

R₊
RIDE SAFE

BOOK YOUR RIDE NOW

DOWNLOAD THE APP NOW

@ridesafe.app

2 Global indices mirror Kuwait's progress in various sectors



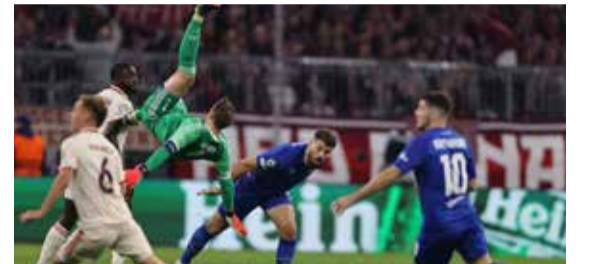
7 Only 'consequential' presidents get shot at, Trump boasts at rally



9 Tupperware files for bankruptcy as colorful containers lose relevance



16 Bayern hit nine, Real and Liverpool win as Champions League kicks off



Kuwait launches space center

Amir hails efforts of Kuwaiti scientists, calls for scientific research



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, flanked by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, receives a detailed explanation from Director of the National Satellite Project Dr Hala Al-Jassar during a ceremony to launch a national space science center at Bayan Palace on Sept 18, 2024. — KUNA (See Page 3)

KUWAIT: Under the patronage and in the presence of HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a ceremony was held at Bayan Palace on Wednesday to launch a national space science center. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and senior state officials attended the event.

HH the Amir arrived at the venue and was warmly welcomed by Director General of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) Dr Ameenah Rajab Farhan and board members. HH the Amir was apprised of Kuwaiti satellite images and listened to a detailed explanation from the Director of the National Satellite Project Dr Hala Al-Jassar.

Addressing the event, HH the Amir commended the efforts of Kuwaiti creative and distinguished researchers in serving their country. He underlined that supporting scientific research is the key to advancement, in which Kuwait is interested, amid an evolving era of artificial intelligence, renewable en-

ergy and space science. He regarded backing scientific research, along with promoting national identity, as the basis of the country's vision, reminiscing the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's insight for establishing a prosperous scientific, technological and innovative culture for the sake of a sustainable Kuwait.

HH the Amir added that while seeking to create a scientific environment that is based on state-of-the-art scientific research and contributes to developing Kuwaiti people's capabilities in all scientific fields, especially space science, it is necessary to laud KFAS' unwavering efforts. The eagerness of KFAS' administration and staff to boost the efficiency of distinguished and creative people amid mounting requirements and future ambitions must also be admired, he affirmed.

In this context, HH the Amir instructed this august foundation's staff to keep drawing in distinguished Kuwaitis specializing in various domains and to exert ardent efforts to place Kuwait among pioneering countries

Continued on Page 6

NEWS IN BRIEF

Honking could land you in jail

KUWAIT: Police on Wednesday warned commuters that the unnecessary use of the vehicle's horn by honking loudly is punishable by a fine of KD 25 and it could land drivers in jail if the matter reaches court. Lt Col Abdullah Buhassan said honking loudly, especially in residential areas, is a major penalty and drivers are allowed to honk only to avoid imminent danger from an incoming vehicle.

Ban on cash car sale transactions

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Al-Ajeel issued a decision banning cash transactions in all car sales, effective Oct 1, with payments limited to banking channels. The ministry explained that this move aims to combat money laundering and financial crimes by allowing authorities to track the flow and sources of funds. The decision is part of broader efforts to protect Kuwait's economy and international reputation from the harm caused by financial crimes like money laundering.

Evening school for juvenile delinquents

KUWAIT: The ministry of social affairs, in collaboration with the ministry of education, opened a new evening school for delinquent juveniles at the juvenile complex. This initiative aims to provide a comprehensive educational environment for 29 male and female students from various academic stages. The school is part of a broader strategy to support and educate juveniles in shelters, ensuring a high-quality learning atmosphere under the supervision of specialized staff. The effort is intended to help rehabilitate the students and reintegrate them positively into society.

Kuwait cuts discount rate by 25 bps as US Fed makes larger cut

KUWAIT/WASHINGTON: The Central Bank of Kuwait on Wednesday cut its discount rate by 25 basis points to 4.00 percent from 4.25 percent, a statement said, after the Federal Reserve cut US interest rates by half a percentage point.

This is the Fed's first reduction since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, sharply lowering bor-

rowing costs shortly before November's presidential election. The Fed's decision will affect the rates at which commercial banks lend to consumers and businesses, bringing down the cost of borrowing on everything from mortgages to credit cards.

The news will likely be well-received by Democratic candidate Kamala Harris, who has looked to highlight President Joe Biden's economic record in her race against Donald Trump. Policymakers voted 11-to-1 in favor of lowering the US central bank's benchmark rate to between 4.75 percent and 5.00 percent, the Fed announced in a statement. The key holdout was Fed governor Michelle Bowman, who supported a more conventional quarter-point cut.

The Fed said its rate-setting committee "has

gained greater confidence that inflation is moving sustainably toward 2 percent, and judges that the risks to achieving its employment and inflation goals are roughly in balance." The bank has a dual mandate from Congress to act independently to tackle both inflation and employment.

Analysts were expecting the Fed to cut rates on Wednesday, as inflation eases toward the bank's long-term target of two percent, and the labor market continues to cool in the surprisingly resilient post-COVID economy. But they were highly uncertain about the size of the move, with some anticipating a small cut of a quarter of a percentage point, and others predicting the more significant half-point cut, which carries a greater risk of reigniting inflation. — Agencies

New device blasts hit Hezbollah

BEIRUT: A second wave of device explosions killed nine people and wounded more than 300 in Hezbollah strongholds of Lebanon on Wednesday, officials said, stoking fears of an all-out war in the region. A source close to Hezbollah said walkie-talkies used by its members blew up in its Beirut stronghold, with state media reporting similar blasts in south and east Lebanon.

AFPTV footage showed people running for cover when an explosion

went off during a funeral for Hezbollah militants in south Beirut in the afternoon. Nine people were killed and more than 100 wounded in the latest attacks, the health ministry said, also describing the devices targeted as walkie-talkies.

It came a day after the simultaneous explosion of hundreds of paging devices used by Hezbollah killed 12 people, including two children, and wounded up to 2,800 others across Lebanon, in an unprecedented attack blamed on the Zionist entity. There was no comment from the Zionist entity, which only hours before Tuesday's attacks had announced it was broadening the aims of its war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip to include its fight against the Palestinian group's ally Hezbollah.

Continued on Page 6



SAIDA, Lebanon: People and first responders gather at the scene of a device explosion on Sept 18, 2024. — AFP

UN demands end to Zionist occupation of Palestine in a year

UNITED NATIONS: UN member states formally demanded in a non-binding resolution Wednesday an end to the Zionist occupation of the Palestinian territories within 12 months and sanctions for non-compliance. The text, which the Zionist entity claimed would fuel violence if adopted, is based on an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice calling the Zionist entity's occupation since 1967 "unlawful". There were 124 votes in fa-

vor, 14 against and 43 abstentions.

Arab countries called the special session of the assembly just days before dozens of heads of state and government meet at the UN headquarters to address the kick-off of this year's General Assembly session. The resolution "demands that (the Zionist 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 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 on Monday.

Continued on Page 6



NEW YORK: Palestinian representative Riyad Mansour applauds the result of a vote at the United Nations headquarters on Sept 18, 2024. — AFP



Crown Prince receives dignitaries, condolences



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Al-Sabah Family received the representative of the President of UAE Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Sheikh Hamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan and the accompanying delegation. The guests offered their condolences over the passing of His Highness the late Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. (Center) His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister and the Royal Family received on Wednesday the envoy of Bahrain's King Hamad Bin Essa Al-Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salmaan bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, Advisor to the King Sheikh Khaled Al-Khalifa and the accompanying delegation. (Right) His Highness the Crown Prince also received the King of Saudi Arabia's envoy, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Mohammad Bin Salman, Minister of Interior Affairs Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud Al-Saud and the accompanying delegation. — KUNA photos

New study shows the impact of dust storms, extreme heat on diabetics

Dust particles may cause damage to blood vessels, increase inflammation

KUWAIT: Dasman Diabetes Institute, established by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), announced Wednesday that it has published a new study on the link between high temperatures, dust storms, and increased hospitalization rates for diabetics. The institute's acting director general, Dr Faisal Al-Rifai, said in a statement that the study, published in the British BMJ ODR journal issued by the British Medical Association in cooperation with the American Diabetes Association (ADA), was conducted by a research team from the institute in cooperation with Harvard University and the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) under the title "The combined impact of dust storms and extreme heat on diabetics in Kuwait".

Dr Al-Rifai said that the study showed the health challenges facing the country in terms of the spread of dia-

betes and obesity with harsh environmental conditions such as dust storms and extreme heat. He explained that the study's supervisors, Dr Hamad Yassin from the institute, Dr Barak Al-Ahmad from Kuwait University, and Dr Ali Al-Hamoud from Scientific Research, collected daily dust samples using dedicated devices during the period from 2017 to 2019 and analyzed them to determine dust pollution levels, indicating that temperature data was collected from meteorological stations.

He stated that the results of this study, which was approved by the Ministry of Health, showed that dust storms and extreme heat cause diabetics to significantly need hospital treatment. He pointed out that the aim of publishing the results of such studies is to raise awareness, especially among diabetics, and urge them to take the necessary measures and precautions, such as

avoiding going out during changing weather conditions, intense heat and dust, drinking water, wearing masks, taking precautions, and ensuring precautionary measures for their safety.

Al-Rifai stressed that the institute spares no effort in working to implement its mission, which is to combat diabetes in Kuwait through research, integrated prevention, training, education, and providing optimal treatment. For his part, the Director of the Research Sector at the Institute, Professor Fahd Al-Mulla, commented on the results of the study that high temperatures lead to increased heat stress, which exacerbates glucose control problems and increases the likelihood of complications. Al-Mulla pointed to a number of these complications, including foot ulcers and high or low blood sugar levels. Fine dust par-



icles may also cause damage to blood vessels and increase inflammation, which further complicates the condition of diabetic patients. — KUNA

A call to defend Arabic language and culture

In my view

Dr Khalid A Al-Saleh

local@kuwaittimes.com

What is happening in our Gulf? It feels like there's a war against our Arabic language, aimed at erasing our culture. The wealthy, who own malls, major stores, restaurant chains and hotels, must defend our culture and language as they are integral parts of our identity — don't you agree? In hotels, malls and some major restaurants, employees are instructed not to speak Arabic — and where? Here, in the Arabian Gulf! Many have spoken out, scholars have written and studies have highlighted the importance of language in preserving identity.

