in Latin America and the Caribbean increased more than four-fold between 2017 and 2023, to 3,069 across 26 countries, the report said. Despite the advances, the financial inclusion of Mexico's tortilla makers is still "zero," Lopez Garcia, the National Tortilla Council president, said. "The banks don't believe in the industry," he said. — AFP

But only around 10 percent of them are legally registered, figures from City



A worker weighs tortillas next to a sign with information about an app to buy tortillas at a tortilla factory.



## Sports

# Eagles overpower Packers in NFL's first season game

## Barkley sparks Philadelphia Eagles over Green Bay 34-29

SAO PAULO: Saquon Barkley scored three touchdowns to spark the Philadelphia Eagles over Green Bay 34-29 on Friday in the first regular-season NFL game in South America. Barkley, who joined the Eagles in March after six seasons with the rival New York Giants, ran 24 times for 109 yards and two touchdowns and caught two passes for 23 yards and a touchdown in a landmark thriller. "It was really important for me just to get going," Barkley said. "I just needed that first tackle to get me going again."

Barkley joined Terrell Owens as the only players with three touchdowns in their Eagles debut. The "Love Hurts" meeting saw Green Bay quarterback Jordan Love and Eagles counterpart Jalen Hurts stage a high-scoring spectacle in the historic Brazil contest, played in Sao Paulo's Neo Quimica Arena. Hurts completed 20-of-34 passes for 278 yards with two touchdowns and two interceptions while Love completed half his 34 passes for 260 yards with two touchdowns passes and an interception before a late-game ankle injury.

"It was a good game, back and forth," Eagles receiver AJ Brown said. "A lot of things were going to go wrong because it's the first game but we made adjustments and it just came down to making plays." Hurts hurled a 67-yard touchdown pass to Brown early in the third quarter as Philadelphia grabbed a 24-19 edge.

Two third-down Eagles penalties helped sustain Green Bay's 70-yard scoring march in response, Love flipping a 2-yard touchdown pass

to Christian Watson as the Packers reclaimed the lead 26-24. Love was intercepted to set up Barkley's 2-yard touchdown run for a 31-26 Eagles edge but Brayden Narveson kicked a 26-yard field goal with 7:52 remaining to pull the Packers within 31-29. Hurts and Barkley guided a masterful march of 67 yards over 16 plays that took more than seven minutes. Jake Elliott's 21-yard field goal boosted the Eagles lead and left the Packers only 27 seconds to seek the winning points.

Love threw a 33-yard pass to Jayden Reed to reach Eagles territory in the dying seconds but suffered a left ankle injury on the next play and Malik Willis was sacked two plays later to end the game. Asked about the severity of Love's injury, Packers coach Matt LaFleur replied, "I don't know." LaFleur was certain missed scoring chances, such as being stopped for three short field goals rather than scoring touchdowns, caused the loss. "I challenged everybody. We've got to learn from this," LaFleur said. "There was a lot of opportunities we didn't capitalize on when you do that you get beat."

The Eagles were unhappy about missed chances as well, even Devonte Smith, who had seven catches for 84 yards. "We were just shooting ourselves in the foot, up and down offensively, but we just kept going," he said. "You're going to have sloppy games like this but it's all how you respond to it." The first Friday game since 1970 in the NFL's opening week was the first of five matchups outside US venues, including three October games in London and a November contest in Munich, Germany.



SAO PAULO: Green Bay Packers Devonte Wyatt vies for the ball during the NFL American football match Philadelphia Eagles vs Green Bay Packers, at Neo Quimica Arena in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on September 6, 2024. — AFP

member contest in Munich, Germany.

### Hurts woeful then solid

Hurts lost a fumble and was intercepted on the first two Eagles possessions but Green Bay only managed field goals from golden opportunities.

Even as the country warms, huge government support and the interest of an expanding middle class have seen the ski industry coast to new heights in China, particularly after Beijing hosted the 2022 Winter Olympics. The country leads the world when it comes to indoor ski resort building, boasting half of the world's top ten based on snow area, according to Daxue Consulting. On Friday, the Shanghai L\*SNOW Indoor Skiing Theme Resort was officially certified by Guinness World Records as the world's largest, overtaking the previous record-holder — also in China, in northern Harbin.

