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PAGER BLASTS HIT HEZBOLLAH

Tens killed, thousands injured • Iranian envoy wounded • Hezb vows revenge as Zionists expand war

Palestine in focus as British envoy visits Kuwait Times, Kuwait News



KUWAIT: British Ambassador Belinda Lewis poses for a group photo with the Kuwait Times and Kuwait News team on Sept 17, 2024. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: During a visit to Kuwait Times and Kuwait News, British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis engaged in discussions focused on the Palestinian cause. The ambassador was warmly welcomed by Deputy Editors-in-Chief Dr Ziad Al-Alyan and Abdullah Boftain, along with the rest

of the team, including content creators Hussain Sana and Youssef Abu Ghazaleh, who emphasized Kuwait's consistent support for Gaza and the Palestinian people amidst the ongoing Zionist war.

They discussed the challenges faced by Palestinians and expressed concerns over inadequate international support, calling for more decisive actions

to secure a ceasefire. The tour of the newspaper highlighted Kuwait Times' long-standing commitment to covering the Palestinian struggle, including a visit to the archives where Abu Ghazaleh shared past publications, notably a 2012 edition commemorating Palestine's recognition as a non-member observer state by the UN. (See Page 3)



BEIRUT: An ambulance rushes wounded people to the American University of Beirut Medical Center on Sept 17, 2024 after pager explosions hit several Hezbollah strongholds around Lebanon. — AFP

BEIRUT: Hundreds of pagers used by Hezbollah members exploded across Lebanon Tuesday, killing at least eight people and wounding Tehran's ambassador in Beirut in blasts the Iran-backed militant group blamed on the Zionist entity. Pagers also exploded in Syria, killing at least seven people. Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah was not harmed in the spree of pager blasts, a senior Hezbollah source told Reuters on Tuesday.

There was no immediate comment from the Zionist military on the blasts, which came just hours after the Zionist entity announced it was broadening the aims of the war in Gaza to include its fight against Hezbollah along its border with Lebanon. Among the dead were the son of a Hezbollah lawmaker and the 10-year-old daughter of a member of the group. The girl

was killed when her father's pager exploded as she was standing beside him, her family and a source close to Hezbollah said.

Hezbollah blamed the Zionist entity for the blasts and warned it would be punished. "We hold the (Zionist) enemy fully responsible for this criminal aggression," the group said in a statement, adding that the Zionist entity "will certainly receive its just punishment for this sinful aggression". Health Minister Firass Abiad said 2,750 people had been injured by exploding pagers — "more than 200 of them critically".

Iranian state television reported that Tehran's ambassador in Beirut Mojtaba Amani suffered "superficial" injuries in one of the explosions. The afternoon blasts hit several Hezbollah strongholds across Lebanon, in

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Student elections suspended

KUWAIT: A decision to indefinitely suspend student elections at universities and colleges was taken by the Government Universities Council at a meeting attended by Education Minister Nader Al-Jallal on Monday. The ban came after student elections allegedly turned into tribal and sectarian disputes, threatening to divide the society. The Universities Council said the decision came after the student union movement witnessed a "deviation" from its original goals, signaling that the election process has ceased to serve the public interests of Kuwaiti students and "no longer helps to strengthen the democratic principles".

Instagram rolls out teen accounts

SAN FRANCISCO: Meta on Tuesday announced the creation of "Teen Accounts", designed to better protect underage users from the dangers associated with Instagram. Under the new policy, users aged 13 to 15 will have private accounts by default, with tighter safeguards on who can contact them and what content they can see. Teens who want a public profile and fewer restrictions — because they want to become influencers, for example — will need to obtain permission from their parents. Under-18 Instagram users will be notified to close the app after 60 minutes each day. The accounts will also come with a default sleep mode that will silence notifications overnight. — Agencies

Traffic jams return along with students

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Traffic clogged the streets of Kuwait on Tuesday with the return of nearly 500,000 students to private Arabic and public schools. Many parents arrived early to drop off their children, attempting to avoid delays on their way to work, but the extra commute time during the school season significantly lengthens their day. Teachers also expressed frustration, requesting the reinstatement of flexible work hours, which previously helped them avoid peak traffic.

The peak traffic hours, from 6:30 to 8 am and 1 to 3 pm, saw heavy grid-

locks, which residents say is a recurring issue. However, some parents observed improvements in traffic management, with police controlling U-turns. Observers have cited synchronized school and work hours as a major factor behind the congestion on the roads, calling for better public transportation rather than temporary fixes like using safety lanes. Other suggestions included staggering school and work hours and relocating schools to less crowded areas.

After first graders returned to school on Monday, elementary, middle and high school students began the new academic year on Tuesday after the summer break, with kindergartens set to welcome students on Wednesday. According to official figures, a total of 497,206 students are enrolled in public and private Arabic schools, including 29,637 kindergartners, 149,316 elementary students, 127,548 middle schoolers and 92,564 high school students. (See Page 2)



KUWAIT: Vehicles are stuck in a traffic jam on the first full day of school on Sept 17, 2024. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

UN chief condemns 'collective punishment' of Palestinians

UNITED NATIONS: Nothing justifies the Zionist entity's collective punishment of the people of Gaza as they endure "unimaginable" suffering, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told AFP on Monday. Guterres lashed out at the Zionist entity's handling of its war in the devastated Palestinian territory, now almost in its second year, as the UN prepares to host world leaders starting next week.

"It is unimaginable, the level of suffering in Gaza, the level of deaths and destruction have no parallel in everything I've witnessed since (becoming)

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GAZA: A Palestinian man carries the body of a child killed in Zionist strikes on the Bureij refugee camp at the Al-Awda Hospital at the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip on Sept 17, 2024. — AFP



Local

Zain partners with joint awareness campaign for new academic year

In collaboration with Ministries of Interior, Education and Information

KUWAIT: Zain announces a community partnership with the joint awareness campaign for the new school year 2024-2025. This initiative comes in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Information, and Center for Government Communication. The campaign aims to instill national identity, promote the values of education, and raise students' awareness of security and traffic safety across all grade levels.

The campaign represents a successful collaboration between public and private sector organizations, aimed at achieving shared community goals. This is especially evident in its focus on supporting education, a key driver of societal growth and prosperity, and a vital contributor to building Kuwait's future. Zain is committed to aligning with national plans and initiatives to promote social development, recognizing the private sector's crucial role in supporting public institutions to ensure sustainable growth across various essential sectors. This commitment is reflected in the numerous partnerships Zain has formed with public institutions over the years, which have led to many successful joint initiatives.

The campaign seeks to deliver a range of positive messages to students, including fostering national identity, expressing love and loyalty to Kuwait, respecting the national flag, promoting the importance of education, highlighting the role of teachers and valuing their efforts, encouraging discipline and adherence to laws, preparing students mentally for the school year, and enhancing security and traffic awareness to ensure student safety.

As part of this initiative, during the first week of the new school year, Zain visited several elementary, middle, and high schools across various governor-



Zain's team with Mol officials during a school visit.

ates. The visits aimed to welcome students, distribute gifts and school supplies, and motivate them to approach the academic year with a positive mindset, aligned with the campaign's core values. This campaign will run throughout the academic year, targeting not only students but also engaging parents and teachers to maximize its positive impact. It includes awareness seminars, distribution of educational ma-

terials, training programs, and the use of social media and other channels to amplify the campaign's messages and values.

As a key partner, Zain will build on its previous initiatives, particularly those focused on child protection, children's rights, and online safety, to add value to the campaign's content. This aligns with Zain's broader efforts to support and protect chil-

dren. Zain firmly believes that children and youth are the foundation of society. To safeguard them in the digital age, the company has developed strategies to mitigate risks associated with technology, integrating this focus into its operations. As part of its commitment to meaningful connectivity, Zain continues to raise public awareness on critical issues such as online child safety.

Kyrgyzstan president Japarov lauds Kuwaiti charitable initiatives

BISHKEK: Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov has praised the initiatives of the Kuwaiti Al-Safa Charity and Humanitarian Society, which contributed to improving people's living conditions and development in his country. In a press statement during his reception with the society's "Partners in Goodness 16" trip, Japarov expressed appreciation for Al-Safa's support for educational and social projects, especially in rural areas, pointing out the importance of these initiatives that contribute to the economic and social development in Kyrgyzstan.

In turn, Al-Safa's Chairman, Mohammad Al-Shaya, said in a statement that the trip in Kyrgyzstan, which began on September 8, saw the opening of major health projects across the republic. He explained that the trip witnessed the opening of 16 projects, including a hospital for endocrine and dialysis, Al-Razi Emergency Hospital, in addition to the integrated endowment village of Fahad Al-Nafisi and Ghazi Al-Nafisi, consisting of 100 houses, a mosque, and a football field. The Society also established a major water station and 10 water networks to benefit more than a quarter of a million people, in addition to three mosques and a center for memorizing the Holy Quran. — KUNA

Legislations in line with human rights treaties: Ministry

KUWAIT: Minister of Justice Dr Mohammad Al-Wasmi has affirmed Kuwait's keenness on harmonizing the national legislation with commitments toward international human rights treaties. Al-Wasmi, also the Minister of Al-Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, alluded in particular to the convention Kuwait has joined in the fields of human rights, renouncing torture, and other accords that condemn cruel and inhumane treatment and penalty, as stipulated in the Decree-Law 93/2024.

The minister, in a press statement, indicated that substituting provision 53 of Law 31/1970, amending some articles of the penal code 16/1960, aimed at boosting human rights and basic rights, as enshrined by the State of Kuwait Constitution. Moreover, he indicated that the modification was the fruit of coordination between the ministries of justice and foreign affairs. — KUNA

Elementary, middle, high school students begin new academic year

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education opened its doors to elementary, middle, and high school students on Tuesday as the new academic year began efficiently after summer break, while kindergarten schools are set to welcome their students on Wednesday. According to official figures, a total of 497,206 students have enrolled in public education and private Arabic schools, including 29,637 kindergartners, 149,316 elementary students, 127,548 middle school students, and 92,564 high school students attending government schools.

Minister inspects schools

Meanwhile, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Acting Minister of Education Dr. Nader Al-Jallal made an inspection tour that included a number of public schools to follow up on the start of the new academic year. The minister congratulated the students on the occasion of their return to school, saying that "the beginning of the school year is a new opportunity for achievement and excellence, in which



KUWAIT: Roads across Kuwait witnessed traffic jams on September 17, 2024 on the first day of school after summer holidays. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait confronts traffic congestion as students head back to school

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Early this morning, Kuwait's streets were heavily congested, as anticipated with the return of around 5,000 students heading back to private Arabic and government schools. Parents, well aware of this recurring issue, have been spotted arriving early at schools to drop off their children, hoping to reach their offices on time afterward. Some residents in Kuwait view this situation as a hopeless case. Hany Hafez, an expat working at the Ministry of Health, said, "I've been in Kuwait for 30 years, and have witnessed this problem happening every year without being resolved."

He particularly pointed to the peak hours of the day, which are from 6:30 am to around 8 am, and from 1 pm to 3 pm when the roads are completely blocked. However, some residents have acknowledged the efforts of the Ministry of Interior. Ahmad Sami, a parent dropping off his children at school, said, "I've noticed a significant improvement in traffic management this year." Another parent with a child enrolled in an Arabic school, like Safaa, observed police vehicles blocking U-turns during peak hours to ease congestion and enhance traffic flow.

Using busses instead

One of the main reasons behind the traffic problem, according to Salma Othman, a student counselor at one of the Arabic schools, is that "everyone seems to be trying to get out at the same time," referring to

parents and employees rushing to reach the schools and their workplaces at the same time. At the school where she works, Othman, who is also a mother of school children, mentioned that the elementary phase alone has around 1,000 students, most of whom are dropped off in their parents' private cars.

Dr Ibrahim Dashti, political analyst and former MP candidate, believes that "decision-makers in Kuwait lack comprehensive strategies for addressing traffic problems." He said that the temporary solutions, such as using safety lanes during heavy traffic, are no longer sufficient. Instead, he highlighted the need for core changes, including improved public transportation options like trains, subways, and buses. He also points out that many countries, such as Turkey, use buses that can accommodate up to 30 students. "Using such buses can reduce the number of cars on the road. Investing in these buses, which should be equipped with cameras and GPS for tracking, is worth it," he said. Tackling the issue from this perspective, as he believes, is far more cost-effective than the current piecemeal approaches involving fixing roads and building bridges.

Staggering school and work hours

While the school counselor agreed that using the school bus could help reduce traffic congestion, she noted that many families who live nearby avoid spending extra on bus fees. On the other hand, Safaa said she avoids using the school bus because it takes too long to pick up children from different areas, often taking around an hour to reach the school. Hafez added that the traffic congestion is even worse in front of schools because many parents line up in "second, third, and fourth lanes to drop off their children."

He suggested staggering school hours from work hours, for example, starting school an hour after the work-

day begins for employees in both the public and private sectors. Mahmoud, another expat added, "the problem has been around for years, so it's hard to find a solution to it." However, he suggested, "It would be better if they moved the schools to more open areas instead of having 10 or 15 schools packed into one small neighborhood," referring to the congested area of Hawally.

Flexible hours system

Teachers also expressed concerns, having previously benefited from a flexible hours system that allowed them to leave half an hour early if they arrived half an hour earlier. Now, they are calling for the return of this system. "Currently, all teachers leave at the same time as the students. As teachers, we are asking for the return of flexible hours — we want to get home earlier," said Shrouk, a teacher at a private school. Another teacher added, "The flexible hours system used to make it easier for us to arrive and leave the school, and it helped reduce the congestion."

Regarding how most of the people cope with the problem, Mahmoud mentioned that leaving early from home is the best solution, which many parents also agree on. "I leave my house at 6:15 am, while my work starts at 8 am. First, I drop off my kids at school and, with great difficulty, manage to get out of the school area," said another parent. Others, whose road trip usually takes 10 minutes or 30 minutes to reach their workplaces, said that during the academic season, the time doubles, which takes a long portion of their day.



Dr Ibrahim Dashti



KUWAIT: Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Acting Minister of Education, Dr Nader Al-Jallal and other officials are pictured during an inspection tour.

hopes and ambitions are renewed and the seeds of knowledge and science are planted that will bear fruit in a promising future for our children."

He stressed the importance of exploiting available capabilities for exploration and learning to develop students' skills and abilities because they are the pillar of the future and the hope of the nation. He praised the efforts of the sectors concerned with the preparations process in the Ministry, which worked tirelessly during the past period to ensure schools are ready to receive students. — KUNA



Students return to school.





British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis, Kuwait Times and Kuwait News teams pose for a group photo. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait Times, Kuwait News affirm consistent and strong stance in support of Palestinians

British Ambassador visits Kuwait Times and Kuwait News



British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis speaks with Kuwait Times reporter Passant Hisham (left) and content creator Yousef Abu Ghazaleh (right).



Ambassador Lewis visits the archives.

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis visited the offices of Kuwait Times and Kuwait News on Tuesday where she was warmly welcomed by Deputy Editors-in-Chief Dr Ziad Al-Alyan, Abdullah Boftain, and the rest of the team. During the visit, Kuwait Times highlighted the strong and consistent stance of both the team and Kuwait in support of Gaza and the Palestinian people. Content creators Hussain Sana and Yousef Abu Ghazaleh engaged with Ambassador Lewis in an insightful discussion about the ongoing Zionist war in Gaza, highlighting the challenges faced by the Palestinian people and expressing concerns over the insufficient international support and the need for more decisive actions towards a ceasefire beyond the current negotiations.

Jana Alnaqeeb, PR and CSR Manager, provided the ambassador with a tour of the newspaper's departments, from the editorial team, responsible for news reporting and content curation, to the social media department, where the ambassador saw how the paper stays relevant in today's fast-paced media world. The visit to the printing press demonstrated the technical side of daily production, while the studio showed the paper's venture into multimedia content.

The tour concluded with a visit to the archives room, led by Abu Ghazaleh, which reflected Kuwait Times' long history of covering critical milestones in the Palestinian struggle. He shared remarkable past publications, including the November 2012 edition with the headline "Palestine Wins UN birth certificate", commemorating Palestine's historic recognition as a non-member observer state by the United Nations General Assembly.



British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis (left) chats with Kuwait Times Deputy Editor-in-Chief Abdullah Boftain (right) and Kuwait Times PR and CSR Manager Jana Alnaqeeb.



British Ambassador and Deputy Editor-in-Chief Dr Ziad Al-Alyan tour the printing press.



British Ambassador checks Kuwait Times' first edition.



British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis discusses with Kuwait Times and Kuwait News teams.



Ambassador Lewis tours the old printing press turned artistic warehouse (left) and the editorial newsroom (right).





Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub praises the role of the Kuwaiti Red Crescent Society. — KUNA

Palestinian envoy praises KRCS' humanitarian efforts

KUWAIT: The Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait, Rami Tahboub, has commended the Kuwait Red Crescent Society's (KRCS) humanitarian and relief efforts and praised the society's continuous work to deliver aid to the Palestinians. In a statement to KUNA following his meeting with KRCS Secretary General Maha Al-Barjas, Tahboub emphasized the role played by the society and highlighted that the KRCS was among the first responders to provide various humanitarian aid to Palestine.

Tahboub noted that KRCS has been actively involved since the beginning of the crisis, assisting thousands of displaced individuals and addressing their urgent needs. The ambassador applauded KRCS' coordination with Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and the Palestinian Ministry of Health, lauding their efforts to alleviate the burden on the displaced Palestinians, the sick, and the wounded. He also affirmed the commitment of the Palestinian Embassy in Kuwait and the KRCS to maintaining communication and coordination regarding humanitarian and relief efforts for Palestine.