Yet, the more we raise our voices, the more schools push our children to prioritize learning any language but Arabic. And, each time a seminar or conference is held to support our language, it feels like another attack is waged against it. Decades ago, we were demanding that science be taught in Arabic. Today, we're asking for something even simpler: That our daily conversations and interactions happen in our own language. An English-speaking foreigner in our countries doesn't need to know a single Arabic word, but an Arab who doesn't speak another language will struggle. It's unbelievable!

In some Gulf airports, you'll only find foreign books for sale, and if there is an Arabic book, it's placed in a hidden corner, almost invisible. If you check into a hotel in our countries and don't speak English, you'll struggle to communicate — even for something as simple as saying "I want tea" (and "tea" is a universal word). Yet, hotel staff and employees in major stores are often instructed not to speak Arabic. And where is this happening? Right here in the Arabian Peninsula!

A year ago, I met with the Arabization committee alongside a dedicated group of language defenders from all parts of the Arab world. We shared our concerns, and we even shed tears together. When we requested a pan-Arab conference to defend the Arabic language, we couldn't find an official or businessman willing to sponsor it. Businessmen who own hotels, malls and major stores: You have a significant responsibility to stand up in support of our nation's culture. God willing, one of you will take the initiative to create a model Arabic establishment — profitable and proud of its language — right here in our countries. Even those who have become wealthier and expanded beyond the Gulf are responsible for supporting and spreading our language, instead of contributing to its decline, which we witness today with great regret.

We are living through a tsunami of cultural erosion that no one seems able to resist. We Arabs are the only people facing this storm, while others around the world continue to embrace their languages. They study, speak and live in their own tongues in restaurants, hotels, and stores. Some of these countries have populations of just a few million, and some speak languages not even recognized as official by the United Nations, yet they never put another language ahead of their own. They take pride in their language and culture. We ask Allah to guide the businessmen of our Gulf to become champions of our language, preserving the culture of our Arab nation.

Cabinet approves the suspension of Afiya contract

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Cabinet endorsed on Tuesday the temporary suspension of Law No 114 of 2024 regarding providing health insurance for retired citizens and Law No 71 of 2023 for one year. During the Cabinet meeting held at Bayan Palace under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi told the Cabinet about the termination of a contract between the Ministry and the company that provides services (health insurance) for citizens as the company did not honor its commitments.

The move is aimed at preserving public health and money, Al-Awadhi said, stressing the Ministry's attention to provide required healthcare for citizens. Meanwhile, the Cabinet expressed condolences to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the Al-Sabah Family over the death of His Highness former premier Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who passed away on Saturday.

The Cabinet was informed about the accompanying official delegation to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's representatives, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, to the 79th session of UN National Assembly (UNGA 79) due on September 19-26. The delegation includes Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, Director General of Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and other senior officials at His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sharida Abdullah Al-Maousherji, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, said.

Meanwhile, the ministers listened to Al-Yahya's presentation about the results of his visit to Egypt while chairing the Kuwaiti delegation to the 13th session of the joint Egyptian-Kuwaiti com-

Sheikh Mubarak: Kuwait needs a great deal of work and dedication

KUWAIT: Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah called on Kuwaiti graduates from the United Kingdom to make great efforts in order to transform their hopes and ambitions into fruitful work in reality on the ground, saying that Kuwait needs a lot of work, honesty and sincerity from us under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Sheikh Mubarak expressed his pleasure to the graduates sharing their joy, in a speech during a ceremony organized by the National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS-UK branch) held last Saturday, under his auspices in the presence of the British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis, and a number of academic leaders, to celebrate with the graduates and outstanding Kuwaiti students sent on scholarships to the United Kingdom.

Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah stated: "I share with you the joy that you have reached this stage, the stage of reaping fruits, after hard work and efforts. You deserve



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah presides over a Cabinet meeting. — KUNA

mittee. He also told the Cabinet about the main ideas about his meeting with Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and Prime Minister Moustafa Moadbouly that focused on the deep-rooted ties and means of enhancing mutual cooperation in all fields to serve the two countries' interests, as well as the latest developments in the region and some regional and international issues of mutual concern. Al-Maousherji added.

Furthermore, Minister of Finance, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, and Acting Oil Minister Noura Al-Fassam briefed the Cabinet on Fitch rankings of Kuwait that were 'AA' with a stable outlook. In addition, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr Nader Abdullah Al-Jallal informed the ministers about the suspension of students' elections at all Kuwaiti universities and colleges inside and outside the country.

Al-Jallal, who is also the acting minister of education, said the move was taken due to violations that happened in the elections and a deviation from the primary objectives of these union activities. He stressed the importance of the Ministry's support for scientific, sports, social, and cultural student activities across all higher education institutions, as these activities play a key role in developing students' skills and innovative capabilities. Expressing concern, Al-Jallal noted that the students' electoral process no longer serves their interests. Finally, the Cabinet approved the report of the High Committee for Citizenship Investigation, which includes revoking citizenship in accordance with Law No 15 of 1959, from some people who obtained it by fraud and forgery. — KUNA

congratulations, celebration and honor. And I see you pursuing towards the path of knowledge, to reap from it the fruit while away from your home, that has extended for years, to turn your dream into reality." In addition, Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Mubarak Al-Sabah recalled the great efforts of his late father Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah in the 1950s by paving the way for the children of Kuwait to pursue knowledge.

"My father, Sheikh Abdullah Mubarak Al-Sabah, who was at that time, Deputy Ruler of Kuwait, Supreme Commander-In-Chief of the Army and Armed Forces, and Chairman of the Knowledge and Aviation Council, in 1952, supervised the first Kuwaiti scholarship missions to the Great Britain. Moreover, he made the first visit by an official in the history of Kuwait to the Kuwaiti students in the UK and stated his vision and precedence realization of his understanding on the importance of bridging of civilizations, openness toward others, benefiting from the experiences of advanced nations, and supplying the Kuwaiti labor market with unconventional skills," he said.

Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah concluded his speech by advising the graduates to be good in serving their fathers and mothers, as through parents, comes blessings from God and success follows, praying to God to provide them goodness and success, and to serve their religion and their homeland, Kuwait.

Global indices mirror Kuwait's remarkable progress

KUWAIT: International indices have shown Kuwait's progress in various sectors, thus bringing into the limelight the government's successful steps regarding economic and financial reforms. The government's rapid steps to achieve actual development at diverse levels and enhance its ranking in the eyes of the international quarters are seen in its 2024-2025 development scheme, inspired by the 2023 New Kuwait vision.

Kuwait's development plans are aimed at elevating its classification in the economic and administrative indexes. According to a report released by the Secretariat General of the Supreme Council of Planning and Development, the main indexes of the Kuwaiti economy between 2023 and 2024 made progress as compared to the previous period.

Kuwait ranked 35th among 163 states in the Global Peace Index (GPI) in 2023, improving by four ranks as compared to 2022. In the Gender Gap Index (2023), Kuwait came in at 120th status among 146 countries and in the Financial Index. It was in the 82nd among 132 states. In the Corruption Perceptions Index (2023), the report by the Supreme Council showed that Kuwait came 63rd among 180 countries and maintained its 69th point among 193 with respect to the government's AI (artificial intelligence) readiness.

As to the Index of Economic Freedom (2024), it ranked 13th among 143 states and 49th among 193 in the Human Development Index (HDI). For the second year in a row, Kuwait came top in the Global Communication and Information Technology Development Index (2024) released by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), an achievement that would provide greater confidence for external investors, help in creating new jobs, and boost expertise transfer.

Moreover, Kuwait ranked 37th at the international level for administrative development, according to the 2024 Global Competitiveness Index released by the International Institute for Management Development (IIMD). The index that measures competitiveness of 67 states is based on 335 sub-indices, partly showing that the Kuwait government has moved forward by four points in terms of efficiency.

Regarding the Global Infrastructure Index (GII), Kuwait moved forward by three points, ranking 46th. As for the GKI Global Knowledge Index (2023), it came 44th, improving by three points compared to the previous year. The GKI assesses pre-university education, technological and vocational teaching, higher education, research and development, innovation, IT, communications, economy, and empowerment environments.

Other international indexes that showed Kuwait's concrete progress in various realms was the Global Index on Investment Insurance, where it came fourth at the Arab level and 41st at the international level (2023). The Kuwaiti government's 2024-2025 development plan aims at improving the country's status in global indices to be among the first 35 by 2035. Kuwait made noticeable progress over the past years at the administrative and technical levels in data gathering, swapping, and dissemination, thus enabling it to release credible, regular, and substantiated statements on various issues.

The positive ripples were sensed by the World Bank, which forecast economic recovery in 2024, while the international classification agencies drew a bullish outlook for Kuwait. On Friday, Fitch placed Kuwait at the AA-level with a stable outlook, buoyed by solid financial conditions. According to the Central Bank of Kuwait, Fitch's lifting of Kuwait's rank signaled the state's ability to cope with financial challenges in the long term, namely executing a plan to stem the budget deficit and cope with the projected fall of oil prices in addition to the adoption of a transparent and sustainable financial strategy by the government. — KUNA

Amir inaugurates national space science center



KUWAIT: Under the patronage and in the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a ceremony was held at Bayan Palace on Wednesday to launch a national space science center. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and senior state officials attended the event. His Highness the Amir arrived at the venue and was warmly welcomed by Director-General of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) Dr Ameenah Rajab Farhan and board members. His Highness the Amir was apprised of Kuwaiti satellite images and listened to a detailed explanation from Director of the National Satellite Project Dr Hala Al-Jassar. — KUNA photos

Kuwait Food and Relief Bank launches water supply project

1,040,000 water bottles distributed to mosques, schools, health centers



KUWAIT: The Kuwait Food and Relief Bank announced on Wednesday the implementation of the "Water Supply Bank" project, indicating that it has cooperated with the General Secretariat of Endowments to distribute 1,040,000 water bottles to 520,000 beneficiaries in mosques, schools, hospitals, health centers, and government agencies.

The bank's Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors, Mishal Al-Ansari, told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that this project is one of the most important charitable projects carried out by the bank with the aim of serving the largest possible number of members of society. Al-Ansari explained that this project enhances the values of solidarity and social compassion among members of society, praising the efforts of the General Secretariat of Endowments in facilitating the means to make this charitable project and other activities and campaigns implemented by the Food Bank to serve the community a success.