Modelled like a glacier, the almost 100,000-square-metre snow world towers over coastal Lingang, about 1.5 hours away from the city centre. Inside, a chairlift, cable car, and a green and red "steam train" ferry visitors to the complex's four ski slopes and other rides. "There were no ski resorts around Shanghai before and there was no way to practice in the summer. But now I have the opportunity to do it... so I'm quite happy," snowboarder Cynthia Zhang told AFP before launching herself down the curving white incline.

### 'A lot of energy'

A Shanghai government report in August acknowledged that such projects "will inevitably consume a lot of energy". Resort executive Yin Kang told AFP that to keep the temperature below zero, 72 cooling machines and 33 snow-making machines worked continuously. The Shanghai government report said the resort was built to maximize energy reuse, through elements such as its ice storage and waste-heat recovery systems.

Over three quarters of the resort's rooftop is covered in photovoltaics, or solar panels, which helps counteract its carbon footprint, it said. "We have taken a lot of energy-saving measures," Yin told AFP. The resort's completion has been pushed back several times. Industry media reported its originally planned opening date to be 2019. Its soft opening period has not been wholly smooth. The resort said it would add more safety measures after an accident in which a guest claimed a finger was severed, state media reported Wednesday. — AFP

## World's largest indoor ski resort opens in Shanghai

SHANGHAI: Shanghai opened the world's largest indoor ski resort on Friday, welcoming visitors in snow-suits to its pistes as China reported its hottest August in 60 years. This year's northern summer saw the highest global temperatures ever recorded, and in the faux Alpine square where the resort's opening ceremony took place, the mercury had already hit 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit) by 9:00 am.

But the temperature plummeted to well below zero inside the cavernous atrium, where visitors switched from sunglasses and T-shirts into padded overalls, some opting for designer goggles or flapping bat-winged helmets. At the top of a piste, snowboarder Jessica Zhang was unfazed by the August heat record. "When it comes to climate I feel like you get ups and downs in temperature — maybe every few years a hottest year comes along," she shrugged.

### Real snow shrinking

This year is likely to be the Earth's hottest ever logged, beating the record set in 2023, according to the EU's climate monitor. China is the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, although in recent years it has also emerged as a global leader in renewable energy. Climate change has affected traditional outdoor skiing destinations, with ice and snow retreating as world temperatures rise. "In China, it might have more of an effect in the north because of climate change, there are fewer people doing winter sports there... so some of the snow parks just aren't operating well, they're shrinking," said Zhang Jin, a 48-year-old skier. "Instead, it's this kind of thing that's opening up right now, larger indoor ones, which I think is still pretty good."



SHANGHAI: Snowboarders and skiers enjoy a run at the Shanghai L\*SNOW Indoor Skiing Theme Resort, the world's largest indoor ski resort, during the official opening day, in the Pudong district in Shanghai on September 6, 2024. — AFP

pull for me so we went for it," he said. Dani Martinez set the initial pace. Aleksandr Vlasov briefly took over before their team leader zoomed away from both. Roglic crossed the line 46 seconds ahead of Frenchman David Gaudu of EF Education and Dane Mattias Skjelmose of Lidl.

Roglic won on the same ascent in 2020 on his way to his second overall victory in the race. "I had some really nice memories from this climb and it didn't disappoint me again. Beautiful," he said. O'Connor, of DeCathlon AG2R, battled in one minute and 49 seconds behind as his 13-day reign in red came to an end. "I was a bit broken at the end there," said O'Connor, saying he had been expecting another Bora attack. "I wasn't surprised but I didn't expect myself to be so bad. Stage 19, I guess." The bonus Roglic gained for winning the stage meant he leads O'Connor by 1min 54sec. Spaniard Enric Mas is third a further 26sec back.

After his 15th Vuelta stage win, Roglic is two tough days away from a fourth Vuelta, which would

equal the record for most victories held by Spaniard Roberto Heras. Saturday's stage is another mountain stage, a 172km ride from Villarcayo to Picon Blanco before ending with a 24.6km time trial round Madrid, which ensures the final day is competitive rather than a victory parade. The Slovenian insisted that the two coming days were the most important. "The big queen stage is still to come tomorrow," he said. "We don't do the normal laps in Madrid, we do a time trial, so it's far from done."