Tahboub highlighted the widespread devastation in Gaza, which affected food supplies, healthcare, and education, urging the continuation of relief efforts in light of severe shortages in medicine, vaccines, food, shelter, and clean water. The meeting also reviewed the urgent humanitarian needs and discussed the KRCS's aid programs across various sectors. On her part, Maha Al-Barjas reaffirmed Kuwait's unwavering stance in supporting the Palestinian people in all international forums, and she added that the urgent aid provided by the KRCS affirms this position.

Al-Barjas added that the KRCS has implemented numerous emergency relief projects in Gaza, including food, medical, and essential supplies, as well as ambulances, medical equipment, shelter, and a field hospital, among other critical needs. She emphasized that Kuwait would continue to support humanitarian efforts in line with its consistent foreign policy of providing aid to all countries in need. Al-Barjas also emphasized the importance of coordination among the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to enhance relief efforts for displaced Palestinians, especially given the dire conditions facing the elderly, women, and children, which demands greater assistance from all parties involved. — KUNA

Burgan Bank shares vital safety tips against phishing, scamming threats

Bank upholds its committed support for 'Let's Be Aware' Diraya campaign

KUWAIT: In conjunction with the back-to-school season and the growing financial responsibilities that accompany it, Burgan Bank renewed its efforts to raise awareness about safe banking practices and financial literacy as part of its ongoing support for the "Let's Be Aware" (Diraya) awareness campaign – running for its fourth year under the supervision of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA), with the support of Kuwaiti banks.

The latest awareness campaign shed light on some of the most common phishing attacks and online scams, as well as the security measures that all customers must adopt to guarantee the safety of their personal information, bank accounts, and hard-earned savings. The Bank's continued support of the Diraya campaign comes as part of its comprehensive social responsibility program and its commitment to advancing Kuwaiti society and domestic economy.

"The ever-speeding technological advancements that we are witnessing today have undoubtedly added a lot of ease and convenience to our everyday lives; however, they have also brought upon us new means of fraud and theft that we must remain vigilant about to avoid becoming scam vic-



Kholoud AlFeeli

tim," said Kholoud Al-Feeli, Deputy General Manager – Marketing and Communication at Burgan Bank.

"While we spare no effort to deploy the latest cybersecurity technologies and data protection systems, the safety of our customers' bank accounts can still be compromised if they unknowingly cooperate with a scammer. That's why we advise all customers, especially if they regularly use their card for making online purchases, to stay alert and always follow the recommended safety precautions."

Burgan Bank noted that, with the rise and growing access to AI tools, scammers are now more adept at drafting seemingly professional emails and text messages that may be hard to identify as fraudulent. That's why the Bank warns against clicking any hyperlinks included in emails or text messages from unknown senders. Unverified links can often trick

users into downloading malware that jeopardizes the safety of their personal information. Meanwhile, other scams are carried out by replicating popular websites, giving the illusion of safety, and then stealing users' personal and banking information.

Similarly, the Bank warned against making purchases from unknown websites, especially if the price seems significantly below the market average. In addition to luring victims with phantom products or services at remarkably low prices, deceptive vendors can also deploy unsecured payment portals intended for stealing banking card information.

Burgan reminded its customers that its representatives would never collect or request to update data via phone, text, or email and that customers should never respond to such requests. Another vital safety precaution is abstaining from sharing the one-time password (OTP) with anyone under any circumstances, reminding customers that the OTP is for personal use only. Burgan Bank urges/encourages customers to report any fraud attempts as swiftly as possible to minimize potential damage. To report fraud, customers can get in touch with the Burgan contact center at 1804080, send a WhatsApp message to +965 1804080, or email at info@burgan.com.



Participants attend the training workshop. — KUNA photos

MoH, WHO launch workshop to monitor respiratory illnesses

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health launched on Monday, in cooperation with the UN's World Health Organization (WHO), a workshop through the EMFLU Platform to monitor winter respiratory illnesses. Director of the Public Health Department, Dr Fahad Al-Ghamlas, stated in the opening speech that the workshop focuses on monitoring and controlling respiratory illness cases and classifying them using the organization's electronic monitoring platform, EMFLU.

He pointed out that the workshop is intended for the medical staff in the emergency department, indicating that health experts and engineers from



Director of Public Health Department at the Ministry of Health, Dr Fahad Al-Ghamlas

the Ministry and WHO will provide an explanation on the digital system (EMFLU) and the developed monitoring system (EMFLU-2). He explained that the workshop identifies the latest developments and recommendations to prevent infectious respi-



Dr Hamad Al-Bass



Representative of the WHO Regional Office for the Middle East, Dr Hala Ab

ratory diseases, with the aim of monitoring these cases and reducing the rate of infection and death. The workshop coincides with the ministry's campaign to vaccinate against winter respiratory illnesses, he added. — KUNA



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People tour the exhibition booths. — KUNA photos

MoH marks World Patient Safety Day

KUWAIT: Director of the Medical Department at the Kuwait Center for Mental Health, Dr Ammar Al-Sayegh, said that the World Patient Safety Day would be a great opportunity to raise awareness and improve patient safety. Dr Al-Sayegh explained, in a statement to KUNA on Tuesday, that this year's celebration focuses on the theme 'Improving Diagnosis for Patient Safety' and aims to highlight the importance of correct and appropriate diagnosis to ensure patient safety and improve public health.

He pointed out that the celebration confirms the commitment of the Ministry of Health to develop patient safety policies and procedures in all health institutions, based on the Ministry's vision that seeks to ensure that all members of society receive safe and high-quality health care. Dr Al-Sayegh noted that diagnostic safety can be greatly improved by using advanced health technology and addressing structural problems and human error factors that can lead to diagnostic errors, pointing out that the development of laboratory tests may help in diagnosing mental illnesses. — KUNA



Director of the Medical Department at the Kuwait Center for Mental Health Dr Ammar Al-Sayegh





Modi's opponent
Kejriwal quits

Azerbaijan stifles climate activists ahead of COP29

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WEST PALM BEACH: Law enforcement officials work at the crime scene outside the Trump International Golf Club in West Palm Beach, Florida, on September 16, 2024. — AFP

Trump gunman waited in hiding for 12 hours: Official

Suspect Ryan Routh charged with two gun-related crimes ; motive remains unclear

WASHINGTON: A man suspected of hiding for nearly 12 hours in an apparent attempt to assassinate Donald Trump at his Florida golf course was charged with two gun-related crimes on Monday, a day after authorities say he was spotted in the bushes with a rifle as the former US president played nearby.

The suspect never had the Republican presidential candidate for the November 5 election in his line of sight and did not fire any shots. But the incident raised questions about how an armed man was able to get so close to Trump, just two months after another gunman grazed his ear with a bullet during a July 13 rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. Trump's visit to his golf course in West Palm Beach was not on his public schedule, acting US Secret Service Director Ronald Rowe told reporters on Monday afternoon, and it was not clear whether the suspect knew Trump would be there.

The Secret Service opened fire after an agent sweeping the course saw a rifle barrel poking out of the bushes a few hundred yards away from the former president, who was on the fairway of the fifth hole. "All of a sudden we heard shots being fired in the air. I guess probably four or five," Trump said during an event on X Spaces. "Secret Service knew immediately it was bullets, and they grabbed me. ... We got into the cars and we moved along pretty, pretty good. I was with an agent, and the agent did a fantastic job."

While praising the Secret Service agents, he added: "We do need more people on my detail." The gunman fled in a sports utility vehicle, according to

court papers on Monday. Officers found a loaded assault-style rifle with a scope, a digital camera and a plastic bag of food left behind.

A suspect, identified on Monday as Ryan Routh, 58, was arrested about 40 minutes later driving north on Interstate 95. The license plate on his vehicle had been reported stolen from another car. Records show a phone associated with Routh was located at the golf course starting at 1:59 am on Sunday morning, 11-1/2 hours before the incident.

The suspect was on the "public side" of a fence along the golf course's boundary, Rowe said. Routh was the subject of a 2019 tip to the FBI alleging that he was a convicted felon who illegally possessed a firearm. Jeffrey Veltri, the agent in charge of the FBI's Miami field office, told reporters. The complainant was unable to verify the information when the FBI investigated the tip, Veltri said.

Gun charges

Routh made a brief appearance in federal court in West Palm Beach on Monday, where he was charged with possession of a firearm as a convicted felon and possession of a firearm with an obliterated serial number. More charges could follow. The defendant invoked his right to an attorney when investigators sought to question him, Rowe said.

In 2002, Routh pleaded guilty in North Carolina to possession of an unregistered fully automatic gun, defined in state law as a weapon of mass destruction,

according to the county district attorney's office, and was sentenced to probation. He was also convicted of possessing stolen goods in 2010.

Trump's campaign schedule will remain unchanged, according to a source with knowledge of the matter. Trump blamed President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic presidential candidate, for the apparent assassination attempt. He claimed the suspected gunman was acting on Democrats' "highly inflammatory language," though authorities have not yet offered evidence of any motive. "Their rhetoric is causing me to be shot at, when I am the one who is going to save the country, and they are the ones that are destroying the country - both from the inside and out," he said, according to Fox.

Democrats including Biden have repeatedly called Trump a danger to democracy, citing among other things his refusal to acknowledge his 2020 election defeat, which inspired the January 6, 2021, assault on the US Capitol. Trump himself repeatedly uses incendiary rhetoric and false statements about his political opponents and, recently, Haitian immigrants.

Both Biden and Harris decried the incident, and Biden also spoke with Trump on Monday. "President Biden just spoke with former President Trump and conveyed his relief that he is safe. The two shared a cordial conversation and former President Trump expressed his thanks for the call," the White House said in a statement. Trump, in a statement, called it a "very nice call." — Reuters

UN members debate call for end to Zionist occupation of Palestine

UNITED NATIONS: UN member states debated Tuesday a push by the Palestinians to formally demand an end to the Zionist occupation of the Palestinian territories within 12 months. The text, which has faced fierce criticism from the Zionist entity, is based around an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice calling the entity's occupation since 1967 "unlawful." "(The Zionist entity) is under an obligation to bring to an end its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as rapidly as possible," read the opinion, requested by the General Assembly.

In response, Arab countries called for a special session of the assembly just days before dozens of heads of state and government descend on the UN headquarters this month to address the kick off of this year's General Assembly session. "The idea is you want to use the pressure of the international community in the General Assembly and the pressure of the historic ruling by the ICJ to force (the Zionist entity) to change its behavior," said Palestinian Ambassador to the UN Riyad Mansour Monday, acknowledging the draft resolution had "shocked many countries."

The draft resolution, which was expected to be voted on late Tuesday or Wednesday, "demands that (the entity) brings to an end without delay its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory," and that this be done "no later than 12 months from the adoption." The first draft text gave only six months. The Zionist entity firmly rejected the resolution on Tuesday. "We gather here to watch the Palestinians' UN circus — a circus where evil is righteous, war is peace, murder is justified," said the entity's ambassador to the UN Danny Danon. "How dare you continue this tradition of passing one-sided resolutions against (the Zionist entity)."

The draft resolution — which would be non-binding — also "demands" the withdrawal of Zionist forces from the Palestinian territories, a halt to new settlements, the return of seized land and property, and the possibility of return for displaced Palestinians. A paragraph calling on member states to halt arms exports to "disappeared from the draft text during negotiations, however. "The Palestinians want to live — not survive. They want to be safe in their homes," said Mansour Tuesday, kicking off the debate on the first resolution ever introduced by the Palestinians. "How many more Palestinians need to be killed before change finally takes place to stop this inhumanity?"

The ICJ opinion was "a historic opinion as this was the first time the court examined the (Zionist) occupation as a whole," Mansour said. While the Security Council is largely paralyzed on the Gaza issue — with the United States repeatedly vetoing censures of its ally the Zionist entity — the General Assembly has adopted several texts in support of Palestinian civilians amid the current war. In May the assembly overwhelmingly supported a largely symbolic resolution on full Palestinian membership of the UN, garnering 143 votes in favor, nine against with 25 abstentions. The push had previously been vetoed by Washington at the Security Council. — AFP

Drug-resistant superbugs to kill 39 million by 2050

PARIS: Infections of drug-resistant superbugs are projected to kill nearly 40 million people over the next 25 years, a global analysis predicted on Monday, with the researchers urging action to avoid this grim scenario. Superbugs — strains of bacteria or pathogens that have become resistant to antibiotics, making them much harder to treat — have been recognized as a rising threat to global health.

The analysis has been billed as the first research to track the global impact of superbugs over time and to estimate what could happen next. More than a million people died from the superbugs — also called antimicrobial resistance (AMR) — per year across the world between 1990 and 2021, according to the GRAM study in The Lancet journal.

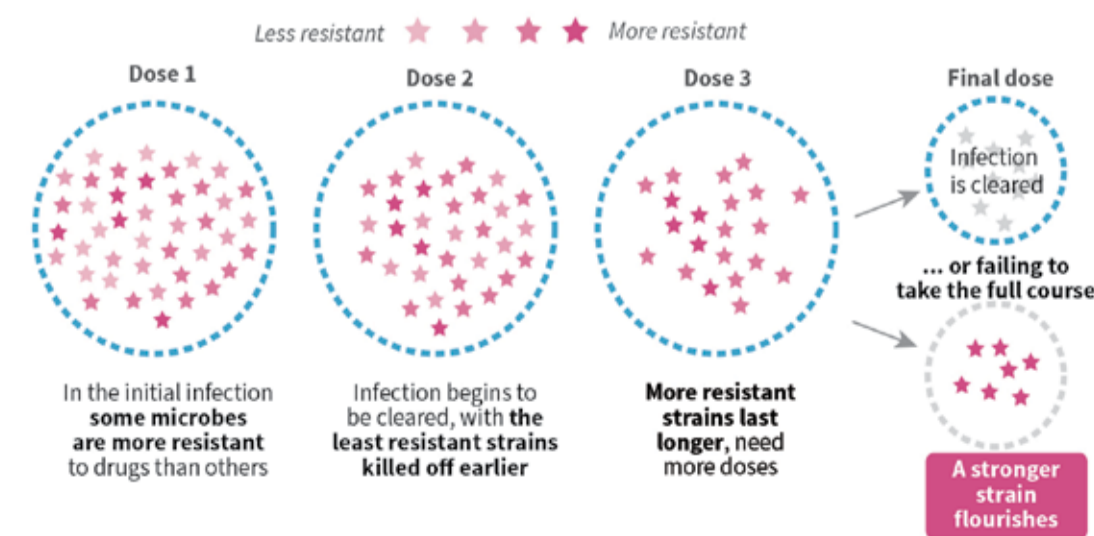
Deaths among children under five from superbugs actually fell by more than 50 percent over the last three decades, the study said, due to improving measures to prevent and control infections for infants. However, when children now catch superbugs, the infections are much harder to treat. And deaths of over-70s have surged by more than 80 percent over the same period, as an ageing population became more vulnerable to infection.

Deaths from infections of MRSA, a type of staph bacteria that has become resistant to many antibiotics, doubled to 130,000 in 2021 from three decades earlier, the study said. The researchers used modelling to estimate that, based on current trends, the number of direct deaths from AMR would rise by 67 percent to reach nearly two million a year by 2050. It would also play a role in a further 8.2 million annual deaths, a jump of nearly 75 percent, according to the modelling.

Superbug evolution: incomplete treatment

How use of antimicrobials can give rise to antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

► An incomplete treatment course can allow the strongest bugs to thrive



Threat to modern medicine

Under this scenario, AMR will have directly killed 39 million people over the next quarter century and contributed to a total of 169 million deaths, it added. But less dire scenarios are also possible. If the world works to improve care for severe infections and access to antimicrobial drugs, it could save the lives of 92 million people by 2050, the modelling suggested.

The researchers looked at 22 pathogens, 84 combinations of drugs and pathogens, and 11 infectious syndromes such as meningitis. The study involved data from 520 million individual records across 204 countries and territories. "These findings highlight

that AMR has been a significant global health threat for decades and that this threat is growing," said study co-author Mohsen Naghavi of the US-based Institute of Health Metrics. Jeremy Knox, infectious disease policy head at the UK-based health charity the Wellcome Trust, warned that the effects of rising AMR rates would be felt across the world. — AFP

"An increasing AMR burden at the scale described in the GRAM report would represent a steady undermining of modern medicine as we know it, as the antibiotics we rely upon to keep common medical interventions safe and routine could lose their effectiveness," Knox told AFP. — AFP

International

'Virus hunters' track threats to head off next pandemic

Studying emerging diseases increasingly necessary as climate change exacerbates spread

BANGKOK: A global network of doctors and laboratories is working to pinpoint emerging viral threats, including many driven by climate change, in a bid to head off the world's next pandemic. The coalition of self-described "virus hunters" has uncovered everything from an unusual tick-borne disease in Thailand to a surprise outbreak in Colombia of an infection spread by midges. "The roster of things that we have to worry about, as we saw with COVID-19, is not static," said Gavin Cloherty, an infectious disease expert who heads the Abbott Pandemic Defense Coalition. "We have to be very vigilant about how the bad guys that we know about are changing ... But also, if there's new kids on the block," he told AFP.

The coalition brings together doctors and scientists at universities and health institutions across the world, with funding from healthcare and medical devices giant Abbott. By uncovering new threats, the coalition gives Abbott a potential head start in designing the kinds of testing kits that were central to the COVID-19 response. And its involvement gives the coalition deep pockets and the ability to detect and sequence but also respond to new viruses. "When we find something, we're able to very quickly make diagnostic



CHAMPENOUX: An adult tick (right) is pictured beside a nymph (young tick) (left) in a laboratory in eastern France. — AFP

tests at industry level," Cloherty said. "The idea is to ringfence an outbreak, so that we would be able to hopefully prevent a pandemic." The coalition has sequenced approximately 13,000 samples since it began operating in 2021. In Colombia, it found an outbreak of Oropouche, a virus spread by midges and mosquitoes, that had rarely been seen there before. Phylogenetic

work to trace the strain's family tree revealed it came from Peru or Ecuador, rather than Brazil, another hotspot. "You can see where things are moving from. It's important from a public health perspective," said Cloherty.