It is worth mentioning that the Kuwait Food and Relief Bank has an integrated team to manage charitable work, as it receives the need to learn about their needs through its website, www.kuwaitfoodbank.org, which aims to meet all the needs and requirements of the needy families in the country. — KUNA



Kuwait Food Bank distributes water as part of the Water Supply Project. — KUNA photos

Ministry launches new hall for visitors

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah inaugurated on Wednesday a new hall for visitors at the Public Authority for the Disabled in the West Abdullah Mubarak area as part of efforts to facilitate services provided to this category and their families. Minister Al-Huwailah said in a press statement on the occasion that the opening of the halls for visitors in various areas of the country comes as part of the Authority's keenness to provide integrated and fast services to enhance transactions for people with disabilities.

She stressed the Ministry's commitment to monitoring all challenges facing people with disabilities and working to find effective solutions in cooperation with the concerned authorities, indicating the importance of listening to the suggestions of people with disabilities and their families and developing the services provided to them in accordance with the applicable laws and legislation. She stated that the new hall includes five counters staffed by comprehensive employees, making it the 5th hall opened by the Authority, in addition to other halls at the Authority's headquarters in Hawally, Jahra (Kuwait Mall), Sabah Al-Ahmad (Kuwait Mall), and Granada (Deaf Club).

On her part, the Director of the Authority, Wafaa Al-Muhanna, confirmed in a similar statement that the opening of more branches, distributed across the various governorates of the country, aims to



KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah inaugurates the new hall. — KUNA

facilitate the completion of transactions for people with disabilities and their families. Al-Muhanna indicated that the services provided include opening files for the first time, renewing a disability certificate, issuing a disability ID, applying for a traffic plate, and updating data, in addition to the electronic services available through the Authority's website and the Sahel application. — KUNA

Conference offers tech, innovative solutions to improve healthcare

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) organized the annual conference of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) under the title "Delivering Excellence in Healthcare in Kuwait," which aims to present innovative solutions to improve the healthcare sector in the country based on the latest global research and technologies.

The foundation said in a press statement on Wednesday that this conference is part of the main activities of the Kuwait Program of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), which is aimed at enhancing academic and research cooperation between Kuwait and the prestigious college. It also reflects the commitment of the Kuwait Program to promote science, technology, and innovation in the country and focus on developing the healthcare sector.

It added that the Kuwait Program of the London School of Economics and Political Science has received wide attention recently, especially after a promotional trip conducted by the college last May to several Kuwaiti institutions, which resulted in a significant increase in participants in lectures, as the number of seats allocated for participants was increased from 10 to 21, while the number of registered participants in the conference reached about 220 people from several entities.

The conference was attended by a group of prominent figures from government, private entities, and diplomats, most notably the British Ambassador to Ku-

wait, Belinda Lewis, especially since the conference is a unique opportunity to enhance knowledge between Kuwait and the United Kingdom. She pointed out that the conference attracted a diverse audience that included academics, researchers, policymakers, and representatives of public and private hospitals, in addition to a number of other concerned parties.

The conference coincides with the 125th anniversary of the launch of Kuwaiti-British relations, which have witnessed consolidation over time through the keenness of the wise leaderships in the two friendly countries to strengthen them, while the Foundation is proud of its role in strengthening these relations through its support for scientific and academic initiatives with a group of prestigious British scientific institutions.

She stated that the conference agenda included lectures presented by experts in the fields of health and technology from Kuwait and abroad, including Dr Alistair McGuire from the London Science School of Economics and Political Science, who gave a lecture entitled "Global Trends in Healthcare: Lessons for Kuwait." A number of Kuwaiti national cadres, experts, and academics participated in specialized lectures, while discussion sessions were also held that addressed various topics, including technology and health care, lifestyle, and providing local health care.

It is worth noting that the Kuwait Program, which is an umbrella for joint cooperation between the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences and the London School of Economics and Political Science, has succeeded over the course of 15 years in supporting a number of research projects, providing professional training opportunities for a number of executives in the private and public sectors, and hosting a number of decision-makers and specialists in the field of public policy and development at the University of London. — KUNA



Participants take a group photo after the symposium. — KUNA photos



Dr Amira Al Hassan is honored.

UN-Habitat stresses the importance of reducing wastes

KUWAIT: Head of the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) mission to Kuwait and the Gulf States (GCC), Dr Amira Al-Hassan, stressed on Tuesday the importance of reducing waste products through rational consumption that satisfies personal desires and needs without negatively affecting the environment, noting that about 60 percent of household waste is classified as organic.

Al-Hassan said in her speech during a symposium organized by the Community Development Center on the occasion of the World Clean-up Day that in light of the worsening effects of global climate change on the Arabian Gulf, which is characterized by high temperatures, everyone must work at various levels to reduce the impact of these changes on urban residents by adopting innovative solutions and interventions.

Al-Hassan reviewed international experiences in converting waste into electrical energy and sustainable environmental interventions in countries such as Singapore, Denmark, Japan, and the United Kingdom, noting that applying these experiences in Kuwait or the Gulf may not be appropriate due to the specificity of each country and the lack of a unified equation for dealing with the environment.

She praised the efforts of volunteer teams in Kuwait in this regard, recommending the cultivation of some local plants as an effective means of improving air and soil quality and enhancing sustainability in cities. Al-Hassan explained that the work of these distinguished volunteer teams reflects the spirit of altruism and love of the homeland, noting that the members of the volunteer teams invest their free time in carrying out environmental activities such as cleaning beaches, recycling workshops, and converting waste into useful products. — KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: In an exciting astronomical phenomenon, Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) captures the partial lunar eclipse in Kuwait's sky at dawn on Wednesday at 3:14 am, reaching its maximum phase at 4:55 am. The partial lunar eclipse is the second and last in 2024 and was seen in most countries of the world with the naked eye without the need to use special equipment or setup. People, who were interested in this unique phenomenon, were keen to use binoculars or a small telescope for a better experience. — KUNA

NBK opens registration for NBK Run

NBK's efforts to promote sustainability and support sports

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is excited to open registration for the 2024 NBK Run, scheduled for December 14th. Early registration is available from September 18th to October 5th through the "Suffix" website, offering special discounts on race fees. Following this period, registration will continue at regular prices until all slots are filled.



The NBK Run is the largest sporting event in Kuwait, renowned for its massive public participation and extensive media coverage. It stands out as the biggest family entertainment gathering, welcoming participants from all segments of the community, regardless of gender. The event aligns with the national goals for sustainable development in health and sports, supporting Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait".

This year, NBK proudly celebrates three decades of the NBK Run, commemorating its ongoing dedication to social responsibility and its role in promoting a healthy, active lifestyle as a cornerstone for building a vibrant community. There will be enhanced collaboration with strategic partners, who will provide valuable prizes for winners and participants, as well as the audience. The Bank will also offer significant prizes to the top three contestants in each category.

The race will honor the top three winners in both the men's and women's 10 km categories with cash prizes of KD 1,000, KD 700, and KD 500, respectively. The top three winners in the men's and wom-

en's 5 km categories will receive KD 500, KD 400, and KD 300, respectively. The race will start at 8:30 am on December 14th, featuring two distances, both beginning and ending at Kuwait Towers. The 10 km route will proceed towards Souq Sharq, then turn and follow the Gulf Road, reaching 200 meters before the intersection with Green Island, before returning to Kuwait Towers.

The second distance of the race is 5 km, starting from Kuwait Towers and heading towards Souq Sharq. Competitors will then turn and continue running until they reach the intersection at Kuwait Army Club. Commenting on this significant event, Manal Al-Mattar, Head of Corporate Communications Group at NBK, said: "NBK takes immense pride in organizing this marathon for three decades, making it the largest sporting event in Kuwait. Its significant popularity and media attention draw thousands of participants from all walks of life and age groups."

"We are committed to hosting this race annually as a key aspect of NBK's ongoing efforts to promote sustainability and support sports for a healthier and better life for our community. This event also reaffirms the bank's deep-rooted connections with its community, demonstrating NBK's dedication to serving Kuwait and pride in its national identity, affirming our role as the bank you know and trust." Al-Mattar added.

She emphasized that the bank's tradition of hosting the NBK Run for three decades showcases its dedication to creating a lasting, positive impact on the communities it serves. She noted that this commitment extends to supporting diverse events that inspire the community to embrace healthy habits, enhancing the overall well-being and safety of its members.



Al-Mattar proudly highlighted the race as one of NBK's most significant and expansive community initiatives. She emphasized the bank's dedication to being a trailblazer in supporting sustainable development across all fields. NBK hosts a variety of social events and initiatives each year, highlighting its significant role and steadfast dedication to community development. These efforts span a wide range of social, humanitarian, charitable, educational, sports, and environmental activities, all designed to support and enrich the community.



Scan & Subscribe
KD 20 a year

For Individuals Only



Scan Now

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First English Daily in the Arabian Gulf



Tel: 24833199 Ext: 220



Participants are pictured during the panel discussion organized by the NATO Regional Centre and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. — KUNA photos

NATO Defense College commends partnership with Kuwait

KUWAIT: Commandant of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Defense College in Rome Lieutenant General Max Nielsen has commended the successful and strong 20-year partnership with Kuwait. In a statement for KUNA on the sidelines of the discussion seminar organized by NATO's regional center and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) titled 'Adapting Defense Education to Challenging Security Environments'.

Lieutenant General Nielsen expressed NATO's aspiration to continue strengthening the pivotal partnership that enhances security and stability in the Arabian Gulf region and ways to develop it in various areas of bilateral cooperation within the framework of mutual respect and trust gained between the two sides. He pointed out that Kuwait has established with NATO a positive concept of effective international cooperation in facing regional and international challenges and threats over a period of 20 years since Kuwait joined as the first member of the 'Istanbul Cooperation Initiative' in June 2004.

He mentioned that his visit to Kuwait was to conduct a discussion seminar in the center over the questions related to defense education and his support for missions and main NATO policies. He added that part of his tasks is to facilitate political discus-



sion between member states and their partners in the Arabian Gulf region through discussion seminars over security challenges on the international and regional levels and to develop mutual understanding between all sides. Notably, Kuwait has created the NATO-Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) Regional Centre in 2017 with the aim to strengthen the partnership between NATO and Gulf partners. — KUNA



India's Kashmir votes in first local poll since losing autonomy

Settlers attack West Bank school

Page 6

Page 7



BEIRUT: Ambulances arrive after a reported device explosion occurred during the funeral of people killed when hundreds of pager devices exploded across Lebanon the previous day on September 18, 2024. — AFP

Pager attack throws Hezbollah into disarray

Analyst sees attack, which killed 12 including children, as sword through group's 'guts'

BEIRUT: Lebanon's Hezbollah was bracing for the risk of Zionist military escalation when its old foe struck a blow it hadn't seen coming, plunging the group into hours of unprecedented disarray, sources familiar with Hezbollah operations say. The explosion of thousands of pagers carried by Hezbollah fighters, medics and others sparked confusion and panic in the group known for military discipline and order. Some tossed away their devices as blasts echoed through Hezbollah-controlled areas of Beirut and other parts of Lebanon. Others buried them.