Roglic had lost the red jersey on stage six when O'Connor turned a long breakaway into a lead of more than five minutes. "My gap is better than five minutes behind," said Roglic. "I'm happy with how I am functioning and I'm happy with the guys." Meanwhile, O'Connor said there was still hope. "There's still tomorrow and two more big days," before adding that he was looking beyond the end of the race. "Monday and having beers and sitting on the terrace and relaxing," he said. — AFP



DAPHNE: Estonia's Ott Tanak and his co-driver Martin Jarveoja drive their Hyundai i20 N Rally1 Hybrid at the special stage Daphne during the Acropolis Rally in Pavlani on September 6, 2024. — AFP

## Tanak leads Acropolis Rally as Ogier charge halted

LAMIA: Estonian driver Ott Tanak led a Hyundai 1-2-3 on the first full day of the Acropolis Rally, the tenth event in the World Rally Championship, taking a 21.8 second lead over Dani Sordo on Friday. World championship leader Thierry Neuville was third 45.2sec behind Tanak with Sebastien Ogier slipping to fourth in his Toyota over two minutes back after turbo trouble late in the day. "We need to be very grateful for a trouble-free day," said 2019 world champion Tanak after a day when temperatures passed 36 degrees Celsius. "It has been very difficult with the temperature and the roughness. It's been a good day but we all know what's coming."

As championship leader, Neuville had the awkward task of opening the dusty, rocky route on the first stage and lost 10sec to Ogier. But the Belgian battled back well enough to win stage six, albeit by only 0.7sec ahead of Sordo. "It was okay. The roughest stage of the day was the last one," said Neuville. "Very challenging day, we did what we could with our position. We have seen a lot of problems for everyone so it could have gone much worse for us. With the position we are in, we are good."

Ogier was leading the race after winning three of the first four stages. But the eight-time world champion hit mechanical problems on stage five which led to him crawling through the day's final stage. "There was not much we could do. The turbo is broken. That is motorsport sometimes. It's not the day we were after." Welshman Elfyn Evans (Toyota) was another to have a nightmare day, effectively kissing goodbye to his title hopes as he closed the day almost 10 minutes down. Another six tough stages follow on Saturday with 141 kilometers of testing Greek roads. — AFP

## Reluctant Roglic climbs back into Vuelta overall lead

MADRID: Primož Roglic grabbed back the lead in the Vuelta as he won the 19th stage after his team pushed him into a ferocious attack on the final climb on Friday. Roglic started Friday's 173.2 kilometre ride through Rioja from Logrono five seconds behind Ben O'Connor. With 6km left on the closing climb to the Alto de Moncalvillo, Roglic and two of his Red Bull-Bora-hansgrohe team-mates blasted off the front. The Slovenian said at the finish that he had not been keen on the tactic.

"I didn't need the stage but some guys decided they

Hurts responded by marching the Eagles 70 yards in 11 plays and capped the scoring drive with an 18-yard touchdown pass to Barkley, making the catch over a defender to give Philadelphia a 7-6 edge. "I fought through contact and Jalen gave me a good ball," Barkley said. — AFP



NEW YORK: Taylor Fritz of the United States celebrates after defeating Frances Tiafoe of the United States in their Men's Singles Semifinal match on Day Twelve of the 2024 US Open at USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center. — AFP

## Fritz ends America's 15-year wait, sets up final with Sinner

NEW YORK: Taylor Fritz became the first American man since 2009 to reach a Grand Slam final on Friday, setting up a US Open title showdown against world number one Jannik Sinner. Fritz, the world number 12, twice fought back to defeat compatriot Frances Tiafoe 4-6, 7-5, 4-6, 6-4, 6-1 in his semi-final. Australian Open champion Sinner became the first Italian man to make the New York final with a 7-5, 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 win over an ailing Jack Draper of Britain.

"He overwhelmed me at the start and I was freaking out a little," said 26-year-old Fritz after securing victory with a 16th ace. "I just told myself to stay in it, hold serve and apply scoreboard pressure. "I did all I could to stay in it. If I hadn't have done that I'd regret it forever. In the final, I will come out and give it everything." Andy Roddick was the last American to make a men's singles final at the Slams at Wimbledon in 2009. He was also the last man from the country to capture a major title when he won the 2003 US Open.