Difficult and costly
More recently, the coalition worked with

doctors in Thailand to reveal that a tick-borne virus was behind a mysterious cluster of patient cases. "At the time, we didn't know what virus caused this syndrome," explained Pakpoom Phoompong, associate professor of infectious disease at Siriraj Hospital. Testing and sequencing of samples that dated back as far as 2014 found many were positive for severe fever with thrombocytopenia syndrome (SFTSV).

"Less than 10 patients had (previously) been diagnosed with SFTSV in Thailand ... we don't have PCR diagnosis, we don't have serology for this viral infection diagnosis," Pakpoom told AFP. Diagnosing it "is difficult, labor intensive and also is costly". And there is a growing need to track these threats as climate change expands the range of infectious diseases globally.

The link between climate change and infectious disease is well-established and multi-faceted. Warmer conditions allow vectors like mosquitoes to live in new locations, more rain creates more breeding pools, and extreme weather forces people into the open where they are more vulnerable to bites. Human impact on the planet is also driving the spread and evolution of infectious disease in other ways: biodiversity loss forces viruses to evolve into new hosts

and can push animals into closer contact with humans.

'You have to be vigilant'

Phylogenetic analysis of the SFTSV strain in Thailand gives a snapshot of the complex interplay. It showed the virus had evolved from one tick with a smaller geographic range into the harder Asian long horned tick. The analysis suggested its evolution was driven largely by pesticide use that reduced the numbers of the original tick host.

Once the virus evolved, it could spread further in part because Asian long horned ticks can live on birds, which are travelling further and faster because of changing climate conditions. "It's almost like they're an airline," said Cloherty. Climate change's fingerprints are in everything from record outbreaks of dengue in Latin America and the Caribbean to the spread of West Nile Virus in the United States.

While the coalition grew from work that preceded the pandemic, the global spread of COVID-19 offered a potent reminder of the risks of infectious disease. But Cloherty fears people are already forgetting those lessons. "You have to be vigilant," he said. "Something that happens in Bangkok could be happening in Boston tomorrow." — AFP

Azerbaijan stifles climate activists ahead of COP29

BAKU: Azerbaijani rights defender and climate advocate Anar Mammadli was picking up his son from kindergarten when police arrested him in front of the children. His arrest was one of the latest in a series which critics say undermines the oil-rich nation's credibility as a host of the United Nations COP29 climate change conference in November. Mammadli has been locked up since April 29 and risks up to eight years behind bars on smuggling charges human rights groups say are "bogus".

He and activist Bashir Suleymanli had formed a civil society group called Climate of Justice Initiative. The organization set out to promote environmental justice in the tightly controlled Caspian nation. Suleymanli told AFP that the group "was forced to close under government pressure even before it began raising awareness of environmental issues".

"We have no platform through which we could be heard — not to mention the fact that we will not be able to stage protests during COP29," he said. International rights groups, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have denounced Mammadli's prosecution on "bogus" charges and demanded his release. Amnesty said it was part of a "continuing crackdown on civil society activists" ahead of COP29.



Activist Kenan Khalilzade

'Harsh measures'

In the streets of Baku, roads are being repaired and buildings getting fresh coats of paint as authorities add luster to the capital in preparation for hosting thousands of foreign guests during COP29, which runs from November 11 to 22. International rights groups have urged the UN and Council of Europe rights watchdog to "use the momentum of COP29" to "put an end to the persecution of critical voices" in Azerbaijan.

But rather than an easing of repression, Kenan Khalilzade of the Baku-based Ecofront ecological group said the run-up to COP29 has seen more government pressure on activists. He said he was briefly detained last year during an anti-pollution protest in the remote village of Soyudlu in the country's west-ern Gadabay region.

"This is historic. A milestone few saw coming 10 years ago," OFV director Oyvind Solberg Thorsen said in a statement. "The electrification of the fleet of passenger cars is going quickly, and Norway is thereby rapidly moving towards becoming the first country in the world with a passenger car fleet dominated by electric cars," Thorsen said.

The speed at which Norway's car fleet is being renewed "suggests that in 2026 we will have more electric cars than diesel cars," he said. "As far as I know, no other country in the world is in the same situation" with EVs outnumbering petrol cars, he told AFP.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), electric vehicles made up just 3.2 percent of the global car fleet in 2023 — 4.1 percent in France, 7.6 percent in China, 18 percent in Iceland — with this data including rechargeable hybrid cars, unlike the Norwegian data. Norway, paradoxically a major oil and gas

tacks to include its fight against Hezbollah along its border with Lebanon. To date, the Zionist entity's objectives have been to crush Hamas and bring home the captives seized by Palestinian fighters during the Oct 7 attacks.

"The political-security cabinet updated the goals of the war this evening, so that they include the following section: the safe return of the residents of the north to their homes," Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said in a statement. Since October, the unabating exchanges of fire between Zionist troops and Hamas ally Hezbollah in Lebanon have forced tens of thousands of people on both sides of the border to flee their homes.

Not formally declared as a war, the exchanges of fire between Zionists troops and Hezbollah have killed hundreds in Lebanon and dozens on the Zionist side. Hezbollah had instructed its members to avoid mobile phones after the Gaza war began and to rely instead on its own telecommunications system to prevent Zionist breaches. The pagers that detonated were the latest model brought in by Hezbollah in recent months, three security sources said.

Hezbollah, which like Hamas is backed by the Zionist entity's regional arch-foe Iran, claimed a dozen attacks on Zionist positions on Monday and three more on Tuesday. Before the wave of pager explosions, the Zionist entity said it had killed three Hezbollah members in a strike on Lebanon.

Hamas, meanwhile, said it was readying for more war, with assistance from fighters and support from across the region. The Zionist military offensive has killed at least 41,252 people in Gaza, mostly women and children. On Tuesday, UN member states were to debate a draft resolution demanding an end to the Zionist occupation of all Palestinian territories within 12 months. In Gaza, rescuers said several Zionist air strikes killed at least seven people overnight. — Agencies



Azerbaijani rights defender and climate advocate Bashir Suleymanli

In 2023, police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at villagers protesting the construction of a pond intended to drain toxic waste from a nearby gold mine. Locals argued that the pond would cause serious environmental damage to their pastures. Several villagers were arrested after the violent police crackdown and Soyudlu remained under lockdown for weeks. "Police threatened me with harsh measures if I ever tried to return to Soyudlu," Khalilzade told AFP. An investigation by the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), a global network of investigative journalists, found the mine — formally operated by British company Anglo Asian Mining Plc — is in fact owned by Aliyev's two daughters.

'Biased and unacceptable'

Any sign of dissent in Azerbaijan is usually met

producer, has set a target to sell only zero-emission vehicles by 2025, 10 years ahead of the European Union's goal. Norway is not an EU member.

Boosted by sales of the Tesla Model Y, all-electric vehicles made up a record 94.3 percent of new car registrations in August in Norway, a sharp contrast to EV struggles seen elsewhere in Europe. "We're almost there," said Christina Bu, head of the Norwegian Electric Vehicle Association. "Now the government just has to make a little extra effort in the 2025 budget bill (to be presented to parliament on October 7) and resist the temptation to raise taxes on EVs while continuing to increase those on fuel cars," she told AFP.

In a bid to electrify road transport to help meet Norway's climate commitments, authorities have offered generous tax rebates on EVs, making them competitively priced compared to highly-taxed fuel and diesel cars, as well as hybrid vehicles. Several

with a tough response from Aliyev's government, which has faced strong Western criticism for persecuting political opponents and suffocating independent media. The 62-year-old has ruled the country with an iron fist since 2003, after the death of his father, Azerbaijan's Soviet-era Communist leader and former KGB general Heydar Aliyev.

The Union for Freedom of Political Prisoners of Azerbaijan has published a list of 288 political prisoners, including opposition politicians, rights activists, and journalists. Among them are several journalists from AbzasMedia and Toplum TV, media outlets critical of Aliyev, and prominent anti-corruption advocate Gubad Ibadoglu who remains in custody despite poor health.

In May, Human Rights Watch said the crackdown in Azerbaijan "raises grave concerns" about how activists "will be able to participate meaningfully and push for ambitious action at COP29". Azerbaijan's foreign ministry has rejected the accusations as "biased and unacceptable".

"Conditioning Azerbaijan's presidency of COP29 with inappropriate political motivation contradicts the very essence of the idea of cooperation addressing climate change that Azerbaijan has undertaken," it said in May. But Khadija Ismayilova, an investigative journalist who has spent months in jail after revealing official corruption, said COP29 delegations should be mindful of Azerbaijan's human rights record. "Countries that take part in COP29 must be aware that civil society is crushed and downtrodden in Azerbaijan," she said. — AFP

other EV incentives — including exemptions on inner city tolls, free parking and use of collective transport lanes — have also played a role in Norway's success, even though those have gradually been rolled back over the years.

Norway has come a long way in 20 years: In September 2004, the country's car fleet counted 1.6 million petrol cars, around 230,000 diesel cars and just 1,000 EVs, OFV noted. The transition to EVs has played a big role in Norway's efforts to meet its climate commitments, which include a 55-percent reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030 from 1990 levels. But it is not enough. In 2023, emissions shrank by 4.7 percent from the previous year, according to official statistics, but the decline compared to 1990 was just 9.1 percent.

Electric cars are considered even more climate-friendly in Norway, where almost all electricity is generated by hydropower. — AFP

PAGER BLASTS HIT HEZBOLLAH...

Continued from Page 1

The first such incident since the group began trading near-daily fire with the Zionist entity in support of ally Hamas. "Hundreds of Hezbollah members were injured by the simultaneous explosion of their pagers" in the group's strongholds in Beirut's southern suburbs, in south Lebanon and in the eastern Bekaa Valley, a Hezbollah source said, requesting anonymity. AFP journalists saw dozens of wounded being rushed to hospital in Beirut and in the south, where dozens of ambulances rushed between the cities of Tyre and Sidon in both directions. Regional broadcasters carried CCTV footage which showed what appeared to be a small handheld device placed next to a grocery store cashier where an individual was paying spontaneously exploding. In other footage, an explosion appeared to knock out someone standing at a fruit stand at a market area.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Zionist entity's domestic security agency said it had foiled a plot by Hezbollah to assassinate a former senior defense official in the coming days. The Shin Bet agency, which did not name the official, said in a statement it had seized an explosive device attached to a remote detonation system, using a mobile phone and a camera that Hezbollah had planned to operate from Lebanon. Shin Bet said the attempted attack was similar to a Hezbollah plot foiled in Tel Aviv a year ago, without giving further details.

Earlier Tuesday, the Zionist entity announced it was broadening the aims of the war sparked by the Hamas at-

UN chief condemns 'collective...

Continued from Page 1

secretary-general," said Guterres, who has led the embattled international organization since 2017. "We all condemn the terror attacks made by Hamas, as well as the taking of the hostages, that is an absolute violation of international humanitarian law," he said.

"But the truth is that nothing justifies the collective punishment of the Palestinian people, and that is what we are witnessing in a dramatic way in Gaza," he added, decrying the widespread carnage and hunger blighting Gaza. The Zionist entity's land and air offensive has claimed 41,252 lives in Gaza, mostly women and children. More than 200 humanitarian workers, mostly UN staff, have also been killed.

"Accountability should be a must" for all civilian deaths, Guterres said acknowledging "serious violations" had been perpetrated by both the Zionist entity and Hamas. Against that backdrop the UN leader has repeatedly called for an immediate ceasefire, but talks overseen by the United States, Egypt and Qatar remain deadlocked, with the Zionist entity and Hamas accusing each other of resisting a deal. "They are endless," Guterres said of the talks, saying it would be "very difficult" to reach a compromise but that he remained hopeful.

With Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refusing to return his calls since October, Guterres is not counting on a breakthrough during the General Assembly's high-level week from Sunday when he would typically receive all visiting heads of state and government. "As

far as I understand, it was already said publicly that it is not his intention to ask for any meeting with me. So of course, the meeting will very probably not take place," Guterres said, brushing off the apparent snub.

"What matters is not the question of a phone call or no phone call, a meeting or no meeting — what matters is what happens on the ground. What matters is the suffering of people. What matters is the constant denial of the two-state solution and the undermining of that two-state solution by the different actions that are taking place on the grounds. With grabbing of land, with evictions, with the new settlements being built — all illegally and in the context of an occupation that now, according to the International Court of Justice's opinion, is in itself also illegal."

He also said a proposed surveillance mission he backed to oversee any future ceasefire looked "improbable", with all sides unlikely to sign up. UN missions require the agreement of the host countries. It was partly for this reason that almost a year ago, the Security Council mandated a multinational mission, led by Kenya, not the UN, to help police in gang-plagued Haiti where blue helmets are reviled.

But with only a few hundred police officers deployed and the mission lacking funds, Washington has raised the specter of transforming it into a UN mission — something that the Security Council could only do at Haiti's request. "I find it very strange that it's so difficult to fund a relatively small police operation in Haiti," he said. "I find it absolutely unacceptable."

Responding to accusations the UN is powerless to curb conflicts in Gaza, Ukraine and elsewhere, he blamed member states — particularly the Security Council and its 15 members — for the decisions taken or not taken. The Security Council as well as international financial institutions are "outdated, are dysfunctional and are unfair", he said. — AFP

International

Modi's opponent Kejriwal quits

Resignation comes days after Kejriwal released from jail; new chief minister named



NEW DELHI: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and former chief minister of Delhi Arvind Kejriwal (right), gestures as he leaves the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi's office on September 17, 2024.

NEW DELHI: A top political opponent of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi quit as chief minister of the capital Delhi on Tuesday, days after being released on bail in a corruption case. Arvind Kejriwal, a key leader in an opposition alliance that battled Modi in national elections this year, was detained in March on accusations his city government received kickbacks from allocating liquor licenses.

He is among several opposition figures facing graft probes. His party has described his arrest as a "political conspiracy" orchestrated by Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The Su-

preme Court granted him bail last week on the condition that he refrained from signing official files or visiting his office.

Kejriwal responded by tendering his resignation to seek a fresh mandate from the public in Delhi polls slated for early next year. The capital's education minister Atishi, who goes by one name, will replace him in the interim. "Atishi steps up to lead Delhi until the upcoming elections, carrying the weight of both CM Arvind Kejriwal's vision and the national capital's future," a statement from their Aam Aadmi Party said.



Delhi's education minister and AAP leader Atishi (centre left) is nominated as the capital's new chief minister. — AFP photos

Kejriwal, 56, began his career as a tax collector but quit his civil service job to become a national anti-corruption crusader, bringing him national fame. Hundreds of cheering supporters greeted him as he left jail on Friday, accusing the government of trying to "break him" by putting him behind bars. "My resolve is stronger than before," he said. "God is by my side."

Kejriwal refused to resign from his position while in custody despite questions over whether his jailing would prevent him from carrying out his official duties. Atishi, 43, suggested after her nomination

that she would still be looking to her predecessor for guidance. "Delhi only has one chief minister. It is Arvind Kejriwal," she said.

Kejriwal's administration was accused of corruption when it liberalized the sale of liquor in the capital three years ago, surrendering a lucrative government stake in the sector. He is among several prominent Modi opponents to face criminal investigation or trial in recent years. US think tank Freedom House said this year that the BJP had "increasingly used government institutions to target political opponents". — AFP

Von der Leyen reveals new team as EU shifts right

STRASBOURG: After weeks of political horse-trading, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen unveiled Tuesday a new top team tasked with shoring up the EU's economic and military security through the next five years. Faced with Russia's war in Ukraine, the potential return of Donald Trump as US president and competition from China, the new commission will need to steward the EU at a time of global uncertainty.

To confront the challenges, von der Leyen handed powerful economic portfolios to France, Spain and Italy — with a hard-right candidate from Rome taking a top role in a commission seen shifting broadly rightward. "It's about strengthening our tech sovereignty, our security and our democracy," the commission chief said as she announced the team at the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

France's outgoing foreign minister Stephane Sejourne was handed an executive vice president role overseeing industrial strategy, after von der Leyen ousted Paris' first nominee. Spain's Teresa Ribera, a socialist climate campaigner, was also made an executive vice president, tasked with overseeing competition and the bloc's transition toward carbon neutrality.

As Russia's war against Ukraine grinds on through a third year, security and defense assumed a new prominence. Former Lithuanian prime minister Andrius Kubilius landed a new defense role overseeing the EU's push to rearm, making him one of several hawkish Russia critics in eastern Europe to receive a prominent position.

Those also include Estonia's ex-premier Kaja Kallas, already chosen by EU leaders as the bloc's foreign policy chief. And Finland, another country neighboring Russia, saw its pick Henna Virkkunen given a weighty umbrella role including security and tech.

As part of the bloc's careful balancing act, the German head of the EU executive had to choose the lineup for her second term from nominees put forward by the other 26 member states. That has meant treading a political tightrope between the demands of competing national leaders — and putting some noses out of joint.

The highest-profile casualty was France's first-choice candidate Thierry Breton, who quit suddenly as internal market commissioner on Monday accusing von der Leyen of pushing Paris to ditch him. Von



STRASBOURG: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen speaks during the Parliament's Conference of Presidents in Strasbourg, eastern France, on September 17, 2024. — AFP

der Leyen fell short in her efforts at gender balance, ending up with 40 percent women after pressuring member states for female nominees. But women obtained the lion's share of executive VP roles, with four of six posts.

Controversial Italian pick

The choice of who gets which job is an indication of where Brussels wants to steer the European Union — and the weight commanded by member states and political groupings after EU Parliament elections in June. Cementing its status as parliament's biggest group, Von der Leyen's center-right European People's Party commands 15 of 27 commission posts — to the chagrin of left-wing lawmakers like France's Manon Aubry who warned of a lurch "far to the right" in terms of policies too.