A Hezbollah official said that as the attack began, the group quickly raised its level of military readiness in case it was the opening shot in a bigger offensive by the Zionist entity, which has stepped up warnings of escalation in the conflict which has been raging across the border for a year. Hezbollah leaders — who didn't carry the devices — turned to the group's internal phone network to find out what was going on. Families of Hezbollah members struggled to locate relatives as the wounded were ferried to scores of hospitals.

Hezbollah officials have described the attack as the most serious security breach in the history of the group, which was established by Iran's Revolutionary Guards in 1982 to fight Zionist forces that had invaded Lebanon that year. A source familiar with Hezbollah thinking said last week that the group had expected the entity to heighten its attacks in Lebanon, based on what the source described as the Zionist entity's "preparations for worse".

In the opening moments of Tuesday's explosions, the group had initially entered a state of confusion before absorbing the "massive, unexpected shock", a second source familiar with Hezbollah operations said. The attack had not paralyzed Hezbollah, the source added. Hezbollah has vowed revenge.

Bodyguards wounded

Hundreds of its fighters have been wounded, mostly in Beirut rather than frontline villages in southern Lebanon, a Hezbollah official said. The official said many of the casualties are medics

or people with administrative roles in Hezbollah institutions — or their relatives who happened to be nearby.

Some have lost their sight or had hands amputated, their attention having been drawn to their pagers by a buzzing sound before it exploded. "This is a sword that went through the organization's guts," said Mohamad Hage Ali, deputy director of research at the Beirut-based Carnegie Middle East Center.

The attack appeared to cause a pause in Hezbollah's cross-border attacks on the Zionist entity, which resumed on Wednesday afternoon with the group announcing it had fired rockets in retaliation for attacks on villages in south Lebanon and in support of Gaza. Hezbollah's media office could not immediately be reached for comment.

Bodyguards of some of top Hezbollah figures are among the wounded, though there have been no reports of casualties among the leadership. Sources have said Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah was unharmed. A top Lebanese security

source and another source said the Zionist entity had planted explosives in 5,000 pagers imported by Hezbollah. The entity has not claimed responsibility. The explosions killed at least 12 people, including eight Hezbollah members — six fighters, a nurse and an engineer — in addition to children.

The number of wounded stands at some 2,800, according to Lebanon's health minister. A senior Lebanese official said the situation was difficult for Hezbollah but the group could absorb the impact and had not been paralyzed by the attack. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the topic.

Nasrallah is due to deliver a speech on Thursday. The sources said the speech had been timed to allow the group to build a fuller picture of the attack before the address. With several Hezbollah fighters killed in Zionist airstrikes in southern Lebanon on Tuesday, it marked one of the deadliest days for the group since it began firing on the entity nearly one year ago in support of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. — Reuters

Lebanon doctors tell of horror after pager blasts

BEIRUT: Doctors in Lebanon spoke Wednesday of horrific eye injuries and finger amputations, a day after pagers exploded across the country, killing 12 people and wounding up to 2,800. "The injuries were mainly to the eyes and hands, with finger amputations, shrapnel in the eyes — some people lost their sight," said doctor Joelle Khadra, who was working in emergency at Beirut's Hotel-Dieu hospital.

Khadra told AFP that Hotel-Dieu, located in the Lebanese capital's Christian-majority Ashrafieh district, treated about 80 injured. Around 20 "were admitted to intensive care immediately and were put on ventilators to ensure they wouldn't suffocate due to the swelling in their faces", she said. "The rest are going one after the other to the operating room. Today, we have 55 surgeries," she added, wearing her white doctor's coat over her blue scrubs.

A doctor at another hospital in Beirut said he worked all night and that the injuries were "out of this world — never seen anything like it". "It's beyond what can be described," he said, requesting anonymity because he was not authorized by the hospital to speak to the media. "We have a lot of injuries with amputated fingers" because people were holding the pagers in one or both hands, he said, while some people who had been sitting on the floor also had wounded feet.

But the "most devastating" wounds were when the pagers blew up in people's faces, he said, citing up to 40 patients with eye injuries, most of them severe. Around three-quarters of those patients "lost one eye completely, and the other eye is either somewhat salvageable or barely salvageable", he said, while "15 to 20 percent ... lost both eyes in a way that's irreparable". "A lot of colleagues have been saying this is worse compared to the August 4 ... (eye) injuries that we saw," he said.

On August 4, 2020, a catastrophic explosion at Beirut's port killed more than 220 people and injured some 6,500, with several hundred at least suffering ocular injuries and some people even blinded in one eye by flying shards of glass and other debris.

The doctor also reported "a lot of burns and foreign bodies — metallic pieces of pagers being retrieved from patients' eyes, brains, faces, sinuses, from their insides, from their bones". He said there was "a lot of tissue loss, fingers lost — things that we can't repair, we can't replace". Health Minister Firass Abiad said Wednesday that two children were among 12 people killed, while almost 300 people were "in critical condition", some suffering facial injuries and brain hemorrhage. — AFP

Taiwan, Hungary deny making pagers used by Hezbollah

BUDAPEST: Taiwan and Hungary on Wednesday denied making pagers that exploded while being used by Hezbollah members in Lebanon, killing 12 people. The New York Times, citing American and other anonymous officials, reported that the Zionist entity had inserted explosive material into a shipment of pagers from Taiwan's Gold Apollo.

Taiwanese prosecutors launched an investigation. Gold Apollo denied producing the devices and instead pointed the finger at its Budapest-based partner BAC Consulting KFT. But Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's government said in a statement on Wednesday that the pager devices were never in Hungary.

Hungarian government spokesman Zoltan Kovacs said the company "is a trading intermediary, with no manufacturing or operational site in Hungary". "The referenced devices have never been in Hungary," Kovacs said on X, formerly Twitter. He added the case "poses no national security risk" and Hungary was cooperating "with all relevant international partner agencies and organizations" in further investigations.

'Not our products'

Earlier Wednesday, Gold Apollo head Hsu Chingkuang said the pagers were "100 percent not" made in Taiwan. "They are not our products from beginning to end. How can we produce products that are not ours?" Hsu told reporters in Taipei. The company said in a separate statement that it has established a

"long-term partnership" with the Hungarian company to use its trademark and the model mentioned in media reports "is produced and sold by BAC".

Taiwan's economic affairs ministry said Gold Apollo's pagers made in Taiwan only have "a receiving function" and the capacity of their built-in battery "is about that of an ordinary AA battery that is not possible to explode to cause death or injury". "After reviewing media reports and pictures, we think it's very questionable that (the model used) is the company's product," the ministry said, adding that there is no record of the company directly exporting to Lebanon.

But BAC Consulting CEO Cristiana Barsony-Arcidiacono told US broadcaster NBC News that her company worked with Gold Apollo but did not make pagers. "I don't make the pagers. I am just the intermediary. I think you got it wrong," NBC cited Barsony-Arcidiacono as saying on the phone. Barsony-Arcidiacono did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment. The explosions in Lebanon killed 12 people, including two children, and wounded up to 2,800 others. Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah has blamed the Zionist entity for the attack.

Sole employee

At BAC Consulting's registered postal address in a Budapest suburb, a woman there told reporters that the two-storey semi-detached building belongs to a company providing virtual business addresses. Barsony-Arcidiacono appears to be the only employee of the company founded in 2022, according to legal documents consulted by AFP which also report an annual revenue of 210 million forints (\$590,000) and profit of around 18 million forints.

On an archived version of a currently inaccessible website, the consultancy described itself as "agents of change with a network of consultants", while Barsony-Arcidiacono touted her experience as a "stra-



BEIRUT: A photo taken on September 18, 2024, in Beirut's southern suburbs shows the remains of exploded pagers on display at an undisclosed location. — AFP

tegic advisor" for international organizations. The Times reported about 3,000 pagers were ordered from Gold Apollo, mostly its AR924 model. "Our company only provides the brand trademark authorization and is not involved in the design or manufacturing of this product," Gold Apollo said.

The company declined to comment further, citing ongoing investigations. "We have assigned the case to the chief prosecutor of the national security team to actively investigate. Our office will clarify the facts of the case as soon as possible," Taipei's Shilin District Prosecutors Office said in a statement. "If there is any illegality involved, it will be severely punished in accordance with the law," the office added.

A source close to Hezbollah, asking not to be identified, previously told AFP that "the pagers that exploded concern a shipment recently imported by Hezbollah of 1,000 devices" which appear to have been "sabotaged at source". There was no immediate comment from the Zionist entity on the explosions. — AFP

International

Settlers attack West Bank school

Palestinian students too scared to attend class, say Zionist army joined attack

JERICHO/RAMALLAH: Half of the pupils stayed away from classes at an elementary school in the Zionist-occupied West Bank on Tuesday, a day after it was attacked by Jewish settlers with wooden bats in violence that has surged since the Gaza war erupted. This type of attack, which wounded seven people according to Palestinian officials, has tested the patience of the Zionist entity's allies, including the United States, who have called for restraint in the West Bank as the death toll climbs in Gaza and the conflict spreads in the Middle East.

A video filmed by activists and posted on social media showed a band of young men striking people who were screaming in the yard of Al-Ka'abneh school during the assault in a Bedouin area near Jericho on Monday. "Half of the students today did not come to school because of the state of fear and terror they experienced yesterday because of the settlers' attack on the school," Ahmed Nasser, an official at the Palestinian Ministry of Education, told Reuters.

Violence against Palestinian villages was on the rise even before the outbreak of the Gaza war, as settlement building has spread unchecked across the West Bank. Since October 7, such attacks by Zionist settlers have increased. Figures last month from the UN humanitarian agency OCHA showed them running at around four per day.

"We were studying as usual in class, then they started saying that settlers attacked the schools, I was able to gather my siblings so that nothing happens to them," said student Aya Mlehat. "I was able to gather them in a classroom, and the settlers started banging on the class trying to open it against our will."

'We ran and hid'

Palestinians and rights groups regularly accuse Zionist forces of standing by as attacks take place and sometimes even joining in themselves. Legal action against violent settlers is rare. "The army came along with the settlers, we ran and hid in a class with a teacher, and did not go back to the class ... He told us to stay low under the tables, we stayed under the table and he told us to be quiet," said student Malak Mlehat.