Fritz was just five years old at the time. Tiafoe was the better player for large parts of the semi-final but after dumping a lazy drop shot into the net to surrender the fourth set, his game fell apart. In a 27-minute final set, Tiafoe won just nine points as he slumped to a second US Open semi-final loss in his last three visits. "It's tough to swallow, it's going to hurt," said Tiafoe. "I thought I was the better player but in the fourth set I had some cramps. My body kind of shut down on me. Probably to do with nerves."

Earlier, in a gruelling three-hour match, Draper, the first British man in the semi-finals since Andy Murray won the title in 2012, was undone by 10 double faults and 43 unforced errors. He also vomited on the court, blaming anxiety for the illness. "Jack and I know each other very well, we are great friends off court," said Sinner, who unleashed 43 winners in the match where he also injured his wrist in a nasty fall.

"It was a very physical match. He's so tough to beat so I'm excited to be in the final." The 23-year-old Sinner added: "In the final, it will be a very tough challenge. I'm happy to be in that position because if you are in the final on a Sunday it means you are doing an amazing job." World number 25 Draper vowed to work on overcoming his anxiety which sabotaged his hopes on Friday. "When you play the top players, the intensity is different. It's a step up. It was a big occasion for me. I definitely felt more nerves around," he said.

"I'm quite an anxious human being. I think when you add all that together sometimes I do feel a bit nauseous on court, and I feel a little bit sick when it gets tough." Despite both men having been born in 2001, Sinner was playing in his 20th Grand Slam event. Draper, plagued by ankle and shoulder troubles in the early stages of his career, was competing at the majors for just the 10th time. "I try my best all the time to keep evolving, to keep learning, and it's definitely something I've had to just work through my whole entire life," added Draper of his struggles. Ukraine's Lyudmyla Kichenok became a Grand Slam champion, just two days after cancelling her wedding. Kichenok, 32, teamed up with Latvia's Jelena Ostapenko to beat Kristina Mladenovic and Zhang Shuai 6-4, 6-3 in the women's doubles final. On Wednesday, she had been planning to marry boyfriend Stas Khmarsky who is also Ostapenko's coach. — AFP

Sports

# Italy beat France, Belgium win, Wales held in Nations League

## Bellamy's Wales held by Turkey in opener

PARIS: Italy recovered from conceding inside 13 seconds to fight back and beat France 3-1 in their UEFA Nations League clash in Paris on Friday, while Belgium beat the Zionist entity and Wales drew with Turkey. Bradley Barcola had opened the scoring at the Parc des Princes with the fastest ever goal by a France player, but the home side failed to build on that stunning start and Italy ran out deserved winners with Federico Dimarco, Davide Frattesi and Giacomo Raspadori all on target.

The result is a boost for Luciano Spalletti's Italy team after their poor showing at Euro 2024, when their defense of the title was ended limply by Switzerland in the last 16. "Italians love football and they have been very sad recently," Spalletti said. "I am happy tonight because we are relieved to see a better performance. "Now we can continue on this

road because we saw how much potential we have."

France, for whom captain Kylian Mbappe struggled to make an impact, picked up where they left off at the Euros, when they never found their best form despite reaching the semi-finals. "It hurts for all of us," admitted their coach, Didier Deschamps. He gave a full international debut to London-born Bayern Munich right-winger Michael Olise, but he was upstaged by Barcola. The Paris Saint-Germain winger robbed Italy's Giovanni Di Lorenzo to run through and score, in the process beating the previous quickest French goal, scored after 38 seconds by Bernard Lacombe, also against Italy at the 1978 World Cup.

### Haaland draws blank

Italy saw Frattesi hit the bar soon after, but they

drew level on the half-hour via a stunning goal, as Dimarco laid the ball off for Sandro Tonali and then met the latter's first-time return with a sweet volley that flew into the far corner. Frattesi turned in a Mateo Retegui cross to put Italy ahead early in the second half, and substitute Raspadori got their third goal on 74 minutes. The winning start in this edition of the Nations League leaves Italy level at the top of Group A2 with Belgium, who beat Israel 3-1 on Friday.