Among the powerful vice presidents is Italy's Raffaele Fitto, handed a cohesion brief in a nod to gains made by far-right parties in the June elections. Giving a top role to a member of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's post-fascist Brothers of Italy party has raised hackles among centrist and leftist groups — while Meloni said it "confirms the newfound central role of our nation in the EU".

After Green party losses at the June ballot, whether climate would remain high on the agenda and

which commissioners would steer green policy was a subject of scrutiny. As well as Ribera's overarching role, the center-right Dutchman Wopke Hoekstra will carry on in a position handling climate and the push to make the EU carbon neutral.

Among other eye-catching choices, Croatia's Dubravka Suica obtained a new role overseeing the Mediterranean region, and the enlargement gig went to Slovenia's Marta Kos — yet to be confirmed as her country's candidate. Other important figures going forward look set to be Slovakia's Maros Sefcovic, handling trade, and Poland's Piotr Serafin, who will steer negotiations over the bloc's next budget.

All would-be commissioners still need to win approval from the European Parliament, with hearings to start in coming weeks. Lawmakers could flex their muscles by rejecting some candidates — or at least dragging them over the coals, as expected with Italy's Fitto.

Chief among those suspected for the chopping block are Hungary's Oliver Varhelyi, nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban's man in Brussels these past five years, who received a diminished portfolio covering health and animal welfare. The stated target is to have a new commission in place by November 1, but diplomats say that looks ambitious, with December 1 more likely. — AFP

Disputed elections becoming a global phenomenon: Report

STOCKHOLM: Voter turnout is diminishing around the world and the results of elections are increasingly questioned, a report on the state of democracy said Tuesday. Between 2008 and 2023, global voter turnout fell by 10 percentage points, from 65.2 to 55.5 percent, according to an annual report by Stockholm-based intergovernmental organization International IDEA.

The problems that affect "young democracies" are also affecting "remarkably very old and consolidated democracies" in Europe and America, Kevin Casas-Zamora, Secretary General of IDEA International, told AFP. Of the 173 countries covered by the think-tank, nearly half of them also show "a very severe decline in at least one absolutely crucial element of democracy," such as the ability to hold credible elections or freedom of the press, Casas-Zamora added.

In the United States, three indicators are down since 2015: credible elections, civil liberties and political equality, according to the report. In addition, less than half the US population (47 percent) believes that the 2020 elections were "free and fair," according to a study published by IDEA in April — before the July assassination attempt against US former president and presidential candidate Donald Trump.

'Cynical attempts'

In addition to polarization, the United States also faces the challenge that much of its electorate does not consider the electoral processes and election results credible, Casas-Zamora noted, while resorting to political violence is seen as more legitimate. On January 6, 2021, thousands of Donald Trump's supporters stormed the US Capitol, galvanized by Trump's refusal to recognize Joe Biden's victory.

According to Casas-Zamora, sowing doubts about "credible, robust electoral processes and results" is not confined to the United States. When political leaders refuse to recognize the credibility of an election or take the initiative of challenging it in court, "it sends an important signal to voters," the report noted. "In some cases, such signals convey legitimate concerns about an election; in others, they are cynical attempts to erode public faith in an opponent's victory," it said.

Between mid-2020 and mid-2024, the results of one in five elections were rejected by a losing candidate or party in the countries studied by IDEA, and opposition parties boycotted one in ten elections. In Venezuela, opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia contested the re-election of President Nicolas Maduro on July 28 — with Urrutia exiled in Spain since September 8.

'Checks and balances'

The election result was not recognized by the United States, the European Union and several Latin American countries — including some of Caracas' historic allies. "Everything I see tells me that Maduro has decided to turn Venezuela into North Korea if that's what it takes to remain in power," Casas-Zamora told AFP.

The report also notes a disheartening state of the world, where wars, global warming and social inequalities serve to fuel the erosion of democracies. "I am absolutely positive that a fully democratic Russia would have not invaded Ukraine," said Casas-Zamora. "There would have been enough checks and balances to prevent the war of aggression against Ukraine from happening," he continued. — AFP

India's Supreme Court pauses demolishing properties of 'criminals'

NEW DELHI: India's top court ordered authorities on Tuesday to pause demolishing private property as punitive action against people accused of criminal activity, condemning the so-called "bulldozer justice". Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu-nationalist government has frequently deployed bulldozers and earth-movers to flatten property owned by those facing trial, saying it targets illegal construction and is a firm response to criminal activity.

The Supreme Court, which is hearing a clutch of petitions challenging the campaign, has asked the government to stall the campaign, until the next hearing scheduled on October 1. In a hearing last week, the court said the practice amounted to "running a bulldozer over the laws of the land". "Alleged involvement in crime is no ground for the demolition of a property," the judges added.

Rights groups have condemned the tactic as an unlawful exercise in collective punishment, often targeting India's minority Muslim community. "It can't be demolished even if he's a convict ... the demolition can be carried out (only) as per the procedure in accordance with the law," said Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai,



NEW DELHI: A bulldozer demolishes a structure next to a mosque in the residential area of Jahangirpuri on April 20, 2022. — AFP

one of the trio of judges hearing the case.

The campaign first started in 2017 in Uttar Pradesh state, governed by Yogi Adityanath, a Hindu monk seen as a potential successor to Modi and a key figure in the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). It has since spread to several other states controlled by the BJP.

Officials say the demolitions are lawful as they only

target buildings constructed without legal approval. But victims of the campaign deny that their dwellings are illegal, and say they are not given the required notice period to dispute demolition orders. Amnesty International has said the demolitions were part of a selective and "vicious" crackdown on Indian Muslims who spoke out. — AFP

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2024

Playbook rings in a new financial future for GCC

Boursa Kuwait hosts 'Women & Prosperity' event, brings together women leaders



150 women from diverse industries take to the trading floor to ring the closing bell at Boursa Kuwait.

KUWAIT: As part of its commitment to empowering women and enhancing their leadership role in the financial sector, Boursa Kuwait sponsored and hosted the "Women and Prosperity" event on Sept 17, 2024. Organized by Playbook, the region's leading e-learning platform for women in leadership positions, the initiative brought together some of the standout female leaders from Kuwait and across the GCC to highlight the growing role women are playing in shaping the future of the financial services industry.

The day's festivities began with a powerful welcome address by Boursa Kuwait board member Dalal Behbehani, who hailed the "Women and Prosperity" event as one that celebrates the achievements of women across this region and beyond and lays the foundation for a future where women's leadership and innovation are acknowledged and rewarded.

Behbehani also highlighted the changes taking place in the financial sector, adding that "There is a growing recognition of the importance of gender diversity in leadership, driven by both business imperatives and social and economic factors." "Playbook is a dynamic platform that empowers women by offering mentorship, resources, and essential tools to help them excel in leadership roles across various industries. It stands as a testament to the collective drive of women who come together to share their stories, uplift one another, and create opportunities for growth and excellence," she added.

Dr Aisha bin Bishr, Global Digital Transformation Expert and a Strategic Leader in Smart City Initiatives gave the keynote speech entitled "Shaping the Future of Finance Through Smart Cities", in which she said: "Smart cities are not only transforming the way we live but also reshaping the financial landscape for businesses and individuals alike in three fundamental ways. First, they drive wealth creation through advanced digital infrastructure and by fostering financial innovation. They also use data and artificial intelligence to promote financial inclusion, empowering individuals — particularly women — to take control of their financial futures. Finally, smart cities are building resilient financial systems capable of withstanding economic shocks, ensuring long-term stability and prosperity."

The day was filled with thought-provoking discussions, beginning with Baroness Helena Morrissey, Founder of the 30 percent Club and a member of the House of Lords, who delivered a compelling keynote titled "Financial Leadership: Secrets from the Top." Baroness Morrissey shared her insights on how women can lead effectively in today's evolving financial landscape, emphasizing the critical role they play in shaping the future of finance. Her speech resonated



Dalal Behbehani



Wafa Al-Obaidat

deeply with attendees, reinforcing the importance of strategic leadership in navigating a dynamic financial environment. The event continued with a panel discussion on "Inspiring Future Generations: Strategies for Wealth, Education, and Well-being." Moderated by Behbehani, the panel featured Haya Ayman Boodai, Board Member at the Kuwait Economic Society, Dr Mariam Al-Awadhi, Consultant Psychiatrist, and Nada Al-Harhi, Strategy Executive and Advisor.

The discussion centered around the pressing need for financial literacy and long-term wealth strategies, offering valuable insights into how today's leaders can inspire and educate the next generation to take control of their financial futures.

The day's program also included an impactful presentation by Nadine Mezher, Co-founder of Sarwa, entitled "Strategic Investment Mastery: Executive Insights for a Dynamic Future." Mezher, a recognized leader in the financial technology space, provided executive-level insights on mastering investment strategies in an increasingly complex financial landscape. Her expertise in investment diversification, risk management, and market trends was both informative and actionable, empowering participants to navigate the dynamic financial environment with confidence.

A key moment of the event was the ceremonial Ring the Bell for Financial Prosperity. In a powerful demonstration of collective leadership, 150 women from diverse industries took to the trading floor, ringing the closing bell at Boursa Kuwait. This act was more than symbolic — it marked a turning point in the financial future of the region and served as a beacon to women everywhere that they have the power, influence, and capability to shape the broader economic landscape. The event also offered attendees practical knowledge through two key workshops designed to equip them with tools for long-term financial success. Baroness Helena Morrissey led the first workshop on "Raising Financially Savvy Kids," sharing her expertise on empowering the next generation with the skills needed for financial independence. The



The ceremonial 'Ring the Bell for Financial Prosperity' during the Boursa Kuwait-sponsored "Women and Prosperity" event.

second workshop, "Building a Resilient Investment Portfolio," was facilitated by Nadine Mezher, who provided deep insights into creating investment portfolios that thrive, even amid market volatility. As the event drew to a close, Playbook Founder and CEO Wafa Al-Obaidat emphasized the profound impact this event would have on the region's financial ecosystem. "We are at the start of something truly transformative — building the largest network of women investors, whose leadership will shape the future of finance. The Women & Prosperity event has highlighted the incredible potential women have to drive financial innovation in Kuwait and the region. Today's discussions have inspired us and laid the foundation for lasting impact, allowing us to redefine success by creating opportunities for women to lead with confidence, resilience, and purpose. I would like to thank Boursa Kuwait for their unwavering dedication and support of women's financial prosperity."

The partnership between Boursa Kuwait and Playbook is more than an event — it is a catalyst for long-term economic transformation. By leveraging the power of technology and financial leadership, this collaboration will continue to drive bold financial moves by women, ensuring that they are at the forefront of shaping the region's economic future. Aligned with Boursa Kuwait's Corporate Sustainability strategy, the Women & Prosperity initiative underscores the importance of financial literacy, sustainability, and leadership, and is a testament to the region's commitment to fostering a more inclusive and prosperous financial ecosystem.

World Bank pledges over \$2 billion for Bangladesh reforms

DHAKA: Bangladesh said on Tuesday the World Bank has committed to providing over \$2 billion in new financing this fiscal year to support the country's ongoing reform efforts, flood response initiatives, and improvements in air quality and healthcare. The announcement was made by the World Bank's Country Director, Abdoulaye Seck, following a meeting with the head of the interim government Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus in Dhaka on Tuesday, his office said in a statement.

"We would like to support you as fast as possible and as much as possible," Yunus' office quoted Seck as saying, underscoring the bank's commitment to addressing Bangladesh's financial needs as it embarks on critical reforms under the interim government, formed last month following the ousting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina after deadly protests. The World Bank also plans to repurpose an additional \$1 billion from existing programs, which will raise the total amount of soft loans and grants to approximately \$3 billion for this fiscal year that ends in June 2025.

The funds will be used to support a variety of key areas, including the country's response to natural disasters and economic reforms. Seck highlighted the importance of the reforms for Bangladesh's future, particularly for its youth, with two million people joining the job market each year. "The completion of the reforms will be critically important for Bangladesh and its young people," he said.

During the meeting, Yunus urged the World Bank to provide the necessary flexibility and support for the country's reform initiatives. "We need a big push, and we have to focus on the dreams of the students." In a televised address last week, Yunus said the government was appealing for \$5 billion in aid to help stabilize an economy that has been struggling since the Ukraine war sharply increased the cost of fuel and food imports. Bangladesh last year sought a \$4.7 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund. The United States is committed to supporting Bangladesh's inclusive economic growth, institution building and development and will provide an additional \$202 million of aid, a US delegation said during a visit to Dhaka on Sunday. — Reuters

US retail sales slow on cooldown in autos, gas spending

WASHINGTON: US consumer spending weakened in August with retail sales slowing to a near-flat level while interest rates stayed high, according to government data released Tuesday.

Overall retail sales were up 0.1 percent from July to August at \$710.8 billion, though this beat analysts' expectations, data from the Department of Commerce showed. Meanwhile, US industrial production surged in August as motor vehicle manufacturing bounced back after plummeting in July, the Federal Reserve said Tuesday, shortly before kicking off a two-day meeting on interest rates.

Analysts had expected a 0.2 percent decline, according to Briefing.com. The latest figures were bogged down by tepid sales at auto dealers and gas stations, the report said. Sales at motor vehicle and parts dealers slipped 0.1 percent from a month ago while those at gas stations dropped 1.2 percent.

Spending at food and beverage stores fell as well,



The US Federal Reserve is seen in Washington, DC on September 16, 2024. — AFP

as did those at furniture and clothing stores, according to the Commerce Department. Excluding autos and gas stations, retail sales was up 0.2 percent.

"The consumer is getting, in my mind, less and less resilient," said Dan North, senior economist at Allianz Trade North America. One reason is that real disposable income, referring to income after inflation and taxes, has declined — as have consumers' excess savings — North told AFP. But he does not expect the slower sales figure to have a major impact on the

Federal Reserve's calculus this week when the central bank mulls the size of expected interest rate cuts. "It's very clear that rate cuts are coming, the market is basically expecting (a cut of) 25 basis points," North said. But he added that the data will be among indicators the Fed will consider as it proceeds with a gradual approach to rate reductions.

Total industrial output exceeded expectations to rise by 0.8 percent last month from a revised 0.9 decline in July, the US central bank said in a statement, pinning much of the rise on "a recovery in the index of motor vehicles and parts." The index "jumped nearly 10 percent in August after dropping roughly 9 percent in July," it added. The July data was affected by the larger-than-expected impact of Hurricane Beryl. The sharp monthly rise in industrial production in August was well above market expectations of a 0.1 percent rise, according to Briefing.com.

The news is likely to soothe concerns about the sector, shortly before the Fed kicks off its two-day interest rate meeting later Tuesday which is widely expected to end with a rate cut. Analysts and traders are split about how sharply the US central bank will cut rates, with opinion divided about whether it will announce a more conventional quarter percentage-point cut on Wednesday, or move ahead with a more aggressive half point reduction. — AFP

Business

Gulf Bank showcases SME banking solutions and future growth strategy

Bank's GB Talks series seeks to enhance competitive edge of SMEs

KUWAIT: As part of the GB Talks series, Mohammad Bujbarah, Corporate Banking Portfolio Officer at Gulf Bank, outlined the banking services and facilities available to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). These services aim to enhance the continuity, sustainability, growth, and competitive edge of SMEs.

Bujbarah emphasized that Gulf Bank offers a wide range of services and transactions tailored to SMEs, available either directly or through a dedicated on-

Mohammad Bujbarah:

Gulf Bank offers a wide range of services and transactions tailored to SMEs, available either directly or through a dedicated online platform.

line platform. This includes the ability to apply for both cash and non-cash credit facilities, without needing an existing Gulf Bank account. Services available include electronic payroll transfers, ATM card issuance, registration for point-of-sale systems, payment gateways, logistics, consulting services, and more. All of these can be accessed and registered for via the bank's website.

He explained that clients interested in financing for their SME can visit the bank's website, go to the SME section, fill out the application on the small and medium-sized business financing solutions page, and submit it. After submission, they will receive an email requesting audited financial statements for the past three years and a recent management report. Following an initial review, the bank will contact the client if the business is deemed economically viable.

Bujbarah also highlighted Gulf Bank's dedication to improving non-banking services for SMEs, assisting them in operating efficiently without the need to invest in or manage their own warehouses or specialized teams for customs clearance and inventory transport. He stressed that Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy is centered on supporting SMEs by expanding its range of products and banking services to promote their growth and development. It is important to note that SMEs eligible for Gulf Bank financing are independent businesses with assets approximately valued at KD 500,000, annual sales up to KD 1.5 million, and at least 150 employees.

Gulf Bank aims to be Kuwait's leading bank, fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace to deliver exceptional customer service while contributing sustainably to the community. Through its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the bank empowers customers to conduct banking transactions conveniently and efficiently, ensuring a



Mohammad Bujbarah speaks during the GB Talks series.

seamless experience. In alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035, "New Kuwait," and its commitment to fostering collaborative partnerships, Gulf Bank is dedicated to driving robust sustainability initiatives

across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions. The bank is committed to implementing strategically selected and diverse sustainability programs both internally and externally.

Brazil's farmers fret over fires and drought

RIO DE JANEIRO: Sugarcane farmer Marcos Meloni is still haunted by his battle last month to fight the flames on his land, as the double-edged disaster of fires and drought hits Brazil's agricultural sector hard.

"The rearview mirror of the water tanker shriveled up" from the intense heat, recalled the farmer from Barrinha, at the heart of a major agricultural area 340 kilometers (211 miles) from Sao Paulo.