The Zionist military said settlers arrived after a report that a Zionist civilian had received a head injury in a clash with Palestinians. "A confrontation was instigated at the scene, during which a number of Palestinians were injured," it said in a statement. It said soldiers and police arrived and dealt with the confrontation, detaining several suspects in the area.

Countries including the United States have begun imposing sanctions on individuals and face pressure to do more and to curb the expansion of settlements on land the Palestinians want as the core of a future independent state, a key part of the two-state solution favored by Western countries. At the same time the West Bank has witnessed almost daily sweeps by Zionist forces that have involved thousands of arrests and regular gunbattles between security forces and Palestinian fighters.

More than 703 Palestinians have been killed by Zionist settlers or forces in the West Bank since October 7, including both fighters and unarmed civilians, according to the Palestinian health authorities. In the same period, about 40 Zionist troops and settlers have been killed in attacks by Palestinians or in



TULKAREM, Palestine: A child walks amid the rubble in an alley following a Zionist army raid in Tulkarem in the north of the occupied-West Bank, on September 12, 2024. — AFP

clashes with fighters, according to figures from the Zionist domestic security agency.

Most countries deem Jewish settlements built on land the Zionist entity occupied since 1967 as

illegal, and their expansion has for decades been among the most contentious issues between the Zionist entity, the Palestinians and the international community. — Reuters

Questions remain over security in Mali a day after attack

BAMAKO: Mali's security situation remained unclear on Wednesday after insurgents attacked an elite police training academy and other strategic areas on Tuesday, killing trainees, overrunning part of the airport and setting the presidential jet alight. Analysts and diplomats described the attack as a major blow to the junta and regional bloc ECOWAS and the European Union issued statements condemning it.

Mali has not confirmed the death toll, but said on state television on Tuesday evening that there had been "some" deaths. A video that circulated online showed sleeping quarters with around two dozen bunk beds in tight formation that had been torched. Several charred bodies can be seen, some under the beds. Reuters has not authenticated the videos.

Fights resumed on Wednesday morning to Bamako's main airport, where much of the violence — claimed by Al Qaeda affiliate Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) — took place a day earlier. The Al-Qaeda-linked group said in another statement on Wednesday that "hundreds of enemy soldiers were killed and wounded" in the attack that also saw the destruction of six military aircrafts including a drone, while four others were partially disabled.

The attack came on the 64th anniversary of the founding of Mali's gendarmerie, and came days after junta leader Assimi Goita had said his army had "considerably weakened armed terrorist groups", in a speech marking the anniversary of Mali's decision together with junta-led neighbors Burkina Faso and Niger to form a security and political alliance. The timing of the attack was likely symbolic, "and



BAMAKO: This video grab obtained by AFP from Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision du Mali (ORTM) on September 17, 2024 shows what appears to be weapons seized by the military in Bamako. — AFP

also indicates that the attack and specific target was likely planned in advance," the United Nations said in a note to staff on Wednesday, describing the incident as a "strong show of force" by JNIM.

Mali's army and Wagner mercenaries it has employed experienced a major battlefield defeat in July, suffering heavy losses at the hands of Tuareg rebels in the northern outpost of Tinzawatan. "In my personal opinion, this is seriously impacting their credibility on the security front", a diplomat in Bamako told Reuters. "We'll see how the population reacts to these events. Either they will support the regime against the jihadists or start wondering if they have the right protection they deserve." At least one man was set alight by a mob in Bamako on Tuesday, suspected of being involved in the attack, Reuters wit-

nessed. The UN cited other reports of reprisals.

On Tuesday, videos posted to JNIM's social media accounts showed armed men shooting into a VIP terminal at the airport and setting fire to a government-owned Boeing 737 plane on the tarmac. Other footage showed an armed man in camouflage firing shots near a WFP turbo-prop plane. Reuters confirmed the location of the videos from the road layout and paint not the tarmac that matched satellite imagery. "This attack is also way more ambitious than the previous attacks back in the second half of the 2010s. It directly targets military objectives in Bamako," said Jean Herve Jezequel, Sahel Project Director at International Crisis Group. "It seems the jihadists demonstrated capacity to hold the airport for some time, possibly multiple hours, which is a

Kuwait launches space center...

Continued from Page 1

in scientific and technological areas, particularly space science. He affirmed that it would build national capabilities to design, run and operate Kuwaiti space projects following the successful launch of the first Kuwaiti satellite (Kuwait Sat-1) in 2023, and to

New device blasts hit...

Continued from Page 1

On Wednesday, Hezbollah said the Zionist entity was "fully responsible for this criminal aggression" and reiterated it would avenge the latest attack, while vowing to continue its fight against the Zionist entity in support of Hamas in Gaza. Cross-border exchanges with Zionist forces were "ongoing and separate from the difficult reckoning that the criminal enemy must await for its massacre," Hezbollah said.

Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib warned the "blatant assault on Lebanon's sovereignty and security" was a dangerous development that could "signal a wider war". The influx of so many casualties all at once overwhelmed hospitals in Hezbollah strongholds. At a Beirut hospital, doctor Joelle Khadra said "the injuries were mainly to the eyes and hands, with finger amputations, shrapnel in the eyes — some people lost their sight." A doctor at another Beirut hospital said he had worked through the night and that the injuries were "out of this world — never seen anything like it".

Experts said Zionist operatives had likely planted explosives on the paging devices before they were delivered to Hezbollah. "This was more than lithium batteries being forced into override," said Charles Lister of the Middle East Institute. "A small plastic explosive was almost certainly concealed alongside the battery, for remote detonation via a call or page," the analyst said, adding the Zionist entity's spy agency "Mossad infiltrated the supply chain".

Among the dead was the 10-year-old daughter of a Hezbollah member, killed in east Lebanon's Bekaa

maintain Kuwait's position on the map of regional and international scientific and technological accomplishments.

Dr Ameenah Farhan said the planned national space center is mainly intended to promote national identity by means of building capabilities and conducting scientific researches. She spoke highly of KFAS' great efforts in this regard, hailing this foundation as one of the most significant feats of the late Amir Sheikh Jaber. She also commended IHH the Amir Sheikh Mishal for following in Sheikh Jaber's footsteps of loyalty, belonging and dedication. — KUNA

Valley when her father's pager exploded, the family and a source close to the group said. Tehran's ambassador in Beirut, Mojtaba Amani, who was injured, said on social media platform X that it was "a source of pride for me that my blood was mixed with that of the wounded Lebanese" in what he called a "horrific terrorist crime". Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian condemned the attack, decrying Western support for Zionist "crimes, killings and indiscriminate assassinations".

The attack dealt a heavy blow to the militant group, which already had concerns about the security of its communications after losing several key commanders to targeted air strikes in recent months. A source close to Hezbollah, asking not to be identified, told AFP the pagers were "recently imported" and appeared to have been "sabotaged at source".

After The New York Times reported the pagers had been ordered from Taiwanese manufacturer Gold Apollo, the company said they had been produced by its Hungarian partner BAC Consulting KFT. A government spokesman in Budapest said the company was "a trading intermediary, with no manufacturing or operational site in Hungary". As fears again surged of a regional conflagration nearly a year into the Gaza war, Lufthansa and Air France announced the suspension of flights to Tel Aviv, Tehran and Beirut until Thursday.

Since October, the unabating exchanges of fire between Zionist troops and Hezbollah have killed hundreds in Lebanon and dozens on the Zionist side. They have also forced tens of thousands of people on both sides of the border to flee their homes. United Nations rights chief Volker Turk said Tuesday's attack had come at an "extremely volatile time", calling the blasts "shocking" and their impact on civilians "unacceptable". — AFP

Global sting targets users of 'Ghost' app

THE HAGUE: A 32-year-old Australian "computer geek" has been arrested on suspicion of building an encrypted messaging app used by hundreds of criminals worldwide to arrange drug deals and order killings, police said Wednesday. Australian Federal Police said the Ghost app was marketed to underworld figures as "unhackable" and was used by hundreds of suspected criminals from Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

But, unbeknownst to users, global policing authorities hacked the network and were watching as the criminals discussed illicit drug trafficking, money laundering, homicides and serious violence. Authorities made their move on Tuesday and Wednesday, arresting criminals from Italy, Ireland, Sweden, Canada and Australia — including Jay Je Yoon Jung, the alleged "mastermind" of the app.

Europol executive director Catherine De Bolle said law enforcement from nine countries had been involved in the international sting. "Today we have made it clear that no matter how hidden criminal networks think they are, they can't evade our collective effort," she said. "This was a truly global game of cat and mouse, and today the game is up". Jean-Philippe Lecouffe, Europol's deputy executive director, told reporters in agency's headquarters in The Hague.

Authorities dismantled an Australian drug lab while

UN demands end to Zionist occupation...

Continued from Page 1

The resolution "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.

It also calls on states "to take steps toward ceasing" arms provisions to the Zionist entity when there are "reasonable grounds to suspect that they may be used in the Occupied Palestinian Territory". "The Palestinians want to live — not survive. They want to be safe in their homes," said Mansour Tuesday ahead of the passage of 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

weapons, drugs and more than one million euros (\$1.1 million) in cash have been seized globally, the EU policing agency added. Ghost, a kind of WhatsApp for criminals, was created nine years ago and could only be accessed via modified smartphones that sold for about Aus\$2,350 (US\$1,590). The hefty price tag included a six-month subscription to the Ghost app and tech support. Australian police said Wednesday, and users were required to purchase an ongoing subscription.

French police traced the creator's location to Australia and joined forces with local police to target the platform. The app's creator regularly pushed out software updates but in 2022, Australian police were able to hijack those updates to access encrypted content. For two years, authorities watched as Ghost became more popular and criminals exchanged messages — including 50 death threats that Australian police said they were able to thwart.

Several thousand people worldwide use Ghost and around 1,000 messages are exchanged on it every day, according to Europol. There were 376 phones with the Ghost app installed in Australia alone. In one case, police intercepted an image of a gun to someone's head and were able to save that person within the hour, Australian Federal Police assistant commissioner Kirsty Schofield said. Ireland, which was second in terms of Ghost users, was able to dismantle "a primary drugs trafficking route into our country and in doing so have seized drugs with an approximate street value of 16 million euros", Justin Kelly, assistant police commissioner, was quoted as telling The Irish Times. — AFP

historic opinion as this was the first time the court examined the (Zionist) occupation as a whole," Mansour said.