Kevin De Bruyne scored twice for Belgium, including a penalty, either side of a Youri Tielemans goal and a Timothy Castagne own goal in a game played in Hungary after Belgian authorities decided the fixture was too high-risk to host. Italy face Israel next on Monday, with that match taking place in Budapest due to the security situation

in the Middle East. France play Belgium in Lyon. Elsewhere on Friday, new Wales coach Craig Bellamy saw his side draw 0-0 with Turkey in Cardiff in Group 4 of the second-tier League B.

Turkey left with a point despite having Baris Yilmaz sent off in the second half. "I am not a master at this after one game, trust me. But I enjoyed it. It was a great country to play against in your first game and I am really happy," Bellamy told the BBC. Wales next go to Montenegro, who lost 2-0 in Iceland on Friday. Erling Haaland drew a blank as Norway were held to a 0-0 draw on their long trip to Kazakhstan in Group B3, while Benjamin Sesko scored a penalty in Slovenia's 1-1 draw with Austria in the same section. Romania, with veteran Mircea Lucescu back in charge, won 3-0 in Kosovo in Group C2. — AFP



Participants are pictured during the regional training course for the preparation of Special Olympics Motor Activity Training Program (MATP) trainers. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Kuwait launches Motor Activities Training Program

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Special Olympics launched the Motor Activities Training Program (MATP) on Saturday, which aims at training the coaches of the motor activities of the Special Olympics under the supervision of the International Special Olympics for the MENA region, which involves 50 trainees from 11 countries, including the GCC. Kuwait's Special Olympics Director Rehab Bouresli spoke about the active role of the Kuwait Special Olympics in the region and internationally, especially in the field of the development of the training field, besides improving the trainers skills in order to enhance the sports.

She said that there are 40 athletes of various motor activities in addition to 13 swimmers, adding that this is the first time that a health checkup will be conducted on the sidelines of this event, through which "we seek to develop the skills of trainers and athletes with severe mental and movement disabilities." The program will contribute to the qualification of more training cadres and the development of their abilities.

It is aimed at implementing the goals of the Special Olympics and strengthening its status as the largest humanitarian sports event in the world to enable the mentally challenged in society through sports, health care, and integration with the initiative programs. Tomooh Club's cadres and Kuwait Special Olympics seek to place the name of Kuwait in prominence in all arenas.

Meanwhile, Director of the Motor Activities of the International Special Olympics, Dr. Niamh Morton from Ireland, said the program seeks to qualify trainers to become the nucleus and to train more people in the region both in theory and practice. She



National Director of the Special Olympics Kuwait Rehab Bouresli



Special Olympics International Motor Activity Program Director Dr Niamh Morton.



Head of Sports and Training Sector for Special Olympics International for the Middle East and North Africa Region, Dr Imad Mohieldin



Head of Games and Competitions Sector at Special Olympics International for the Middle East and North Africa, Sherif El-Fouly

said Kuwait has a special interest in caring for the disabled and assists more athletes for international events, and she commended Kuwait for providing all facilities in order to allow the disabled to participate in all aspects of life, particularly sport.

Head of the sports and training center at the International Special Olympics for the MENA region, Dr. Imad Mohieldin, said the MATP is one of the most important events in the region as it cares for a

special group, improves their skills, and turns them into champions. The program is aimed at gathering a larger number of trainers in order to qualify them to produce more champions. Official Spokesman of Special Olympics in the MENA region from Oman, Mujahid Al-Sarhani, said Kuwait is among the countries that cares for sports and athletes and actively works on integrating the disabled in various activities.

## China football numb after 'disastrous' 7-0 Japan thrashing

BEIJING: Chinese football fans and media rounded on the national team on Friday after they suffered fresh humiliation in a 7-0 thrashing to rivals Japan in World Cup qualifying. President Xi Jinping once said he wanted China to host and even win the World Cup one day, but that ambition looked further away than ever after a chastening evening in

Saitama on Thursday. China had only squeezed into the decisive third round of qualifying for the 2026 World Cup thanks to a superior head-to-head record over Thailand. China have reached the World Cup only once before, in 2002.

They are still alive in the group despite the desperate start, but Oriental Sports Daily said it was China's heaviest World Cup qualifying defeat. "When the taste of bitterness reaches its extreme, all that is left is numbness," it said. The Paper in Shanghai said that Chinese football had hit "rock-bottom" and called it a "disastrous defeat". It partly pointed the finger at China's Croatian boss Branko Ivankovic, calling his "incompetence... a contributing factor to this crushing defeat". The

hammering in Saitama was hotly discussed on Chinese social media platform Weibo, with the hashtag "National team loses to Japan 0-7" viewed 480 million times as of Friday morning. "We still don't know what the Japanese goalkeeper looks like after a 90-minute game," said one user.