"I thought I was going to die there." Brazil's worst drought in seven decades has fueled fires across the vast nation in recent weeks, ripping through the Amazon rainforest, leaving jaguars with burn injuries in the Pantanal wetlands, and choking major cities with smoke.

The country's vital agricultural sector is also reeling, with harvests of sugarcane, arabica coffee, oranges and soybeans—of which Brazil is the world's main producer and exporter—at risk.

And there is little hope of a quick turnaround, with less rain forecast in October than average. In the country's main sugar-producing region in the state of Sao Paulo, some 230,000 hectares of the four million sugarcane plantations in the area, have been affected to varying degrees by the fires.

Half of the damaged plantations have yet to be harvested, according to the Brazilian Sugarcane Industry Union. "Where the sugarcane is still standing, we expect the yield (in sugar) to drop by half," said Jose Guilherme Nogueira, CEO of the Organization of Sugarcane Producers' Associations of Brazil.

Meloni had already finished his harvest but his land suffered significant damage. "It burned where there were shoots, which were already struggling to come out because of the lack of water. Now we have to see where we will have to replant." In southeastern



NOVA IGUAÇU, Brazil: Fire burns on a hill in Vila de Cava, Nova Iguaçu, Rio de Janeiro state, Brazil on Sept 13, 2024. — AFP

Minas Gerais, home to 70 percent of Brazilian Arabica, coffee growers are also anxiously awaiting the rains needed to encourage their shrubs to flower and form the coffee berries that will be picked next year.

"The soil lacks water. It is the worst water deficit in 40 years," lamented Jose Marcos Magalhaes, president of Minasul, the second-largest coffee cooperative in the country. By the end of the month, "we need rains of good intensity to hope to have a normal harvest" in 2025, he said.

Bad weather has already disrupted the 2023-2024 harvest, which is coming to an end. In May, the state-run National Supply Company (Conab), a public body, anticipated an increase of 8.2 percent in Arabica production, but these forecasts "will probably be revised downwards", said Renato Ribeiro, from the Center for Advanced Studies in Applied Economics at the University of Sao Paulo.

The drought is also squeezing orange farmers, whose fruit are mainly destined for the juice

industry. Brazilian citrus producers' association Fundecitrus expects a nearly 30 percent decline in production, exacerbated by a bacterial disease plaguing the country's oranges.

Conab expects soybean production to fall 4.7 percent as a result of last year's drought and massive flooding in April and May in the southern Rio Grande do Sul state.

This year's drought has delayed planting for the next harvest. "If the weather improves, soybean producers can make up for this delay," said Luiz Fernando Gutierrez, an analyst at the Safras e Mercados firm. "But if the drought continues into October, there could be harvest problems" in 2025.

Brazil's agricultural industry is the worst affected by climate change, but also bears some responsibility for its woes, said climatologist Carlos Nobre. "This is the sector that emits the most greenhouse gases in Brazil. It must reduce them and put an end to deforestation. It must open its eyes." — AFP

Cuba slashes daily bread ration as ingredients run thin

HAVANA: Cuba's communist-run government on Monday slashed by a quarter the weight of its subsidized ration of daily bread, the latest shortage to strain a decades-old subsidies scheme created by the late Fidel Castro. The bread, one of a handful of still subsidized basic food products in Cuba, will be reduced from 80 grams to 60 grams (2.1 oz), or approximately the weight of an average cookie or a small bar of soap. Its price, too, was slightly reduced, to just under 1 peso, or 1/3 of a cent.

Still, many Cubans, who earn around 4,648 pesos a month, or around \$15, can scarcely afford to shop for more expensive bread on the private market, leaving them with few alternatives. "We have to accept it, what else can we do?" Havana-resident Dolores Fernandez told Reuters while she stood outside a bakery on Monday. "There's no choice." Cuba last week said it had run short of the wheat flour it needs to produce the bread, a predicament the government blames on the US trade embargo, a complex web of restrictions that complicates Cuba's global financial transactions. The Caribbean island nation is suffering from extreme shortages of food, fuel and medicine, shortfalls that have primed a record-breaking exodus of its citizens to the nearby United States.

Cuba's ration book, or "libreta," as it is known among island residents, was once considered a hallmark of Fidel Castro's 1959 revolution, providing a range of deeply-discounted products to all Cubans, including bread, fish, meat, milk, and cleaning and toiletry supplies. Today, the crisis-racked government offers just a fraction of those products, and often, they arrive late, in poor quality or not at all. Bernardo Matos, of Havana, said he had not detected a change in bread size on Monday, but said he was unhappy with the quality. — Reuters

Concerns mount over Senegal fiscal shortfalls

NAIROBI: Senegal's slower economic growth, its widening fiscal deficit and a potential delay in International Monetary Fund financing could cloud the outlook ahead of Nov 17 parliamentary elections, analysts say. President Bassirou Diomaye Faye, just five months into the job, set the stage for the snap vote when he dissolved the opposition-led National Assembly on Thursday.

Election planning will now clog up the calendar just as the West African nation is preparing for the next review of the \$1.9 billion IMF loan that it secured last year in a bid to stabilize public finances.

"Senegal is unlikely to have its next review approved by the IMF board before December," Barclays analyst Michael Kafe said in a note to clients. Any delay in the disbursement of the next tranche of financing would coincide with other less than encouraging economic developments.

This year's growth forecast has been reduced to 6.0 percent, the IMF said on Friday, from a forecast of 7.1 percent in June, after the economy expanded at a slower-than-projected pace in the first half.

"This slowdown reflects weaker activity in the mining, construction and agro-industrial sectors," the fund said. Analysts are keeping a close eye on the political and financial temperature in the run up to the vote. Economic disparities were behind at least some of the grievances that brought people out onto the streets in violent protests in 2021 - though there has been no suggestion of repeated unrest this time around.

Government revenue fell significantly in the first eight months of this year, the IMF added, while expenditure remained on track. "Consequently, the fiscal deficit widened, and amid lower-than-expected liquidity buffers, the authorities relied on costly external commercial borrowing with short maturities." Senegal's dollar bonds fell marginally on Friday after the dissolution of parliament. Yields on the 2033 and 2048 maturities were steady on Tuesday trading



DAKAR: Mamadou Samb, 30, collects fresh water heated over an open fire to clean his dive equipment shortly after going spear fishing at La Cabane des Plongeurs in Dakar. — AFP

at 85.33 cents on the dollar and 73.24 respectively. Faye, a former tax inspector, blamed the previous parliament's refusal to initiate a new budget law, and its push-back against a plan to abolish wasteful state bodies, for his decision to dissolve it. He won the presidential election in March with 54 percent of the vote, driven by discontent among youth voters. But his Pastef party only had 26 seats in the now-dissolved 165-member parliament. It was part of a coalition that had a total of 56 lawmakers.

That could change in the November election, political risk consultancy Eurasia Group said, citing the popularity of the president's initiatives including a national dialogue on reforming the judiciary and an ongoing financial audit, aimed at rooting out inefficiencies and wastage.

"Historically, legislative election results tend to align with those of presidential elections when held soon after," Eurasia said. Faye's fortunes could also be lifted by the prospect of brighter economic times on the horizon, thanks to proceeds from its newly-tapped natural resources. Senegal became an oil producer in June, when Australia's Woodside Energy started production at its Sangomar oil and gas field. Gas production is also due to begin by the end of the year at the Greater Tortue Ahmeyim liquefied natural gas project, operated by BP. — Reuters

US inflation at turning point: Economic advisor

WASHINGTON: Top White House economic advisor Lael Brainard declared that the US economy had turned the corner in bringing down inflation and it was now time to focus on safeguarding jobs and growth.

Two days before the Federal Reserve is expected to begin a long-awaited monetary easing cycle, Brainard said that inflation was returning to pre-pandemic levels without the considerable job losses and growth slowdown that were previously predicted. "Today, we are at an important turning point. Inflation is coming back down close to normal levels, and it is important to safeguard the important labor market progress we have made," Brainard told a Council on Foreign Relations event in New York.

Brainard, the former Fed vice chair who now serves as the director of the White House National Economic Council, said the Biden administration's focus now is to support growth and the labor market. There could still be some inflationary supply shocks in the global economy, but many countries and businesses have taken steps to become more resilient in the face of such shocks, partly by diversifying supply chains.

Brainard did not say in her remarks what action the Fed should take on Wednesday, and her comments were in line with recent comments from Fed officials. But she said President Joe Biden has emphasized the independence of the US central bank, drawing a contrast with Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump's frequent criticism of Fed monetary policy decisions during his presidency.

Brainard described the actions that the Biden administration has taken to support the recovery, from COVID relief spending to clean energy tax subsidies, but said more work was needed to help Americans cope with price pressures and higher living costs, including to increase the supply of housing.

"If we can address affordability of housing that will give people a lot more breathing room. So I think what we are very focused on is solving the kind of

cost of living squeeze that Americans are feeling," Brainard said. Brainard said housing affordability has been one of the most complicated challenges in bringing down inflation, adding that the non-housing components of the Consumer Price Index are now increasing at only a 1.8 percent rate, below the Federal Reserve's 2 percent inflation target.

"Housing has been really the kind of stickiest piece of that, and it's a complicated part of the inflation puzzle, because we actually need more homes, ultimately, to get to greater affordability," Brainard said. Lower mortgage rates, predicted by markets as they anticipate Fed rate cuts, will make development of more housing easier, she said, adding that lower borrowing costs for homes and automobiles will also help sustain growth going forward.

Brainard said that a more benign financing environment also could encourage more conversions of some vacant office buildings in certain cities that help ease supply crunches and financial vulnerabilities in commercial real estate, but she noted that the high costs of such conversions remained an obstacle. She said the Biden administration has "kept a close eye" on pressures from commercial vacancies, especially in older "Class B" office buildings. "It does seem to be a very targeted problem, a difficult, difficult problem. But commercial real estate writ large, there are areas that are doing quite well," she said. — Reuters



ROSEMEAD, US: People shop at a grocery store on Aug 14, 2024 in Rosemead, California. — AFP

Business

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

US Fed's rate cut path remains uncertain amid market volatility

Sluggish economic growth, cooling inflation push ECB to ease monetary policy

KUWAIT: In August, the US inflation fell to its lowest level since February 2021, with the consumer price index rising by 0.2 percent for the month, putting the 12-month inflation rate at 2.5 percent. This was lower than the expected 2.6 percent. However, core inflation, excluding food and energy, rose 0.3 percent, slightly above the forecasted 0.2 percent, keeping the 12-month core inflation rate at 3.2 percent. This complicates the Federal Reserve's decision on a potential interest rate cut. Despite the overall moderation in inflation, housing costs, which make up a third of the index, rose 0.5 percent, contributing significantly to the overall CPI increase. Other factors, such as rising prices in apparel, airline fares, and motor vehicle insurance, also pushed costs higher, while energy prices dropped 0.8 percent. Markets are currently pricing a 59 percent probability of a 50bps cut in the upcoming FOMC meeting.

US unemployment claims

The final inflation data released before the Federal Reserve's anticipated interest rate cut showed wholesale prices rising in August at a pace slightly above expectations. The producer price index, which measures the costs producers receive for final demand goods and services, increased 0.2 percent on

the month, matching the consensus forecast. Core PPI, excluding food and energy, rose 0.3 percent, slightly hotter than expected, and remained at the same level when trade services were excluded. On an annual basis, headline PPI rose 1.7 percent, while core PPI excluding food, energy, and trade increased 3.3 percent. Additionally, initial claims for unemployment benefits rose marginally to 230,000, suggesting that layoffs remained low despite a slowing labor market. This combination of a relatively stable labor market and persistent inflation further reduced the likelihood of a 50-basis-point interest rate cut by the Federal Reserve in its upcoming meeting.

The greenback closed the week at 101.114

ECB press conference

The European Central Bank, in a widely anticipated move, delivered a quarter-point interest rate cut on Thursday, marking its second such reduction this year, as sluggish economic growth and cooling inflation across the eurozone pushed policymakers to ease monetary policy. This brings the deposit rate to 3.5 percent. The central bank lowered its 2024 growth forecast to 0.8 percent due to weaker domestic demand, while reaffirming its commitment to a data-dependent approach to future rate decisions.

While market participants were largely expecting the rate cut, uncertainty remained over whether the ECB would provide clues about its future rate path, with economists divided on whether a pause in October or further rate cuts in December would be more likely. The ECB's meeting comes just days before the Federal Reserve is expected to begin its own rate-cutting cycle, adding to the complexity of global monetary policy coordination.

The EUR/USD currency pair closed the week at 1.1076

UK GDP

In July, the UK economy showed no growth, following a stall in June, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This fell short of the expected 0.2 percent growth. The services index grew by 0.6 percent over three months, down from June's 0.8 percent. Additionally, industrial production and manufacturing production both declined unexpectedly, falling by 0.8 percent and 1.0 percent respectively, missing market expectations. The GBP/USD currency closed the week at 1.3122

China Consumer Price Index

China's CPI rose less than expected in the Au-

gust figure, with the index at 0.6 percent y/y, missing expectations of a 0.7 percent increase while higher than the previous 0.5 percent figure. Declines were seen in costs of transportation, rentals, and home goods. Meanwhile, food prices rose 2.8 percent, the first positive print since June of 2023. Core CPI rose 0.3 percent from a year ago, while the producer price index fell by 1.8 percent, higher than the estimated 1.4 percent figure.

China's PPI continued to decline, falling 1.8 percent y/y, worsening from July's 0.8 percent drop. Meanwhile, China's exports grew by 8.7 percent y/y, surpassing forecasts, while imports increased by just 0.5 percent, reflecting weak domestic demand. The economic outlook of the world's second largest economy remains pressured by a persistent property market slump, unemployment concerns, rising trade tensions, and deflationary pressures, prompting calls for more fiscal stimulus.

The CNY/USD currency pair closed the week at 7.0876.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30520.

News in Brief

Germany dispute over Intel subsidies

BERLIN: A new budget dispute emerged within Germany's ruling coalition on Monday, with the finance ministry saying funds no longer needed to subsidize Intel's new chip-making plants should be used to balance the books and the economy ministry pushing back. Berlin had in June agreed subsidies worth nearly 10 billion euros (\$11.13 billion) with the US chipmaker to build two leading-edge facilities in the eastern city of Magdeburg as part of its expansion push in Europe. Intel CEO Pat Gelsinger released a memo to employees on Monday outlining a number of steps the company would take to revive itself which included pausing construction at its project in Germany for two years. — Reuters

Eurozone eyes gradual easing

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank should keep cutting interest rates gradually, its chief economist said Monday, after policymakers reduced borrowing costs last week for the second time this year. "A gradual approach to dialing back restrictiveness will be appropriate if the incoming data are in line with the baseline projection," Philip Lane said in a speech in Luxembourg. But he stressed policymakers should keep an open mind about "the speed of adjustment", and it would depend on how fast inflation drops and the state of the eurozone economy. — AFP

Milei warns zero deficit is a must

BUENOS AIRES: Argentine President Javier Milei presented his 2025 budget to congress Sunday, with the libertarian promising to veto any law that threatened his strict goal to reduce the country's budget deficit to zero. "We will veto all the bills that threaten the fiscal balance, because we will not be accomplices in swindling the Argentine people," he said. Since taking office in December, the budget-slashing Milei has applied a drastic austerity program in a bid to rein in chronic inflation and decades of government overspending. — AFP

German investor morale falls steeply

FRANKFURT: German investor confidence fell significantly more than expected in September, a survey showed Tuesday, as a hoped-for recovery in Europe's largest economy seemed to recede from view. The ZEW institute's closely watched economic expectations index fell to 3.6 points, down sharply from 19.2 points a month earlier. Analysts surveyed by financial data firm FactSet had predicted a much smaller decline to 16.6 points. The September drop comes after the indicator dropped 22.6 points in August, its worst decline in two years. — AFP

South Sudan ready to restart pumping oil through Sudan

NAIROBI: South Sudan and Sudan have made progress towards restarting the pumping of South Sudan's crude oil through a pipeline running to a port in its neighbor,

Ogilvy PR launches Influence Shield to empower brands

KUWAIT: Ogilvy announced the launch of Influence Shield, a comprehensive risk management solution designed to empower brands to safely navigate the complex and ever-evolving landscape of social media and influencer marketing. The key services of Influence Shield range from risk assessment, enhanced vetting and risk categorization to rapid response activation and Influencer management.

Led by Ogilvy PR's Toby Conlon, Global Head of Crisis and Risk, and Rahul Titus, Global Head of Influence, the new global offer will combine Ogilvy's social media and influence expertise, coupled with their reputation and risk management capabilities. Ogilvy's influencer specialism is the biggest and most awarded in the world with over 400 dedicated Influencer practitioners across the network covering 38 countries. The creator economy was valued at \$250 billion in 2023 and is projected to reach \$480 billion by 2027 (Goldman Sachs), brands are increasingly turning to influencer marketing to connect with consumers. The rapid growth has also

Azerbaijan banks on 'God-given' oil and gas to go green

BAKU: Flames soar into the air from a sandstone outcrop on a hillside of the Absheron peninsula near Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, as it prepares to host the COP29 climate conference. The "burning mountain"—Yanardag in Azerbaijani—is fed by underground gas rising to the surface and ignited upon contact with oxygen.

The abundance of naturally occurring fires from the energy-rich nation's huge gas deposits has earned it the nickname "The Land of Fire". Azerbaijan's vast oil and gas resources "have shaped the history, culture, politics, and the economy" of the Caspian nation, said energy expert Kamalya Mustafayeva.

Azerbaijan's oil deposits -- 7 billion barrels of proven reserves—were discovered in the mid-19th century, making what was then part of the Russian Empire one of the first places in the world to start commercial oil production. "The world's first industrial onshore oil well was drilled in Azerbaijan, and also the first offshore one," Ashraf Shikhaliev, the director of energy ministry's international cooperation department, told AFP.