US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield condemned the resolution ahead of the vote as "inflammatory" and said it "is not going to advance the cause of peace". "It also fails to acknowledge, among other things, that Hamas, a terrorist organization, is currently exerting power, control and influence in Gaza," Thomas-Greenfield added. The United States voted against the resolution.

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. Unlike in the Security Council, no country in the General Assembly has veto power. More than 41,272 Palestinians, a majority of them civilians, have been killed in the Zionist military campaign in the Gaza Strip since the war began. — AFP

International

India's Kashmir votes in first local poll since losing autonomy

Delhi to have power to override legislation passed by elected 90-seat assembly

SRINAGAR: Indian-administered Kashmir voted Wednesday in the first local elections since the cancellation of its special semi-autonomous status sparked fury in the troubled Himalayan territory, which is also claimed by Pakistan. Many in the disputed Muslim-majority territory of 8.7 million registered voters remain bitter over the 2019 order by the Hindu-nationalist government of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to impose control from New Delhi.

A federally appointed governor has controlled the territory since, with the first regional assembly election in a decade viewed by many as being more about exercising their democratic rights than practical policies. Voters queued under heavy security in the three-phased election, which is being staggered geographically due to security arrangements and logistical challenges in the mountainous region. "After 10 years we are allowed to be heard," said Navid Para, 31, among the first to vote in the cool morning mountain air of Pulwama, near the main city of Srinagar. "I want my voice represented."

About 500,000 Indian troops are deployed in the region battling a 35-year insurgency in which tens of thousands of civilians, soldiers and rebels have been killed, including dozens this year. Modi urged people to vote in "large numbers and strengthen the festival of democracy". Top electoral officer PK Pole reported "peaceful and incident-free" polling, with long queues suggesting "a high turnout".

'Solve our problems'

Turnout has not been high in past elections when separatists opposed to Indian rule boycotted polls, demanding the independence of Kashmir or its merger with Pakistan. "All the politics revolves around the dispute," said trader Navin Kotwal, 73, from Doda in Jammu district. "All I care about is that we want to

be governed by educated representatives who can solve our problems."

Farmer Ahmadullah Bhat, 47, said he had voted "to have our own government", saying he was worried common land was being taken under the rule of federal authorities. "I can now go to my elected representative to solve our issues," he said. Vigorous election campaigns featured unusually open debates but key decisions will remain in New Delhi's hands, including security and appointing Kashmir's governor. Delhi will also have the power to override legislation passed by the 90-seat assembly. The last round of voting will be held on October 2. Results are expected six days later.

'Better than nothing'

The territory, officially titled Jammu and Kashmir, is split. One part is the overwhelmingly Muslim Kashmir Valley. Another is the Hindu-majority Jammu district, geographically divided by mountains to the south. A third section, the high-altitude ethnically Tibetan Ladakh region, bordering China, was carved into a separate federal territory in 2019.

Some of the worst violence this year has been in Jammu, where Modi campaigned for votes on Saturday and, in a reference to rebel groups fighting Indian rule, vowed that "terrorism is on its last legs". Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) claim that the changes to the territory's governance have brought a new era of peace to Kashmir and rapid economic growth. The implementation of those changes in 2019 was accompanied by mass arrests and a months-long internet and communications blackout. While this is the first ballot for the local assembly since 2014, voters took part in national elections in June when Modi won a third term in power. Jammu farmer Syed Ali Choudhary, 38, acknowledged the assembly's powers will "be much less" than before.



PULWAMA: An Indian security personnel stands guard as voters queue up to cast their ballots at a polling station during the first phase of assembly elections in Pulwama, south of Srinagar on September 18, 2024. — AFP

"Something is better than nothing," he said.

Economic woes

Many Kashmiris are resentful of the restrictions on civil liberties imposed after 2019, and the BJP is only fielding candidates in a minority of seats concentrated in Hindu-majority areas. Critics accuse the BJP of encouraging a surge of independent candidates in Muslim-majority areas to split the vote.

A lack of jobs is a key issue. The area has an unemployment rate of 18.3 percent, more than double the national average, according to government figures in July. Critics say the central government has awarded major contracts, such as construction and mineral extraction, to firms outside the territory. "My biggest concern is unemployment," said Madiha, 27, a jobless graduate who gave only one name. "The cost of living has reached the sky." — AFP



FLINT: Donald Trump attends a town hall meeting moderated by Arkansas Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders (right) in Flint, Michigan, on September 17, 2024. — AFP

Trump says only 'consequential' leaders get shot at

FLINT, United States: Donald Trump resumed campaigning Tuesday for the first time since a second apparent attempt on his life, boasting "only consequential presidents get shot at" while praising Kamala Harris for making a phone call to check on him. Trump spoke at a town hall meeting before fervent supporters in Flint, a beleaguered industrial city that was once a jewel of the US automotive industry in swing state Michigan, before factories closed due to foreign competition.

Trump drew a link between what the FBI called a foiled assassination bid against him Sunday at his golf course in Florida and his pledge to slap heavy tariffs on imports of cars from Mexico and China. "And then you wonder why I get shot at, right? You know, only consequential presidents get shot at," Trump said.

Trump's election rival Harris, campaigning in another swing state, Pennsylvania, said Tuesday she had reached out to the former president after the thwarted attack. "I checked on him to see if he was OK. And I told him what I have said publicly — there's no place for political violence in our country," Harris said in an interview with the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ).

The White House described it as a "cordial and brief conversation." Trump said Harris "could not have been nicer." Trump has said the would-be shooter was a follower of what he called President Joe Biden's and Harris's rhetoric insisting that he is a threat to US democracy. At the town hall meeting, Trump supporters said the foiled attack made them support him even more. "I believe that they want to kill Trump so that Trump cannot try to make his second term in office," said retired autoworker Donald Owen, 71.

Trump depicted himself at the event as the savior of the US auto industry as it competes with foreign companies. He insisted: "If a tragedy happens, and we don't win, there will be zero car jobs, manufacturing jobs, it will all be out of here."

Trump also defended his convoluted, rambling way of speaking, and then in a tangent on fossil fuel drilling he said, "We have Bagram in Alaska. They say it might be as big, might be bigger than all of Saudi Arabia." But Bagram is an air base in Afghanistan. Trump may have confused it with a place in Alaska called the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, or ANWR.

Meanwhile, Harris used her interview in Pennsylvania to give her first reaction to a row over false stories spread by Trump that Haitian immigrants were eating residents' cats and dogs in a town in Ohio. Dozens of bomb threats were made against the community in the town of Springfield after Trump and his running mate JD Vance publicly boosted the fake story, forcing the closure of some schools. "It's a crying shame, literally, what's happening to those families, those children in that community," Harris said. — AFP

Chile birth rate falls as women say no to motherhood

SANTIAGO, Chile: Chilean lawyer Camila Ramirez, 29, does not want to give up her freedom and well-being to become a mother, and she is not alone. In the past decade, births have fallen by 29 percent in Chile, now the country with the lowest birth rate in the Americas. With 1.17 children being born per woman, the Latin American nation is far from the 2.1 needed to maintain its population, according to the National Statistics Institute (INE). "Being a mother is an absolutely selfless task. I love to travel and when I go on a trip, I do it alone. I don't ask anyone. I just disappear," said Ramirez, who is balancing her job with a master's degree. "I can't see myself being in charge of feeding and entertaining a child, always prioritizing the wellbeing and care of a child over my own wellbeing," she added.

Declining birth rates are sparking alarm across the globe, especially in developed economies. Even Pope Francis has weighed in, suggesting couples who have pets instead of children are selfish and a threat to humanity. Chile's birthrate is below that of developed economies such as Italy, Japan, and Spain, according to the UN Population Division. "The changes around reproduction in Chilean society have been very fast and abrupt. What took decades in Europe has happened in 10 or 20 years in Chile," said Catholic University sociologist Martina Yopo.

Chilean women have gained greater access to education — especially since universities became free in 2008 — and entered the workforce in higher numbers. And with greater reproductive autonomy, "today being a woman does not necessarily mean being a mother, and having a family does not necessarily require children," added Yopo.

'An emergency'

The INE predicts Chile's birthrate will continue to fall in coming years, and not even an increase in immigration is managing to reverse the situation. "It is an emergency, a health crisis. I can think of few things more important than this from an economic, social and ethical point of view," said Anibal Scarella, president of the Chilean Society of Reproductive Medicine.

Economist Jorge Berrios said the drop in birth rate means "there will be many older people and that they will most likely have to continue working." "There is no generational renewal in people, in the economy."

As in many countries, gender inequality means that many working women know that if they become



SANTIAGO, Chile: Bank executive Isidora Rugeroni, 25, poses for a picture with her cat during an interview with AFP at her home in Santiago on August 27, 2024. — AFP

mothers, they will bear the main load of parenting. There is also little support from the state in areas such as childcare, said Yopo. And women are choosing to have children later, with a third of all births in Chile last year to women aged between 30 and 34. The trend has led to a rise in infertility. "We are not helping people to be able to reconcile the development of their careers and the desire to fall pregnant," said Scarella, who wants to improve access to assisted fertility and egg preservation.

Physiotherapist Tamara Guzman never dreamed of being a mother, and kept postponing the decision. Now 41, and married, she feels she can't afford the lifestyle she enjoys and raise a child. "Everything is very expensive. I see it in my friends who are mothers and are super tired, with dark circles under their eyes, and stressed because they have to pay the nanny or the kindergarten, diapers and milk. If I had more income, yes, I would think about it," she said.

Angered by violence against women and the state of the world, banking executive Isidora Rugeroni decided to get sterilized four years ago, aged just 21. "I felt that there was a lot of evil in the world, a lot of injustice and I came to 'Antinatalism', which is a philosophy that states that it is not ethical to have biological children with the world as it is," she said. "I can do much stronger activism and impact society as a woman without biological children," she said.

Rugeroni said she would like to be a foster mother, and also "adopt all the animals I want." Chile has seen an 80 percent drop in teen pregnancies over the past two decades, according to the INE. And it is not only women balking at parenthood: the number of vasectomies performed in Chile has risen almost tenfold in the past decade, from 768 in 2013 to 7,580 in 2023, said the agency. Meanwhile, female sterilization in public hospitals increased by 54 percent in the same period. — AFP

Afghan women defy Taliban university ban to study medicine

GLASGOW: When the Taliban banned women from attending university in Afghanistan, Zahra Hussaini thought her dream of becoming a doctor was over. Now, she is continuing her medical degree in Britain. "Coming to Scotland, it changed everything. It has given me hope for a better future," the 20-year-old told AFP in Glasgow, where she arrived last month to resume her studies. "I can become a doctor, I can become independent financially and I can serve my family, my community to the best of my ability," she added.