Another went as far as to call for the team to be "disbanded". "There is no point in spending the most money on this useless project." Writing on Weibo, former national team player Fan Zhiyi - who featured at the 2002 World Cup - said: "When there's a gap in ability and you lose, it's acceptable. "What's hard for football fans to accept is losing like this." China will attempt to get their campaign back on track when they host Saudi Arabia on Tuesday. — AFP

## Bahrain defeat Kuwait in Basketball Championship

MANAMA: The Bahraini Basketball team achieved on Friday victory over Kuwaiti counterpart with a score of 76-67 in the semifinals of the 17th Gulf Basketball Championship. The Qatari team won against its Saudi Arabian counterpart with a score of 76-63. The Bahraini team maintained its lead throughout the match to achieve victory against the Kuwaiti team by a nine-point difference to qualify for the final. In the second match, the Qatari team won by a 13-point difference against the Saudi Arabian team, ending the match with a total of 76-63. The Gulf Basketball Championship for Men, hosted by Bahrain, was held from September 2 to 7, with the attendance and sponsorship of the First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council for Bahraini Youth and Sports (SCYS) Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad. — KUNA



# Classifieds

### Clinics & Hospitals

#### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804

Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

#### Hospitals

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

### Change of Name

**I, SUWEL ABDUL RAHIMAN KHAN**, holder of Indian Passport No. M3188531 having permanent address at Post Sagwe Tal Rajapur Dist Ratnagiri MS, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) SOHAIL A RAHIM and (surname) KHAN. (#6163 06/09/2024)

**I, SHAJI JOBY**, holder of Indian Passport No P1094284 having permanent address 42/827 Thekkiniyath house, Chiyaram P.O 680026 Thrissur Kerala, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Shaji and (surname) Varghese. (#5917 05/09/2024)

## Track and field couple light up Paralympics, Olympics

Meet the Woodhalls; US double amputee propels prosthetic blades to gold



PARIS: In this handout photograph US' Hunter Woodhall celebrates winning the Para Athletics Men's 400m - T62 Final ahead of Germany's Johannes Floors and Netherlands' Olivier Hendriks at the Stade de France at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, in Paris. — AFP

PARIS: In the depths of the Stade de France, track and field's most charismatic couple were wearing their gold medals, leaning on each other and drinking it all in. One half of the duo, US double amputee sprinter Hunter Woodhall, had propelled his prosthetic blades to Paralympic gold in the T62 400 meters in Paris on Friday. Next to him, his wife Tara Davis-Woodhall, the Olympic women's long jump champion, was wearing sunglasses and a huge smile. It was the first Paralympic title of 25-year-old Woodhall's career - he won a bronze medal in the one-lap event at the Tokyo Games three years ago.

As soon as he crossed the line on Friday, Hunter ran to his wife trackside, just as she had done in a picture that went viral after her Olympic triumph on August 8, 2024 has been a year neither of them will ever forget. "I think this is a lesson in shooting for the stars and making big goals," said Hunter, his face still flushed after shedding tears of joy. "When we said this is what we wanted to do, a lot of people told us we were crazy. Every single day we just showed up, we did our best and this is the outcome." Tara, also 25, responded: "He took the words right out of my

mouth! I am pretty sure we both wrote down on our goals of the year, Paralympic gold and Olympic gold, and we have not stopped working since then.

"It has been honestly the craziest journey of our entire lives." What is striking about the Woodhalls is the obvious joy they take in each other's successes. "Tara has taught me a lot," Hunter said, who had recounted after he finished sixth in his 100m event earlier in these championships that his wife did speed work with him, running alongside him to hone his technique. Hunter was born with a fused right ankle and fibular hemimelia in his left leg. At 11 months old both his legs were amputated below the knee.