Since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Azerbaijan has produced 1.05 billion tons of oil and is set to increase its natural gas production from 37 billion cubic meters (bcm) this year to 49 bcm over the next decade, according to official figures. Revenues from oil and gas production make up about 35 percent of the country's GDP and nearly half of the state budget.

"Azerbaijan's oil revenues—up to \$200 billion to date since 1991 -- gave the country an opportunity to make a huge leap forward," said Sabit Bagirov, who headed the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan in the 1990s. "Baku, once a small fishermen's hamlet of some 4,000 people, was born of an oil boom," which led to a massive population growth—at a faster rate from the 1890s than London, Paris, or New York—said energy expert Ilham Shaban. Modern Baku is a bustling metropolis dotted with skyscrapers, seaside promenades, and futuristic buildings designed by world-renowned architects.

The Azerbaijani capital has become a venue for major international events, such as the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest, matches in the Euro 2020 football championship, and the Formula 1 motor racing Grand Prix. The manna of

South Sudan's finance minister and the president's office said. The exports are a crucial source of revenue for South Sudan and Sudan takes a cut of the oil as a transit fee. The main pipeline carrying oil from South Sudan through Sudan for export was halted in February because of damage stemming from a war between Sudan's army and the Rapid Support Forces. Analysts say the damage is leading to serious environmental contamination and that the stoppage has contributed to higher food prices in Sudan, where millions face extreme hunger.

"Sudanese engineers have accomplished the necessary technical preparations for the resumption of

the rise of social polarization, culture wars and political change -- all of which can heighten tensions and volatility on social media.

Ogilvy's latest offering tackles the biggest brand safety challenges by providing a holistic approach to risk mitigation. Influence Shield is an end-to-end service that leverages expert knowledge and behavioral science. The framework of services are rooted in the psychology of risk as well as Ogilvy's proprietary tech stack to provide data-driven insights. Toby Conlon, Global Head of Crisis and Risk, Ogilvy PR: "Risk is nothing new to businesses, but Influencer marketing has become such a dominant force it represents the new frontier for brand reputation. Many businesses are finding out the hard way. Influence Shield gives brands the confidence to move forward, which means there's even greater opportunity and innovation."

Rahul Titus, Global Head of Influence: "Influence is no longer a 'nice-to-have' for brands, it's a business-critical channel. Influence Shield equips brands with the foresight and agility to navigate risk proactively, turning potential pitfalls into opportunities for greater impact and trust."

Influence Shield offers a comprehensive suite of services, including:

- Campaign risk assessment: Proactive identification and analysis of potential risks using a PESTLE-based approach.

- Enhanced Influencer Vetting: In-depth scrutiny of influencers, going beyond surface-level checks to uncover potential red flags.
 - Risk categorization: Creating a clear way to assess how big risks are, giving a common language for everyone to use.
 - Creative & Content Compliance: Ensuring all creative assets and messaging adhere to ethical and legal standards.
 - Triage & Escalation Processes: Clear protocols for swiftly addressing and mitigating issues as they arise.
 - Issues Playbook: Pre-emptive development of response strategies and materials for potential scenarios.
 - Influencer Onboarding & Handling: Making sure we manage risk with our influencers, from the start of the relationship.
 - 24/7 Issue Monitoring: A monitoring and alert system which never sleeps.
 - Rapid Response: Continuous monitoring of social media activity and a dedicated team ready to act swiftly in a crisis.
 - Creative Review & Content Adaptation: changing the creative approach and the types of content to create safety for the influencers and the brand.
 - PR Planning & Activation: Handling any issue off social media.
- Influence Shield is available immediately to Ogilvy clients.



An oil well in the Azerbaijani capital of Baku on July 23, 2024. — AFP

petrodollars helped Azerbaijan to arm itself against arch-rival Armenia, and last year Baku recaptured its breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh region from Armenian separatists who had controlled it for decades.

About 75 percent of Azerbaijan's energy exports go to European markets. In 2022, the European Commission—keen to reduce Europe's dependence on Russian gas—signed a deal with Baku to double gas imports from the country. While Azerbaijan's share of gas supplies to Europe might only reach five percent by 2033, the country can meet all the gas needs of Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Albania, and the south of Italy, said Bagirov. "Azerbaijan has become an important factor in ensuring Europe's energy security," said expert Mustafayeva. But fossil fuel reserves, which President Ilham Aliyev has called "a gift of God", are expected to be exhausted within several decades.

"Azerbaijan's oil wells will run dry within 20 years, natural gas reserves will last for 50 years," Bagirov said. "Economic dependence on hydrocarbons is a concern for the Azerbaijani government, which is making serious efforts to develop other economic sectors," including technology,

oil production," South Sudan President Salva Kiir's office said in a statement late on Monday after a meeting in Juba between Kiir and Sudan's army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan. "Engineers from South Sudan are expected to visit Sudan in the coming weeks to familiarize themselves with the readiness of the facilities so as to jump-start production." "There has been a breakthrough, and (news of) it will come to public very soon," South Sudan's Finance Minister Marial Dongrin Ater told a news conference late on Monday. Burhan's office said the two sides would develop an operational plan to restart oil flows.

agriculture, and tourism, he said. Expert Shaban said "Azerbaijan's goal is to get the maximum money from its hydrocarbon resources before Europe reaches its decarbonization objective," which will lead to a significant drop in the continent's demand for fossil fuels.

Azerbaijan's ambitious plans to expand energy production mean the country would emit 781 million tons of carbon dioxide greenhouse gas a year—more than twice the annual emissions of the UK, London-based Global Witness environmentalist group said in January.

The prospect has prompted criticism from environmentalists ahead of the COP29. "COP hosts have a responsibility to deliver progress and the answer is not found at the bottom of an oil well or a gas pipeline, but through ambitious climate finance and action," said Jasper Inventor, Greenpeace International's head of delegation for COP29. Azerbaijani officials said the country is making significant strides in setting its own green agenda. The country aims to increase its renewable energy capacity to 30 percent by 2030 and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2050. — AFP

South Sudan's economy has been under pressure in recent years amid communal violence, with crude oil export revenue having dwindled since a 2013-2018 civil war and more recently export disruptions due to war in neighboring Sudan.

South Sudan had been sending about 150,000 barrels per day of crude through Sudan for export, under a formula established when South Sudan gained independence from Khartoum in 2011, taking most oil production with it. At its peak before the civil war, South Sudan's crude oil production stood at 350,000 to 400,000 barrels per day. — Reuters

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2024

Sean 'Diddy' Combs charged with racketeering, sex trafficking

Music mogul Sean "Diddy" Combs has been hit with three federal charges of racketeering conspiracy, sex trafficking and transportation to engage in prostitution, according to an indictment unsealed on Tuesday. The indictment was unsealed after Combs, 54, was arrested in Manhattan by federal agents on Monday night, following a year in which his career was derailed by several lawsuits accusing him of physical and sexual abuse. According to the 14-page indictment, Combs turned his business empire into a criminal enterprise in which he and his associates engaged in sex trafficking, forced labor and other crimes.

The indictment said Combs threatened and coerced women to "fulfill his sexual desires," and on numerous occasions starting around 2009 assaulted women by "striking, punching, dragging, throwing objects at, and kicking them." According to prosecutors, Combs gave women drugs and financial support in exchange for their participation in sexual activity with male sex workers in "highly orchestrated performances."

Prosecutors also said that in one videotaped and publicly reported incident in March 2016, Combs attempted to bribe a hotel security staff member who intervened when he threw a vase at a woman who was attempting to leave. Combs is expected to appear in Manhattan federal court on Tuesday. His lawyer Marc Agnifilo did not immediately respond to a request for comment after the indictment was made public.

Agnifilo said on Monday night he was disappointed with the decision to pursue an "unjust prosecution" of the rapper and producer. "Sean 'Diddy' Combs is a music icon, self-made entrepreneur, loving family man, and proven philanthropist who has spent the last 30 years building



US producer-musician Sean "Diddy" Combs gestures in the press room during the MTV Video Music Awards at the Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey. — AFP photos



Marc Agnifilo, lawyer for rapper and music producer Sean "Diddy" Combs, arrives at federal court for his client's arraignment on September 17, 2024, in New York.

an empire, adoring his children, and working to uplift the Black community," Agnifilo said. "He is an imperfect person, but he is not a criminal."

Agnifilo added that Combs voluntarily relocated to New York in anticipation of the charges. Combs, who has also been known as P. Diddy and Puff Daddy, was a major figure in hip-hop in the 1990s and 2000s. He founded the label Bad Boy records, and is credited with helping turn rappers and R&B singers such as Mary J. Blige, Faith Evans, Notorious B.I.G. and Usher into stars.

His reputation came under fire last November when former girlfriend Cassandra Ventura, an R&B singer known as Cassie, accused him in a lawsuit of serial physical abuse, sexual slavery and rape during

their decade-long relationship. She agreed to an undisclosed settlement one day after suing, even as Combs denied her allegations.

Lawsuits mount

His legal pressures mounted, and he has faced several civil lawsuits by women and men who accused him of sexual assault and other misconduct. His lawyers have been fighting those cases in court. Federal agents raided his homes in Los Angeles and Miami Beach, Florida six months ago. Singer Dawn Richard, formerly of Danity Kane, last week accused Combs in a lawsuit of sexual assault, battery, sex trafficking, gender discrimination and fraud.

A Michigan judge this month ordered Combs

to pay \$100 million to Derrick Lee Smith, who said Combs drugged and sexually assaulted him at a party almost 30 years ago, after Combs failed to show up to defend himself in court. A lawyer for Combs said he would seek to dismiss that judgment. Combs has also rejected claims in a February sex trafficking lawsuit by Rodney "Lil Rod" Jones, who Combs employed as a producer on his 2023 release "The Love Album: Off the Grid." The indictment is not Combs' first brush with the law. He was acquitted in March 2001 of bribery and weapons charges in a criminal trial stemming from a nightclub shooting that left three people wounded. — AFP



Cambodian tycoon Leang Pov (left) and his wife pose for a photo next to their supercar taking part in the Gumball 3000 rally. — AFP photos



People look at supercars taking part in the Gumball 3000 rally.



A team member assists in the parking of a Rolls-Royce car.

Supercars line up at Cambodia's Angkor Wat temples

The centuries-old temples of Cambodia's famed Angkor Wat played host to a parade of Rolls-Royces, Ferraris and Lamborghinis Tuesday, although drivers were banned from revving their supercharged engines. The event was intended to promote the environmentally sensitive UNESCO-listed World Heritage site, where the ruins of the Khmer empire's greatest monuments are surrounded by lush forests and giant trees.

Tourism is vital to the Southeast Asian country and received around 6.6 million visitors a year before the COVID-19 pandemic, when numbers nosedived to below 200,000 in 2021. Visitors rebounded to nearly 5.5 mil-

lion last year, netting more than \$3 billion in revenue, but remained below pre-pandemic levels. Asked about the apparently incongruous nature of the occasion, Cambodia's tourism minister Sok Soken told AFP that strict guidelines had been imposed, with engine-revving banned "in terms of disrespect to our heritage here".

He spoke a few meters away from a Bugatti Chiron, some models of which reportedly have list prices of more than \$3 million. "The display of cars is an art of technology, an inclusion of technology and a modern way of travelling," he said, adding Cambodia "will be ready to provide hospitality to all forms of travelers". An attempt by orga-



People pose with a Ferrari car taking part in the Gumball 3000 rally.

nizers Gumball 3000, a British lifestyle brand, to set a record for the number of supercars and hypercars at a World Heritage site fell short. However, the vehicles saw high traffic from locals and tourists taking pictures and selfies. "This is the first time I have seen such modern cars at Angkor Wat," said university student Kuy Tola, 19. "It is amazing." — AFP



People look at supercars taking part in the Gumball 3000 rally.



People take photos of supercars taking part in the Gumball 3000 Rally.

Emmy ratings pick up with historic 'Shogun' wins

Television's Emmy Awards enjoyed a sizeable audience boost, with viewership rising by more than half from the previous edition's all-time low, network ABC said Monday. Some 6.87 million tuned in on Sunday night to watch Japan-set historical epic "Shogun" smash the record for most Emmy wins in a single season, picking up 18 awards at the small-screen version of the Oscars. The show about warring rivals in feudal Japan also became the first non-English-language show to claim the highly coveted best drama series prize.

The audience jump is a welcome boost for a show that — like many award ceremonies — has struggled to retain viewers in recent years. "The '76th Emmy Awards' telecast on ABC posted the award show's largest overall audience in 3 years, since the show's airing on CBS (in 2021), which enjoyed an NFL football game lead-in," said an ABC statement. Father-and-son duo Eugene and Dan Levy were broadly praised for their co-hosting of Sunday night's event, which channeled nostalgia with multiple segments honoring television's past, including a "West Wing" cast reunion. Still, the ratings are historically low. As recently as 2018, the Emmys telecast regularly topped 10 million.

Since then, the Emmys have had to contend with the Covid-19 pandemic, which required a socially distanced ceremony. And last summer's Hollywood strikes meant pushing back the 2023 edition into the following January for a ceremony watched by only 4.46 million — meaning



Japanese actress Anna Sawai (left) winner of the Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series award for "Shogun" and Japanese actor Hiroyuki Sanada winner of the Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series award for "Shogun" pose in the press room during the 76th Emmy Awards at the Peacock Theatre at L.A. Live in Los Angeles on September 15, 2024. — AFP

this year enjoyed a 54 percent rise. Awards shows generally have struggled to attract viewers over the past decade or so, as audiences fragment and younger demographics skip linear television in favor of streaming and social media.

But several shows including the Oscars have enjoyed a small uptick in their most recent editions. In Sunday night's biggest surprise, "Hacks" was named best comedy, besting previous winner "The Bear." "Baby Reindeer" triumphed in the limited series section. In addition to winning best drama, "Shogun" earned best actor and best actress awards for Hiroyuki Sanada and Anna Sawai. — AFP

BURBERRY GIVES THE TRENCH COAT A STREETWEAR EDGE



Models present creations for Burberry's Spring/Summer 2025 fashion show collection, during the London Fashion Week in London. — AFP photos



LONDON FASHION WEEK



With a Spring/Summer 2025 collection reinventing the iconic trench coat with a streetwear edge, English designer Daniel Lee brought a breath of fresh air on Monday to fashion giant Burberry, hit by financial troubles. The designer, who has been at the creative helm of Burberry for the past two years, departed from the tradition of setting the London Fashion Week show in a tent pitched in the heart of a park, opting for the concrete of the brutalist National Theatre building instead. For the venue's scenography, the creative director called on British artist Gary Hume, who redecorated the building's foyer, inspired by one of his installations from the 1990s.

Lilac carpeting and large green sheets pierced with geometric patterns added color between the grey concrete pillars. Under the eyes of celebrities - Vogue USA editor-in-chief Anna Wintour, actor Barry Keoghan, Blur singer Damon Albarn and recent Paris gold medalist Keely Hodgkinson - the models entered from one of the building's massive staircases.

The classics that make up the British brand's DNA were still there: the trench coat with turned-up collar for men, tartan in shades of grey, beige or cream, and carefully structured outlines. But even "Burberry icons evolve", wrote Daniel Lee in his note of intent, as "trench elements are deconstructed and realized in fabrics that feel light: silk poplin and linen".

For women, the designer re-made the trench as a cropped jacket, a halter cape or a parka with shoulders covered in silk organza faux feather trims, layered over delicate dresses or skirts, blending elegance with a sportier, even military style.

Spring palette

For men, the influence of sportswear fashion is even stronger, with lightweight materials and functional cuts, giving rise to outfits of flowing pants and tartan zip-up jackets, paired with sneakers or loafers. "There's a tension between looser, fluid fabrics versus leather and pieces inspired by traditional British uniforms," Lee explained. The collection also gave a nod to the resurgence of y2k fashion, with low-rise trousers, cargos and capris that end below the knee.

Before the show, Daniel Lee said he admired artist Gary Hume's "extraordinary use of color", and his palette of green, lilac and orange is reflected in the collection, which ends with glamorous gold-sequined dresses. Since his arrival at Burberry in October 2022, Lee has been on a mission to modernize the cornerstone of British luxury, which is experiencing worsening financial difficulties.

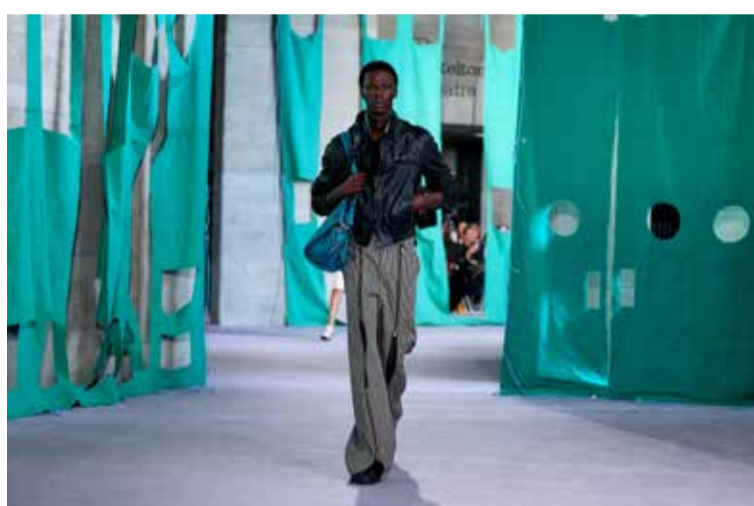
For several months now, the British fashion house has suffered from a lack of global appetite for luxury goods and unfortunate strategic choices. Next week, Burberry will exit London's FTSE 100 after 15 years at the top-tier index. It has been the FTSE 100's worst-performing company over the past year, its share price tumbling about 70 percent.