Hussaini is one of 19 female medical students from Afghanistan who landed in Scotland on August 21 following a three-year campaign by the Linda Norgrove Foundation. Norgrove was a 36-year-old Scottish aid worker who was kidnapped by Islamist militants in Afghanistan and

killed during a failed rescue attempt by US special forces in 2010.

The foundation, formed by her parents in her name, said that the students had often been confined to their homes since the Taliban issued its ban on women studying at universities in December 2022. The Taliban authorities have implemented an austere interpretation of Islamic law since returning to power in Afghanistan in August 2021 following the withdrawal of US forces.

Women have borne the brunt of restrictions that the United Nations has labelled "gender apartheid". "They didn't allow me to get my specialization in Afghanistan," said 25-year-old medical student Fariba Asifi, who is also now studying at Glasgow University. "Now I consider I am the luckiest person that I am here and I can continue my education



GLASGOW: Medical students (from left) Malika Mohammadi, Fariba Asifi, Zahra Hussaini and Masoma Zaki take in their new surroundings at the University of Glasgow on September 13, 2024. — AFP

and I achieve this opportunity to continue my education and follow my dream. I'm so excited and I'm really happy."

The woman arrived in Scotland after

the devolved Scottish government in Edinburgh amended funding legislation to ensure that they would be treated like Scottish students and be eligible for

free tuition. Some are studying at St Andrews, Dundee and Aberdeen.

The foundation said it had to clear a number of hurdles for the women to make it to Scotland, including negotiating travel to Pakistan to apply for UK visas, organizing English language tests and university interviews over Skype. It also secured accommodation and UK bank accounts and said it had spent £60,000 (\$79,000) in all.

"Finally, these 19 incredibly talented young women get their future back with the opportunity of a tremendous education and a career. The alternative for them in Afghanistan wasn't good," Linda's father John Norgrove said in a statement. Asifi said she hoped to be able to return to Afghanistan to work as a doctor one day. "It's not a permanent situation, it's temporary, it will change and one day we will have a bright Afghanistan, a peaceful country. "And one day, I'm pretty sure we will see all girls, all ladies can do, can get education, get working and getting their fun. And we should be optimistic we will have a bright Afghanistan. It's near." — AFP

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2024

Cash-strapped Sri Lanka eyes China development

New president to face huge loans, interest on \$46 billion external debt



COLOMBO, Sri Lanka: People walk through the Colombo Port City Marina Park in Colombo. — AFP

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's economic collapse was partly blamed on struggling high-debt Chinese mega-projects, but candidates in Saturday's presidential election are banking on at least one of them to buck the trend. The strategically located Indian Ocean country suffered its worst financial meltdown in 2022, when it ran out of dollars to import essentials, sparking street protests that toppled the then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

When the island nation plunged into chaos, CIA chief Bill Burns blamed its economic collapse on what he called "dumb bets" on Chinese-funded projects. These include an international airport without flights, a seaport without ships, an empty convention centre, and a \$113 million, 350-metre (1,155-foot) communication tower shunned by broadcasters.

Colombo has since secured a \$2.9 billion IMF bailout loan, but whoever is elected will face huge loans and interest accumulated since Sri Lanka defaulted on its \$46 billion external debt.

All top three candidates—incumbent President Ranil Wickremesinghe, opposition leader Sajith Premadasa and Marxist leader Anura Kumara Disسانaya—aka—are hoping a Chinese-funded real estate "Port City" development will woo much-needed foreign investors.

Past projects, dubbed "white elephants" by critics, were built with generous loans from China's infrastructure development program known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which Western nations criticize as a debt trap for developing countries. In December 2017, unable to repay a huge Chinese loan, Sri Lanka handed

its Hambantota port in the south of the island to a Beijing company on a 99-year lease for \$1.12 billion. The Port City development began in 2014, when the China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC) invested \$1.4 billion to reclaim 269 hectares (665 acres) of land next to Colombo harbor. It bills itself as the "gateway to South Asia", a special economic zone with tax breaks of up to 40 years.

For now, it remains largely empty. But Revan Wickramasuriya, the chief operating officer of the Port City Economic Commission, the state regulator of the zone, said the authorities expect to attract \$12-\$15 billion in foreign direct investment to construct buildings and set up hotels, housing, and a marina.

"This is an asset that has been created for Sri Lanka", Wickramasuriya told AFP,

underlining that "the government hasn't borrowed a single dollar to reclaim this land." Now it is up to the government of Sri Lanka to actually take this asset and monetize it," he added. CHEC's Port City plan says it offers a "world-class global hub" for businesses, promising a "high-freedom, low-risk financial environment".

While election campaigning season was in full swing, President Wickremesinghe, once critical of the project, took time to inaugurate a Duty Free mall at the site—yet to see major construction—and secured parliamentary approval to allow offshore banking. Key challenger Premadasa has vowed to continue with the project, but with unspecified amendments to the terms of the zone.

The coalition of the main leftist candidate, Anura Kumara Disسانaya, has said

it would use it to attract "global IT players". But critics note several businesses moving to the special zone were existing Sri Lankan companies, and a few foreign firms already operating.

"Why are these companies going to Port City? The simple and only reason is that they are getting very generous 25- to 40-year tax holidays," said Imran Furkan, from geopolitical risk analysis firm Tresync.

Furkan also said the development fed into strategic rivalry between China and India, which has previously seen neighboring Colombo as firmly part of its sphere of influence. Indian firms that already benefit from tax free zones at home may be reluctant to deal with a landlord that is a state-owned company of China, Furkan said. "It makes no economic or strategic sense," Furkan warned. — AFP

News in Brief

Turkey seals LNG deal with Total

ISTANBUL: Turkey's energy minister announced Wednesday a 10-year deal to receive liquefied natural gas from French firm TotalEnergies as the country, heavily dependent on Russia, seeks to diversify its source of supplies. The minister, Alparslan Bayraktar, said the deal between Turkish state oil and gas company BOTAS and TotalEnergies was signed at Gastech, an industry conference in Houston, Texas. "The 10-year-deal will start in 2027, and will deliver 16 LNG cargoes of up to 1.6 billion cubic meters per year," he wrote on social media platform X. — AFP

Danish bank to pay \$7m fine in France

PARIS: Danske Bank, Denmark's largest, has agreed to pay 6.3 million euros (\$7 million) to end legal pursuits in France linked to alleged money laundering in its Estonian subsidiary that resulted in heavy US penalties. The fine was agreed on August 27 with France's national financial crime prosecutors and validated by a court Wednesday. The agreement does not involve any admission of guilt. The bank's Estonian unit allegedly laundering some 200 billion euros through some 15,000 accounts from 2007 to 2015, according to an independent auditor's report published in 2018. — AFP

China sanctions 9 US firms

BEIJING: China imposed sanctions on nine US defense firms on Wednesday, the foreign ministry said, describing the measures as retaliation for Washington's approval of military equipment sales to Taiwan this week. "Weapons sales by the United States to China's Taiwan region have seriously violated the one-China principle... seriously infringed upon China's sovereignty and security interests, (and) damaged China-US relations," foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a news conference. — AFP

French budgetary situation grim

PARIS: France's budgetary situation is "very serious", Prime Minister Michel Barnier told AFP on Wednesday, saying more information was needed to gauge the "precise reality" of French public finances. France was placed on a formal procedure for violating European Union budgetary rules before Barnier became head of government earlier this month, while the Bank of France warned this week that a projected return to EU deficit rules by 2027 was "not realistic". France's public sector deficit is projected to reach around 5.6 percent of GDP this year and go over six percent in 2025, which compares with EU rules calling for a three-percent ceiling on deficits. — AFP

EU court scraps €1.5bn fine against Google

BRUSSELS: An EU court on Wednesday scrapped a 1.49-billion euro (\$1.65 billion) fine imposed by Brussels against Google over abuse of dominance in online advertising. "The General Court annuls the (European) Commission's decision in its entirety," the Luxembourg-based court said in a statement, adding that the "institution committed errors in its assessment".

Brussels "failed to take into consideration all the relevant circumstances in its assessment of the duration of the contract clauses that the commission had deemed abusive", the court said.

The commission, the EU's influential competition regulator, said it "takes note" and would "carefully study the judgment and reflect on possible next steps"—which could include an appeal. A Google spokesperson said the company welcomed the ruling, noting it had "made changes" to its ad services in 2016, before the EU decision.

"We are pleased that the court has recognized errors in the original decision and annulled the fine," a Google spokesperson added. The ruling is especially

UK inflation steady as BoE gears for rate decision

LONDON: British annual inflation stayed at 2.2 percent in August, official data showed Wednesday, fuelling expectations that the Bank of England would decide against a successive interest-rate cut this week.

The Consumer Prices Index matched July's level, already above the BoE's target of 2.0 percent, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement. Analysts said the latest data firmed expectations that the central bank would likely avoid cutting its key interest rate on Thursday, having reduced borrowing costs by 25 basis points in August for the first time in more than four years.

"A pause on interest rate cuts was already expected... and today's release cements that view," said Ruth Gregory, deputy chief UK economist at Capital Economics research group. "We continue to assume the next 25 basis-point rate cut will take place in November."

The pound rose solidly against the dollar on expectations the BoE would leave its rate at 5.0 percent, while also reflecting a widely expected cut in US borrowing costs later Wednesday, analysts said. The UK central bank trimmed borrowing costs last month for the first time since the onset of the COVID pandemic in early 2020 after UK inflation retreated from four-decade highs, briefly meeting its two-percent target in May before edging back up.

"Years of sky-high inflation have taken their toll; and

prices are still much higher than four years ago," Darren Jones, a senior official at the UK Treasury, said in response to Wednesday's data. The main inflationary movements in August came from large monthly rises to airfares, particularly for European destinations, said Grant Fitzner, chief economist at the ONS.

"This was offset by lower prices at the pump as well as falling costs at restaurants and hotels," he said. The data comes after official figures last week showed that Britain's economic output stalled in July, dealing a blow to the new Labour government that has put growth expansion at the top of its priority list. Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour government won power at the start of July, ending 14 years of Conservative rule. The BoE hiked borrowing costs 14 times between late 2021—when they stood at a record-low 0.1 percent—and the second half of last year. Supply-chain disruptions following COVID lockdowns, together with soaring food and energy prices caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, sent global inflation surging. — AFP

welcome for Google after the EU's highest court last week upheld a 2017 fine worth 2.42 billion euros, imposed for abusing its dominance by favoring its own comparison shopping service. As part of a major push to target big tech abuses, the EU slapped Google with fines worth a total of 8.2 billion euros between 2017 and 2019 over antitrust violations.