### 'Fix this'

Last year, in the para-athletic world championships, also in Paris, one of Hunter's prosthetic legs broke as he prepared to start the 400m. He was distraught. "From that moment, Tara looked at me, she said 'we're going to make changes, we're going to fix this'. That's what I did, I made sacrifices, I dialled in, I worked and made sure that would never happen again." The couple met at an indoor athletics meeting in Idaho in 2017. Hunter was leaving the track

when Tara walked over and said, "I don't know why, but I just feel like I need to give you a hug."

The exchanged messages on social media and met again a few months later and "started talking, non-stop," Tara said in a YouTube video. They kept up a long-distance relationship while both attended different universities but they married in 2022 -- and now they are inseparable. At the Olympics, their social media account "thewoodhalls", charting their preparations and their experiences in Paris, attracted tens of thousands new followers on Instagram and TikTok - they now have nearly 600,000 on the former and 260,000 on the latter. They have over 800,000 followers on their YouTube channel.

Their appeal is clear, and their social media following has attracted the kind of young audience that track and field craves in a world where - outside of the Olympics and Paralympics - it faces a battle for attention against so many other sports. "There are so many great kids coming up in the sport," Hunter said. "I think that is the greatest thing about having so much awareness of the Paralympics, is that we're going to continue to grow." For now though, the plans are clear: "Party!", said Tara. — AFP

### Paralympics medals table

PARIS: Medals table after the ninth day of competition at the Paris Paralympics:

(Top 15 nations only)				
	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
China	83	64	41	188
Great Britain	42	34	24	100
USA	31	36	19	86
Netherlands	24	14	10	48
Italy	20	13	30	63
France	17	24	24	65
Brazil	17	22	31	70
Ukraine	16	23	28	67
Australia	16	13	23	52
Japan	12	10	15	37
Germany	9	11	19	39
Uzbekistan	9	8	6	23
Canada	8	7	8	23
Spain	7	10	21	38
Poland	7	5	9	21



### Kuwait thump NZ in Continental Futsal Championship

KUALA LUMPUR: Kuwait's Futsal Blues defeated New Zealand's (NZ) Whites 8-3, securing the third place in the Continental Futsal Championship 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand, on Friday. The Blues maintained an eight-goal lead, built by Naser Alabann (3), Salman Albaujan (1), Abuaziz Borashed (1), Abuaziz Bu-Rashed (2), and Abdulaziz Almasam (1). Then Whites' Hamish Grey reduced the gap by two goals and Art Twigg added the final one. Kuwait's Fahad Al-Khawari won the best goalkeeper award of the friendly five-nation tournament - a preparatory stage for the 10th edition of FIFA Futsal World Cup, due in Uzbekistan between September 14, and October 6, 2024. — KUNA



### Double gold sends China back to top of Paralympic table

PARIS: Two victories in the space of 15 minutes on Friday helped China leapfrog Britain to the top of the medals table for Paralympic swimming. Guo Jincheng, who has no arms, swam a world record in the men's 50m butterfly S5. In the following race at the La Defense Arena, Lu Dong repeated the feat in the women's event on the penultimate day of competition in Paris.

Jincheng was joined on the podium by compatriots Yuan Weiyi and Wang Lichao, also helping China to continue to dominate the overall medal table — the Chinese had 83 golds at the end of competition on Friday, 41 more than closest overall challengers Britain. "I feel more stressed when I compete against my Chinese teammates," Jincheng said. "We all know each other, the details and everything. "The smallest thing could make me lose," he added.

Despite losing their lead in the swimming stakes, Britain had reason to cheer with four medals including gold for Poppy Maskill in the women's 100 S14 for athletes with an intellectual impairment. "I was a little bit annoyed because it's not a PB (personal best)," she said. "I am happy with the medal obviously, that's really cool and a great achievement. "I am slightly disappointed in the time because I know I can do better. But I tried my hardest," she added. The other highlight was Italian para swimming's poster boy Simone Barlaam claiming his second gold of Paris 2024.

He swam a European record in the 100m butterfly S9 for competitors with joint restrictions in one leg, double below-the-knee amputations or an amputation of one leg. Barlaam spent time in Paris as a teenager to receive treatment on his leg and the surgeon who saved his limb was in the stands to watch him in action on Friday. "Thinking that 12 or 13 years ago I go I was here in this very city, with him, in a very different location," Barlaam said. "It feels very surreal... I would have never imagined even in the best scenarios this kind of thing (would happen)." — AFP