Briton Jonathan Akeroyd stepped down as CEO after a series of poor results in July after just over two years at the label, and was immediately replaced by American Joshua Schulman, former head of brands Michael Kors and Coach. On its penultimate day Monday, London Fashion Week also featured catwalks by Labrum London, Irish designer Sinead O'Dwyer and, for the first time, Edeline Lee, a favorite of Victoria Starmer, wife of Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who was in the front row of the show for the occasion. — AFP





LONDON FASHION WEEK



British politics and fashion collide at London Fashion Week

Canadian-British designer Edeline Lee presented her latest spring-summer 2025 collection at London Fashion Week (LFW) on Monday with a loyal customer in attendance — Victoria Starmer, the wife of UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer. The label with the fitting tagline “Clothing for the Future Lady”, has dressed some of Britain’s most powerful women, including Catherine, Princess of Wales and Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner.

Last year, Victoria Starmer, who generally keeps a low profile and has been praised for her style, wore a red belted dress by the designer for the Labor party conference — one of her few political appearances. Variations of the same outfit were on display in the new collection — belted jacquard dresses with flutter sleeves in cornflower, yellow, coral pink and emerald green.

At the brand’s first-ever LFW catwalk show, Lee presented tailored midi and maxi dresses, flowing pantsuits and sequined gowns intended to make the



Models present creations during a catwalk presentation for the Edeline Lee Spring/Summer 2025 collection, at London Fashion Week in London, on September 16, 2024. — AFP photos

wearer feel “polished, ready and powerful”. Attending the show on the banks of the River Thames while her husband was in Rome meeting Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni, Victoria Starmer opted for a blue and white polka-dot jumpsuit with a tailored navy-blue

jacket. However, she could not fully step away from politics. Over the weekend The Times newspaper accused Keir Starmer of breaching parliamentary rules by failing to disclose that a Labor party donor had bought more than £5,000 (\$6,600) worth of design-

er clothes for his wife. The prime minister insisted on Monday that “rules are being followed” after it was also reported that Labor’s Waheed Alli gave Keir Starmer nearly £20,000 worth of clothes, which he had declared. — AFP

JW Anderson dreams big with the mini dress at London Fashion Week



From leather tutus to unstructured knitwear, the mini dress is the centerpiece of the spring-summer 2025 collection by JW Anderson, the label of Loewe artistic director Jonathan Anderson, presented Sunday on the third day of London Fashion Week. Under the glass ceiling of Old Billingsgate, a former Victorian fish market in London’s City district, the Northern Irish designer experimented with the form, fabric, and color of the humble mini dress, playing with the possibilities of a garment often relegated to the wardrobe staple “little black dress”.

A few models donned summer dresses in sky blue satins and pink sequins, but more looked prepared for a chilly British summer, borrowing thick knitwear and leather from the winter wardrobe. Some dresses were detailed with vest buttons and sweater pockets printed directly onto the fabric. Meanwhile, pullover and blazer-style dresses brought contrasting aesthetics to the catwalk.

Dance-ready models strutted down the runway in sumptuous tutus and leotards in black, brown, and khaki leather, with others flaunting mini and maxi versions of the “balloon” skirt, which has been making a comeback since spring. Also artistic director of the LVMH group’s up-and-coming Spanish label Loewe, Anderson continues to revisit the classics in his latest collection, adding sweater sleeves or giant knitwear onto simple white or navy dresses. — AFP



Models present creations for JW Anderson’s Spring/Summer 2025 fashion show during the London Fashion Week in London. — AFP photos

Miss America, Miss World pageants accused of discrimination

A New York woman filed a complaint against the Miss America and Miss World beauty pageants Monday, accusing them of discriminating against her for being a mother. Danielle Hazel, 25, filed with the New York City Human Rights Commission after she was disqualified from the pageants for having a six-year-old son. “My dream of competing in those pageants is still on hold today because of their discriminatory entry requirements, which ban mothers from competing,” Hazel said.

For her legal representation, Hazel has tapped Gloria Allred, a lawyer from California known for taking on cases involving women’s rights. “Being pregnant or being a parent is not a crime, and should not exclude

an individual from employment or business opportunities,” Allred told reporters at a press conference.

Allred said the pageants’ eligibility rules - which stipulate that a contestant must be unmarried, childless, not pregnant and without a legally dependent person - are “based upon the antiquated stereotype that women cannot be both a mother and be beautiful, poised, passionate, talented and philanthropic.” Allred added that she has already sued another beauty pageant, Miss Universe, for similar reasons.

US beauty pageants have been rife with controversy for the past several years. In May, the 2023 winners of Miss USA and Miss Teen USA relinquished their titles, citing mental health reasons, after an administrator of the pageant’s parent organization resigned, citing a toxic work environment. Founded in 1921, Miss America is the oldest beauty pageant in the United States. Miss USA, founded in 1952, was owned by Donald Trump until 2015, the year he launched his first run for the White House. — AFP

Sports

Buoyant Bangladesh seek more history in India Test series

Bangladesh have never won any of their 13 previous matches against India

CHENNAI: Fresh from their first-ever Test series win over Pakistan, Bangladesh will chase more cricket history when they face India in Chennai from Thursday. The 2-0 sweep in Pakistan sparked celebrations at home a month after political turmoil and deadly protests in Bangladesh ousted the autocratic former premier.

But a two-Test series in India is a far more daunting prospect—Bangladesh have never won any of their 13 previous matches, losing 11 and drawing two. Both draws came at home, at Chittagong in 2007 and Fatullah in 2015.

"This will be a challenging series for us," visiting skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto said ahead of the first Test. "But after having a good series against Pakistan, there is an extra confidence in our team, as well as among all the people of the country."

India will be strong favorites to sweep the series but Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Litton Das and Mehidy Hasan Miraz all head to Chennai in good form. Mushfiqur amassed 216 in the Pakistan series while off-spinner Mehidy was the leading bowler with 10 wickets in the two matches.

The shadow of political troubles looms over the matches in Chennai and Kanpur. Star player Shakib, 37, is a former lawmaker from the ousted ruling party of ex-prime minister Sheikh Hasina. She fled a student-led revolution, escaping to India by helicopter as protesters marched on her palace, ending 15 years of iron-fisted rule.

Shakib faces a case of alleged murder, accused of culpability in the police killing of protesters. The left-hander, who bats in the middle-order and bowls

spin, went back to England to play county cricket for Surrey after having a key role in Bangladesh's success in Pakistan.

His national teammates have rallied around him. "As for Shakib, I am hopeful that he will do well," Najmul said. "He has been in good form with the ball." Bangladesh unveiled a new pace sensation in Nahid Rana in Pakistan, where the right-arm bowler clocked speeds of more than 146 kph (90 mph).

Uncapped wicketkeeper Jaker Ali comes into the squad in place of fast bowler Shoriful Islam, who pulled out with a groin injury.

Kohli back

Rohit Sharma will look to India's experienced slow bowling trio of Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel to test Bangladesh's batting on pitches that are expected to favor the spinners. Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj will lead the pace attack while Mohammed Shami recovers from ankle surgery.

India welcome back wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant to the Test squad for the first time since he nearly lost his life in a car crash in December 2022. Pant, an attacking left-handed batsman, is expected to replace Dhruv Jurel behind the stumps.

Virat Kohli is also back for his first Test since facing South Africa at Cape Town in January, having missed India's 4-1 home series win against England for the birth of his second child. New head coach Gautam Gambhir takes charge of India in a Test for the first time.

After Chennai, the second Test begins in Kan-



CHENNAI: India's Virat Kohli (C), head coach Gautam Gambhir (R) and chief selector Ajit Agarkar speak during a practice session at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Sept 17, 2024, ahead of their first cricket Test match against Bangladesh. — AFP

pur on September 27 with both part of the World Test Championship. India lead the current standings ahead of Australia. The Tests are followed by a three-

match Twenty20 series starting in Gwalior on October 6, moving to New Delhi three days later and finishing in Hyderabad on October 12. — AFP

England's Curry 'curled up and cried' after injury

LONDON: England's Tom Curry said on Monday he "curled up in a ball" and cried when told the full extent of a hip problem that saw him miss most of last season and left the Sale flanker fearing for his rugby career.

Curry, having suffered pain during England's semi-final run at last year's World Cup in France, was diagnosed with a condition meaning the ball in the hip joint is not entirely round. As he prepared for surgery, the now 26-year-old was told it might be the end of his professional career.

"It was horrible," Curry told reporters. "I was lucky because I had (girlfriend) Lilla there at the time but I literally just cried. I curled up into a ball. I just couldn't really process it—it was a surreal moment." Having undergone a six-hour operation, Curry then travelled twice a week for several months of specialist coaching sessions where he had to learn how to run again.

"I tried to run and I couldn't run," Curry said. "I think that was the toughest hurdle to get over because I just couldn't do it and it felt the same... I worked with some really special guys, their eye for detail is amazing and it genuinely taught me to run again."

Curry, following a gruelling rehabilitation regime, eventually recovered sufficiently to play just over 30 minutes of Sale's Premiership semi-final loss to Bath in June. He was then immediately recalled by Steve Borthwick for England's post-season tour of Japan and New Zealand, despite Sale boss Alex Sanderson saying the intensity of international rugby so soon after returning could jeopardize Curry's long-term prospects. But the backing from England coach Borthwick was a huge boost to Curry's morale. "It meant everything," he said. "In terms of being able to have that confidence from Steve and the coaches, it was massive. I missed a bit of the World Cup at the start, played a bit, missed the Six Nations. I just want to repay him by getting myself fit, staying fit, and playing as well as I can really." Curry insisted his injury would not alter his all-action style. — AFP



Tom Curry

Kenyan anti-doping program halted by budget cuts

NAIROBI: Kenyan athletics' battle against doping has suffered a serious blow which could result in it being banned from international competitions due to budget cuts that have halted all testing, its anti-doping agency said Tuesday.

The Anti-Doping Agency of Kenya (ADAK) says it was allocated only 20 million shillings (\$155,000) to run day-to-day programs for the financial year starting in July—far below the expected 288 million shillings (\$2.2 million).

The program was one of the victims of large-scale budget cuts imposed by the government af-

ter it was forced to scrap a tax bill that triggered massive protests in June. "This move has grounded the agency, and we are not able to fulfil our obligations, hence risking non-compliance to the World Anti-Doping Code," ADAK board chief Daniel Makdwallo told reporters in Nairobi.

"I urge the national treasury to reconsider this funding gap and reinstate the budget for the agency in order to protect Kenyan athletes." Kenya has invested massively to clean up its image after a string of doping scandals around the 2016 Rio Olympics led to it being declared non-compliant by WADA.

It created its revamped anti-doping agency that year, and it has shown its teeth, sanctioning 78 athletes in the last three years alone. In June, it handed out its first lifetime ban to marathon runner Beatrice Toroitich and a six-year ban to 10km record-holder Rhonex Kipruto. The government announced in April 2023 that it would invest \$25 million over five years to combat the problem. — AFP

Frustrated N Zealand, confident S Lanka meet in two-Test series

COLOMBO: New Zealand play Sri Lanka in the first of two Tests at Galle from Wednesday as the visitors look to shake off the frustration of their abandoned match with Afghanistan.

On a spin-friendly pitch they face an emboldened Sri Lanka who last week ended a 10-year wait for a Test win in England. New Zealand's one-off Test against Afghanistan at Greater Noida, near New Delhi, was meanwhile washed out without a ball being bowled. But skipper Tim Southee said "exciting times" lie ahead with a hectic schedule of eight Tests in 12 weeks on three continents, starting with Sri Lanka. World Test Championship points are on the line and the Black Caps are third behind India and Australia in the table. Sri Lanka are fifth.

"We haven't played a Test match since March, but exciting times are ahead of us as we play eight games between now and December," Southee told reporters in Galle. New Zealand will then play a three-Test series away in India beginning in October, before another three-Test series against England back home.

"We are looking forward to making an impact and move forward," Southee added. "We know how important points in these games are." The tourists will bank heavily on ex-captain Kane Williamson, who has an outstanding record against Sri Lanka, with Southee calling the 34-year-old "vital".

Kane, New Zealand's highest run-scorer in Test cricket and the world's number-two ranked batsman, averages 78 against Sri Lanka, way above his career average of 54. "He has had a lot of success against Sri Lanka," Southee said. "He's a great performer to have in the side against any opposition." His experience will be vital for us in this series."

'Tough'

The first Test, in the imposing grounds beneath the walls of the 17th century Galle Fort, will have a rest day on Saturday when Sri Lanka votes at a presidential election.



GALLE: Sri Lanka's captain Dhananjanaya De Silva (C) plays football during a practice session on the eve of their first Test cricket match against New Zealand at the Galle International Cricket Stadium in Galle. — AFP

The final match will also be played at Galle, from September 26. Galle traditionally helps spin bowling and the New Zealanders have expert advice, having recruited Sri Lanka's skilled former go-to bowler Rangana Herath as spin coach for the tour. Left-armers Ajaz Patel and Mitchell Santner are their key spin bowlers. Off-break all-rounder Glenn Phillips, as well as Michael Bracewell and left-arm spinner Rachin Ravindra, give them options.

Sri Lanka have a strong line-up too, switching bowlers from their winning team against England, where the visitors clinched the third Test by eight wickets at The Oval. England took the series 2-1 after victories at Old Trafford (by five wickets) and Lord's (by 190 runs).

Sri Lanka have left out pace bowlers Vishwa Fernando and Milan Ratnayake, bringing in left-arm spinner Prabhath Jayasuriya and off-spinner Ramesh

Mendis. "We know that it is tough on the seamers, who did so well in England, but given the conditions in Galle, we have to leave out two of them," coach Sanath Jayasuriya told reporters. The hosts have also juggled around their batting line-up, promoting Kamindu Mendis, player of the series in England, to number five from number seven.

Sri Lanka: Dimuth Karunaratne, Pathum Nissanka, Dinesh Chandimal, Angelo Mathews, Kamindu Mendis, Dhananjanaya de Silva (capt), Kusal Mendis (wkt), Ramesh Mendis, Prabhath Jayasuriya, Lahiru Kumara, Asitha Fernando.

New Zealand: Tim Southee (capt), Tom Blundell (wkt), Michael Bracewell, Devon Conway, Matt Henry, Tom Latham, Daryl Mitchell, Will O'Rourke, Ajaz Patel, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner, Ben Sears, Kane Williamson, Will Young. — AFP

Raducanu into Korea Open second round

SEOUL: Emma Raducanu got her Korea Open campaign off to a winning start with a hard-fought 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7-5) victory over American Peyton Stearns on Tuesday.

Britain's Raducanu is looking to make an impact in Seoul after a string of last-minute withdrawals, including world number one Iga Swiatek. US Open runner-up Jessica Pegula and former Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina.

The 2021 US Open champion Raducanu, ranked 70th in the world, had to dig deep to beat her 48th-ranked opponent in steamy conditions in a match that lasted 2hr 43min. "I'm proud to have made it through to the next round," said the 21-year-old Raducanu, who is unseeded.

"Thank you to everyone for sticking around and watching us. It was tough, it was very humid, the balls were bouncing around a lot." Raducanu's next opponent will be China's Yue Yuan, the eighth seed.

"It was a tough match to get through," added Raducanu. "I haven't played many matches in the last few months and Peyton is a really good player in really good form, so I'm pretty pleased." Raducanu, who has failed to build on her stunning US Open success, stormed into a 4-1 first-set lead but let her opponent come back before edging her in the tiebreak. Raducanu struggled to shake off Stearns in the second set and could not finish the job when serving for the match at 5-3. She had to battle some more to take the second set to a tiebreak but then rode a late surge of momentum to clinch the match in straight sets.

American Hailey Baptiste joined her in the second round after beating compatriot and former US Open champion Sloane Stephens 7-6 (7/4), 6-2. Sixth seed Yulia Putintseva of Kazakhstan was knocked out after a 6-3, 7-6 (7/5) loss to American Amanda Anisimova. Play was delayed for 45 minutes at the start of the day for excessive heat. — AFP



Emma Raducanu

Sports

Japanese players in vogue as English clubs widen horizons

Japanese players had mixed success in Premier League since Junichi Inamoto

TOKYO: Japanese players are moving to English football in record numbers and more look set to follow with clubs attracted by their quality, strong work ethic and value for money. Kaoru Mitoma is the standout talent of five Japanese players in the Premier League, with eight more in the Championship and two in League One.

Liverpool midfielder Wataru Endo, the captain of Japan, believes his compatriots are "being held in higher esteem" by English clubs compared to the past. "The staff at Liverpool ask me about lots of Japanese players, not necessarily with a view to a transfer but just saying this or that player is a good player," he said.

"It feels like there is more interest in Japanese players from around the world." Currently also in England's top flight are Daichi Kamada (Crystal Palace), Takehiro Tomiyasu (Arsenal) and Yukihiro Sugawara (Southampton).

'A bit of fear'

Japanese players have had mixed success in the Premier League since Junichi Inamoto became the first when he joined Arsenal in 2001. Inamoto left for Fulham after a single season where he failed to make a league appearance for the Gunners.

Shinji Kagawa won the Premier League with Manchester United in 2013 but drifted to the margins after a bright start and returned to Borussia Dortmund after an up-and-down two years. FIFA-registered CAA Base agent Joel Pannick, who has 50 Japanese players on his books, says English clubs previously had "a bit of a fear of Japanese players".

"The stereotypical approach would be that the player would be technically very good but would they be physical enough? Would they be strong enough?" he told AFP. "Previously maybe Japanese

players were pigeonholed—they go to Germany or Holland, where it's more technical."

Pannick says the recent success of Japanese players at British clubs, especially at Celtic under former J. League and now Tottenham coach Ange Postecoglou, has helped change perceptions. He also says the COVID pandemic changed the way clubs scout players, making video footage and data from around the world more readily available.

"Teams wouldn't want to spend the time and money taking a risk going to a place far away when they don't know what they're going to see when they get there," he said. "Now that everything is available to watch hours or minutes after the match, it has removed any fear of 'should the Japanese market be one that we look at?'"

Quality and value

Relatively cheap transfer fees have made Japanese players a canny investment, with Pannick calling them "more attractively valued than the equivalent player from anywhere else in the world". Brighton paid just 2.5 million pounds to sign the winger Mitoma from the J. League in 2021, while prolific goalscorer Kyogo Furuhashi joined Celtic for 4.5 million pounds the same year.

Furuhashi was heavily linked with Manchester City this summer. The prices mean that in recent transfer windows it has mostly been Championship clubs entering the market for Japanese players. Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu says players are willing to play in the second tier and work their way up.

"The J. League is a very good league but the players want to play at the highest level," said Moriyasu. "The Premier League is where the best players in the world are and they want to be there too. I think a lot of players have moved to the Championship with a view to making the step up."



MANAMA: (FILES) Japan's forward #10 Daichi Kamada and Bahrain's midfielder #08 Mohamed Marhoon vie for the ball during the 2026 FIFA World Cup Asian qualification football match between Bahrain and Japan. — AFP

Pannick says post-Brexit changes to work permit rules have forced English clubs to look beyond Europe for signings and be "more open-minded and creative". Japan's recent performances at the World Cup, which included wins over Germany and Spain in Qatar in 2022, have put their players firmly in the shop window.

Pannick says they have the mentality to make

the most of the opportunity. "With the players I've worked with, if something hasn't gone right, if they've been taken out of the team or if they're asked to play in a position that's not their favorite, the default response is: what can I do better?" he said.

"The players identify themselves as ambassadors of Japan and they want to give a good account of themselves." — AFP

Former Villa striker Shaw dies aged 63

LONDON: Former Aston Villa striker Gary Shaw, who helped the club to their shock European Cup triumph in 1982, died on Monday aged 63. Shaw was a member of the Villa side that won the First Division title in 1981 and then memorably stunned German giants Bayern Munich in the European Cup final 12 months later.

The forward died after recently going into hospital following a head injury suffered in a fall. "Aston Villa Football Club is deeply shocked and profoundly saddened to learn that Gary Shaw, one of our European Cup-winning heroes, has passed away," a statement said. "Gary was one of our own, a talented striker who delighted supporters with his goalscoring exploits which helped fire Villa to success in the 1980s. Individual accolades would also follow for a player who was idolized by many on the terraces.

"He passed away peacefully earlier today surrounded by his family, who asked Aston Villa to release a statement on their behalf." Shaw's death came on the eve of Villa's first match in the Champions League for 41 years.

Unai Emery's side face Young Boys in Switzerland on Tuesday and the Villa manager urged his team to win the match in tribute to Shaw. "My condolences to the family and all the supporters at Villa," said Emery, whose team will wear black armbands for the fixture in Bern.

"We have a memory always, in our training ground a picture of 1982 and the European Cup. He



Gary Shaw

was a protagonist of that. My condolences to them. "Yes, I think it's sad and we can use it as motivation."

Shaw joined Villa as an apprentice and went on to score 79 times in 213 appearances, including 20 goals in their 1981 title-winning campaign. He was named PFA Young Player of the Year after Villa's first English title since 1910.

Shaw scored three goals in Villa's run to European Cup glory, including a crucial quarter-final strike against Dynamo Kiev. Peter Withe's winner against Bayern in Rotterdam lifted the team to previously



unimaginable heights, with Birmingham-born Shaw savoring the triumph more than most.

Yet within a year of Villa's epic victory, Shaw suffered a knee injury in a match against Nottingham Forest that curtailed his progress and ultimately saw him retire from the game after six operations.

He left the club in 1988 for spells in Denmark and Austria, before ending his career in 1992 after short stints at Walsall, Kilmarnock and Shrewsbury. Shaw later worked as a statistical analyst and a matchday ambassador for Villa. — AFP

Yokohama thrashed 7-3 in Champions League goal fest

SEOUL: Asian Champions League debutants Gwangju FC scored after just 90 seconds on the way to a 7-3 home hammering of last year's runners-up Yokohama F-Marinos on Tuesday. Also on the second night of action in Asia's top club competition, which has been rebranded as the Champions League Elite, China's Shandong Taishan won 3-1 at home to Central Coast Mariners of Australia.

South Korea's Gwangju grabbed an early lead over Yokohama of Japan when Jasir Asani's tame effort from outside the box squirmed under the grasp of visiting goalkeeper Riku Terakado. The hosts extended their lead at a sparsely attended Gwangju World Cup Stadium on the quarter-hour mark when Oh Hu-seong headed in unmarked at the back post.

As the rain came down, Yokohama hit back on 34 minutes when the Brazilian Elber slammed home. The game turned goal crazy in the second half, with Albanian international Asani netting twice more for his hat-trick and the hosts adding three more.

Elber, with his second, and Takuma Nishimura pulled goals back for the bedraggled away team, who were reduced to 10 men late on. The J. League's Yokohama are coached by the Australian John Hutchinson following the sacking of compatriot Harry Kewell after just six months in the job. — AFP

Players close to strike action over congested schedule

MANCHESTER: Players could be close to strike action over the amount of games they are required to play, Manchester City midfielder Rodri warned on Tuesday on the eve of their Champions League opener against Inter Milan.

Expanded Champions League and FIFA Club World Cup formats, alongside enlarged national team competitions, has made for a greater number of games for top teams and players, and Rodri is the latest to say the workload is too great.

"I think we're close to that (striking)," Rodri told reporters. "It's the general opinion of the players, and if it keeps this way, we'll have no other option. I really think it's something that worries us. We are the guys who suffer." The optimal number of games "in which a player can perform at the high-

est level," the Spaniard said, is between 40 and 50.

"After that, you drop because it's impossible to sustain the physical level," he added. "This year, we're going to go until 70, maybe 80 (games), depends on how far you go into competitions. "I think it's too much. We have to take care of ourselves, because we are the main characters of this sport or business. Not everything is money or marketing, it is also the quality of the show. When I rest, when I'm not tired, I perform better. And if people want to see better football, we need to rest."

Last season, the 28-year-old's campaign extended through to Spain's European Championship victory on July 14, along with City teammates Kyle Walker and Phil Foden, who finished runners-up with England at the tournament in Germany.

City defender Manuel Akanji half-joked recently that he may have to retire at 30 because of the gruelling schedule. "It's so tough," the Swiss player said. "You don't just think about this season—but also next season. Let's say we win the league or cup, then go to the final of the Club World Cup: the Community Shield is three weeks after. So when do we have holidays?"

City host Inter Milan in a repeat of the 2023 Champions League final, won by the English side as part of their first-ever treble. It is one of eight first-phase games, followed by a potential playoff before the last 16 kicks off.

City manager Pep Guardiola said his tactics for the new format will be to simply "win our first game, then the next one, then we will see." City forward Erling Haaland could overtake Cristiano Ronaldo as the fastest player to reach 100 goals for a single club, having scored 99 goals in 103 appearances in all competitions—including nine in four league games this season. Ronaldo netted 100 in 105 matches for Real Madrid. "I played for 11 years and scored 11 goals. This guy (Haaland), in four games he's scored nine," Guardiola said with a laugh.

"The opponents will find a solution (to contain the Norwegian), and we have to find a solution to beat them, to find a way." Rodri said Haaland's blistering start to the season is a great example of the importance of rest. The striker had much of the summer off as Norway did not qualify for Euro 2024.

The new 32-team Club World Cup in the



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Spanish midfielder #16 Rodri reacts during a press conference at the Manchester City's training ground, in Manchester, north-west England. — AFP

United States, meanwhile, ends on July 13, about a month before the next Premier League campaign kicks off, which will then lead into the 2026 World Cup. — Reuters

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, Shaikh Nawaz, S/o Shaikh Iliyaz, aged about 31 years, residing at No. 173, N.G. Kareem Block, 3rd Cross, Shanthinagar, Mysore-570019, have my from Shaiq Nawaz to Shaikh Nawaz in my passport No. W0760072 on my own freewill & sworn in before Notary Akbar Shariff vide affidavit dated 12-9-2024, in future, I will be known, called and identified as Shaikh Nawaz. (# 6166 18/09/2024)

I, Abdul Kadar, holder of passport no. Z3201026 has changed my name to Abdulqadir Jafar Ali (given name) Tapiya (surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Abdulqadir Jafar Ali Tapiya and also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (16/09/2024)

Mets edge Nats for 11th walk-off win

Dodgers ride another big inning to split with Braves



DENVER: Brendan Rodgers #7 of the Colorado Rockies hits a ground ball that would result in an out at second base and a throwing error on the double play attempt allowing a game-winning run to score in the ninth inning against the Arizona Diamondbacks at Coors Field on September 16, 2024 in Denver, Colorado. — AFP

NEW YORK: Starling Marte hit a game-ending single with one out in the 10th inning as the New York Mets earned a 2-1 victory over the visiting Washington Nationals on Monday. After Tyrone Taylor was intentionally walked leading off the inning, Francisco Alvarez hit a fly ball to the warning track in right field to advance pinch runner Harrison Bader, who came on for automatic runner Mark Vientos. Five pitches later, Marte won it by lining a 3-1 fastball from Jacob Barnes (8-3) into left field to easily score Bader. After Marte ensured the Mets (82-68) avoided their third straight loss, he was mobbed by his teammates at second base. The Mets logged their 11th walk-off win of the season on a night when Francisco Lindor did not play to a lower back injury. The Braves (81-69) lost to the Dodgers on Monday night, giving New York a one-game lead over Atlanta in the race for the third National League wild-card spot. Washington starter Jake Irvin allowed just one run on four hits in 7 1/3 innings. He struck out five, walked one and got 11 outs via groundballs. Washington's Jose Tena, who has reached base safely in 12 straight games, delivered an RBI single in the fourth inning.

Guardians 4, Twins 3

Rookie Kyle Manzardo clubbed a go-ahead two-run homer in the eighth inning and Cleveland rallied for a victory over visiting Minnesota. The Guardians trailed 3-0 after three frames and got just 2 2/3 innings from starter Matthew Boyd. However, five relievers combined to allow just three hits the rest of the way as the Guardians chipped away and came out on top. Angel Martinez paced the Cleveland of-

fense with three hits and an RBI.

Minnesota reliever Griffin Jax (4-5) got out of a bases-loaded jam in the seventh with the Twins up 3-2, but the American League Central-leading Guardians got to him an inning later. Starter Pablo Lopez allowed eight hits and walked two but yielded just two runs in 6 1/3 innings for the Twins, who own the AL's third and final wild-card spot despite being mired in a 9-18 rut. Lopez fanned four.

Cardinals 4, Pirates 0

Andre Pallante allowed just four hits over seven innings as St. Louis blanked visiting Pittsburgh. Pallante (7-8) struck out a career-high nine batters and walked one as the Cardinals snapped their three-game losing streak. Andrew Kittredge tossed a perfect eighth inning for the Cardinals and Ryan Fernandez did the same in the ninth to wrap up the opener of a four-game series. Paul Skenes (10-3) allowed one run on four hits in six innings for the Pirates, who lost for the third time in four games. Skenes struck out seven and walked one while lowering his ERA to 2.07. Pittsburgh reliever Kyle Nicolas exited the game with an injury in the eighth inning after walking the only batter he faced.

Brewers 6, Phillies 2

William Contreras doubled home two runs and Aaron Civale allowed one run over five-plus innings to pace Milwaukee to a victory over visiting Philadelphia in the opener of a three-game series between division leaders. Milwaukee's magic number to clinch the National League Central dropped to two. Civa-

le (7-8) exited after allowing consecutive singles by Kyle Schwarber and Trea Turner to open the sixth. He walked one and fanned six in his outing. Colin Rea, who has made 25 starts this season, held the Phillies scoreless for the final 2 2/3 innings to earn his first career save. Philadelphia leads the NL East by eight games over the New York Mets and is one game in front of the Los Angeles Dodgers for the best record in the NL. Philadelphia starter Ranger Suarez (12-7) allowed three runs on four hits in five innings.

Dodgers 9, Braves 0

Freddie Freeman's three-run homer highlighted a six-run seventh-inning rally and sparked visiting Los Angeles to a win over Atlanta. By splitting the four-game series, the Dodgers (89-61) won the season series 5-2 against the Braves. Atlanta (81-69) fell one game behind the New York Mets in the race for the final National League wild-card spot. Los Angeles' Yoshinobu Yamamoto made another good start in his return from a strained rotator cuff that kept him sidelined for nearly three months. He pitched four scoreless innings and allowed four hits and two walks while striking out three. The winning pitcher was Evan Phillips (4-1), who pitched a perfect fifth inning.

Cubs 9, Athletics 2

Shota Imanaga threw six quality innings, Dansby Swanson homered and drove in four runs as Chicago beat visiting Oakland. Imanaga (14-3) allowed two runs on five hits while walking three and striking out 11 as the Cubs (77-73) won their second straight. Imanaga has come away with a win in each of his

past five starts. Isaac Paredes and Miguel Amaya each finished 3-for-4 with two RBIs for Chicago, and Seiya Suzuki went 3-for-5 as the Cubs tallied 18 hits. Brent Rooker went 2-for-5 with a homer and a pair of RBIs for Oakland (65-86), which dropped its third straight. Jacob Wilson and Tyler Soderstrom also tallied two hits apiece for the A's.

Tigers 7, Royals 6

Matt Vierling's third hit of the ninth, a sixth-inning RBI single, capped a rally from a 4-0 deficit as visiting Detroit beat Kansas City. Parker Meadows, Spencer Torkelson and McKinstry had two hits apiece for the Tigers, who have won 8 of 11. Brennan Hanifee (1-1) gave up one run in 2 1/3 innings for his first major league win, and Jason Foley earned his 24th save. Bobby Witt Jr. hit a grand slam and he, Isbel and Yuli Gurriel each had two hits for the Royals. Sam Long (3-2) took the loss in relief.

Rockies 3, Diamondbacks 2

Brenton Doyle scored on a throwing error by shortstop Geraldo Perdomo in the bottom of the ninth inning as host Colorado rallied to beat Arizona. Doyle finished with two hits and two stolen bases and Ezequiel Tovar and Hunter Goodman went deep for the Rockies (58-93), which beat the Diamondbacks (83-67) for just the third time in 11 tries this season. Seth Halvorsen (2-0) pitched two innings of relief for the win. The loss cut Arizona's lead in the National League wild-card race to a game over the New York Mets and two over Atlanta. Marte homered and Gabriel Moreno had two hits for the D-backs. — Reuters

Jordan Chiles appeals decision that stripped her of bronze medal

NEW YORK: US gymnast Jordan Chiles on Monday filed an appeal in the Federal Supreme Court of Switzerland to overturn a decision that stripped her of her Olympic bronze medal in the women's floor event at the Paris Games.

Chiles was forced to give up the medal when the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) last month ruled in favour of an appeal by Romanian gymnast Ana Maria Barbosu, who was subsequently awarded the bronze. Barbosu and her team had appealed to CAS that an inquiry filed by the U.S. team over the results of the floor exercise, which led to Chiles's initial score being revised upwards, had been registered four seconds after the one-minute deadline allowed by the International Gymnastics Federation.

The success of the Romanian appeal meant Chiles's score was reduced and she fell out of third place behind Brazilian winner Rebeca Andrade and silver



Jordan Chiles

medallist Simone Biles, her American teammate. In the appeal, lawyers for Chiles argue that CAS refused to consider video footage that "unequivocally proves" that the inquiry was submitted in time.

They also argue that Hamid Gharavi, the president of the CAS panel that revoked Chiles's bronze medal, had a conflict of interest. "Mr. Gharavi has acted as

counsel for Romania for almost a decade and was actively representing Romania at the time of the CAS arbitration," attorneys for Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLC said in a press release.

The lawyers also said that Chiles was only notified of the CAS hearing a few hours before it began, not giving her the necessary time to prepare a defense. "From start to finish, the procedures leading to the CAS panel's decision were fundamentally unfair, and it is no surprise that they resulted in an unjust decision," the lawyers said.

USA Gymnastics and the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee all voiced their support for Chiles's appeal. A decision from the court is expected in the next four to six months, a source told Reuters. In an Instagram post last month, Chiles called the CAS decision "unjust" and a "significant blow."

The Olympian, who also won team gold with Biles in Paris, has said she would fight on and holds out hope that she will ultimately prevail. "I am now confronted with one of the most challenging moments of my career," she said in the post. "I will approach this challenge as I have others—and I will make every effort to ensure that justice is done. I believe that at the end of this journey, the people in control will do the right thing." — Reuters

Coach Castro parts ways with Al Nassr

RIYADH: Cristiano Ronaldo's Saudi club Al Nassr announced the departure of Portuguese coach Luis Castro on Tuesday, a day after starting their AFC Champions League Elite campaign with a disappointing draw. Monday's 1-1 stalemate with Iraq's Al Shorta in the Asian competition compounded a slow start to the domestic season with the current contract of Ronaldo, 39, due to expire next summer. "Al Nassr can announce that head coach Luis Castro has left the club," said a statement posted on X. "Everyone at Al Nassr would like to thank Luis and his staff for their dedicated work during the past 14 months, wishing them the best of luck for the future." Castro, 63, is the third coach to depart Al Nassr since Ronaldo's groundbreaking arrival in early 2023 on a contract that was said to net him 400 million euros over two-and-a-half years. Frenchman Rudi Garcia quickly left that April, followed by a brief stint by Croatian coach Dinko Jelenc before Castro was appointed in July last year. The highly decorated Ronaldo is yet to win a Saudi trophy with the Riyadh club, with his sole silverware so far being last year's Arab Club Champions Cup. — AFP