The 1.49-billion euro fine is the third of those penalties, focused on Google's AdSense service.

But the long-running legal battles between Google and the EU do not end there, Google is also challenging a 4.3-billion-euro penalty Brussels levied on it for putting restrictions on Android smartphones to boost its internet search business.

The 2018 fine remains the EU's largest-ever antitrust penalty. The General Court in 2022 slightly reduced the fine to 4.1 billion euros, but mainly supported the commission's argument that Google had imposed illegal restrictions. The legal saga continues in that case after Google appealed the latest decision before the higher European Court of Justice.

The EU has since armed itself with a more powerful legal weapon known as the Digital Markets Act (DMA), to rein in tech giants including Google. Rather than regulators discovering egregious anti-trust violations after probes lasting many years, the DMA gives businesses a list of what they can and cannot do online. The aim is that tech titans change their ways before the need for deterrent fines.

Google is already the subject of one investigation



under the DMA alongside Facebook owner Meta and Apple. Google is in the US regulators' crosshairs as well. Last week, the tech titan faced its second major antitrust trial in less than a year with the US government accusing Google of a monopoly in ad technology—the complex system determining which online ads people see and their cost.

It comes after a US judge in August found Google's search business to be an illegal monopoly, a ruling which threatens a possible break-up for the tech behemoth. Ad tech is at the centre of multiple probes by regulators around the world. British and EU competition watchdogs have said in preliminary findings that Google abused its dominance in the market. Google has the right to respond in both cases before the regulators reach final conclusions. Parent company Alphabet in July said revenue from online ad searches climbed to \$48.5 billion in the second quarter of this year. — AFP

IMF postpones consultations with Russia

WASHINGTON: The International Monetary Fund said on Wednesday that it has postponed planned economic consultations with Russia that were due to start this week to gather more data and analysis to ensure "a rigorous consultation". The IMF had planned to conduct its routine "Article IV" assessment of Moscow's economic policies for the first time since Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, but several European countries had objected to the re-engagement.

"Article IV consultations with Russia have been postponed while we gather all the necessary data and analysis for a rigorous consultation," an IMF spokesperson said in a brief emailed statement.

The statement provided no further details on timing for the consultations, which are an annual requirement of IMF membership. The IMF's last annual mission visited Russia in November 2019, before the start of the COVID pandemic. Earlier on Wednesday, Russia's state TASS agency quoted Alexei Mozhin, Russia's director at the IMF, as saying the consultations had been postponed for technical reasons.

"The Fund's management notified the Russian side and the board of directors that the mission's work would be postponed indefinitely," Mozhin said. "Technical unpreparedness of the mission to conduct consultations was mentioned as the reason for postponing the mission." — Reuters



LONDON: A worker checks the stock inside a store in east London. — AFP

Business

Tupperware files for bankruptcy

Colorful containers lose relevance as sales dwindle

WASHINGTON: Tupperware Brands and some of its subsidiaries have filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection and are seeking a buyer, the food container firm said, after years of dwindling sales. "Over the last several years, the Company's financial position has been severely impacted by the challenging macroeconomic environment," president and CEO Laurie Ann Goldman said in a statement Tuesday announcing the bankruptcy filing.

"As a result, we explored numerous strategic options and determined this is the best path forward," added Goldman. The company said it would seek court approval for a sale process for the business to protect its brand and "further advance Tupperware's transformation into a digital-first, technology-led company." The Orlando, Florida-based firm said it would also seek approval to continue operating during the bankruptcy proceedings and would continue to pay its employees and suppliers.

"We plan to continue serving our valued customers with the high-quality products they love and trust throughout this process," Goldman said.

The bankruptcy announcement had been in the pipeline for several weeks. In mid-August, the group said it continued to "face significant liquidity problems" and had doubts about its ability to continue its activity. In its filing with the US Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware, Tupperware listed assets of between \$500 million and \$1 billion and liabilities of between \$1 billion and \$10 billion.

The filing also said it had between 50,000 and 100,000 creditors. Tupperware shares closed at \$0.5099 Monday, well down from \$2.55 in December last year. Trading in them was suspended on Tuesday.

The 78-year-old company became famous in the 1950s and 60s with its "Tupperware Parties," where friends would gather with food and drink as a company representative demonstrated the items. Tupperware became synonymous with airtight plastic food containers but its business model failed to keep up with changing consumer demands. It was severely hit by the emergence of online commerce, the rise of meal deliveries and has also been a victim of consumers turning to more environmentally friendly solutions. "The party has been over for some time for Tupperware," said Susannah Streeter, head of money and markets at Hargreaves Lansdown.

"Shifts in buyer behavior pushed its containers out of fashion, as consumers have started to wean themselves off addictions to plastics and find more environmentally conscious ways of storing food," she said. The company has tried to adapt to changes in consumption patterns by developing its online sales and entering into distribution agreements with chain stores, but has been unable to halt its slide.

Tupperware said it had implemented a strategic plan to modernize its operations and drive efficiencies to ignite growth following the appointment of a new management team last year.

"The Company has made significant progress and intends to continue this important transformation work." The company's roots date to 1946, when chemist Earl Tupper "had a spark of inspiration while creating molds at a plastics factory shortly after the Great Depression," according to Tupperware's website.



JOUÉ-LÈS-TOURS, FRANCE: An employee of Tupperware Brands Corporation is at work on the production line, on Aug 27, 2013 at the group's plant in Joue-les-Tours, centre France. — AFP

Tupperware enjoyed a boom period during the COVID-19 pandemic before seeing its sales slide. In 2022, in the last annual results published by the group, Tupperware reported a turnover of \$1.3 billion, down 42 percent on five years earlier. "Its attempts to appeal to younger shoppers by selling

in the US chain Target haven't been as successful as hoped," said Streeter. "There is still a chance a buyer for the business can be found, but with plastic seen as far from fantastic, among eco-aware consumers, revitalizing the brand will be an uphill struggle." — AFP

Falling home sales in South China to hit major developers

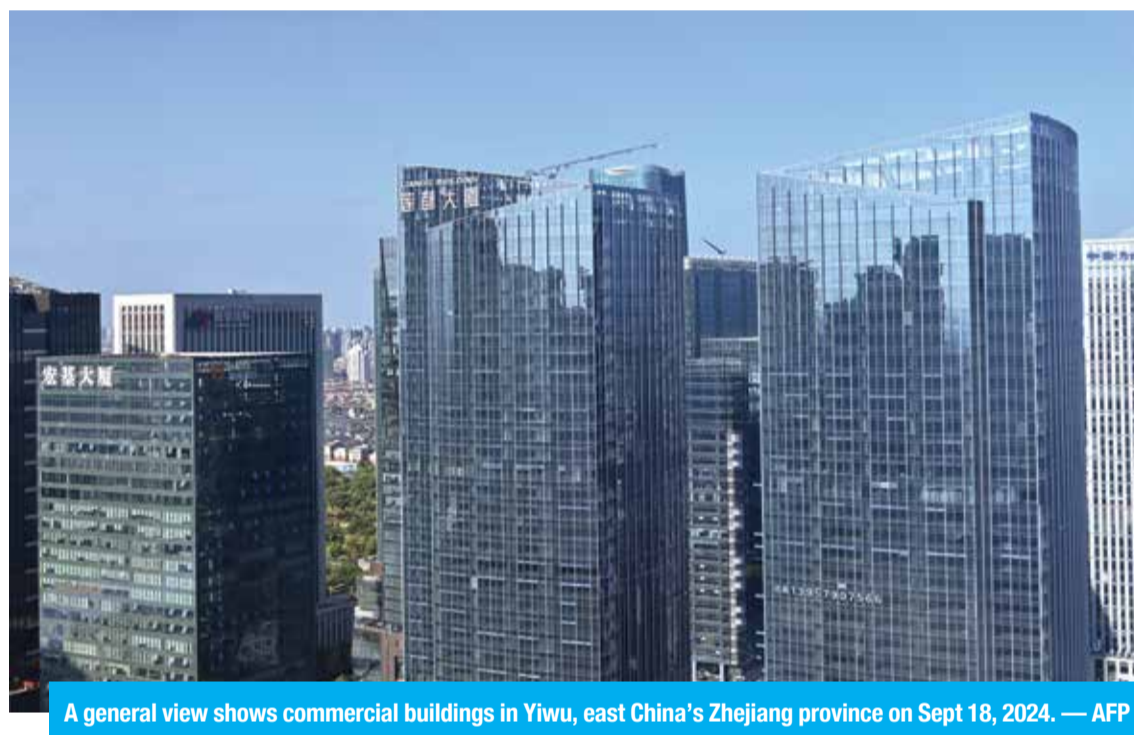
BEIJING: Chinese homebuyers on a tight budget have long sought out Hegang, an ex-coal boomtown on the Russian border. Now, as China's property crisis spreads, Hegang's basement prices are showing up in wealthier regions in a new threat to the economy. Average prices of new homes in 70 major cities including Beijing slumped for the 14th month in August despite dramatic reversals in China's once-restrictive purchase policies. Even prices in the economically vibrant south have sunk, stoking intense social media discussions on widening property deflation, with hashtags "Hegang-isation" and "HegangHomePrices" chalking up tens of millions of views.

In Huizhou, a southern city with a once-thriving property market due to its proximity to Shenzhen and its abundance of sea-view apartments, newlyweds Wendy Ye and her husband in 2021 paid 11,000 yuan (\$1,551) per square metre for a flat. The value of their home has since dropped by a staggering 45.5 percent to 6,000 yuan per square metre.

The sharp decline has turned the couple's investment into a source of constant stress, made worse by a hefty 9,000 yuan monthly mortgage on a second flat in Shenzhen. With a recent cut in her salary compounding matters, Ye, a primary school teacher, said she was considering borrowing from her parents to ease some of the financial pressure. "I'm trying not to dwell on the diminished equity for now, but the mortgage pressure is heavy," Ye told Reuters.

Across China, average home values have tumbled nearly 30 percent from their 2021 highs after authorities clamped down on excessive debt among developers in the summer of 2020. That sparked severe cash crunches and led to incomplete projects, defaults and even public protests by homebuyers, hammering market sentiment.

The protracted property downturn has eroded the wealth of Chinese households, which often count their homes as their single largest investment, chilling domestic demand and undermining growth in the world's second-biggest economy. Retail sales, a key gauge of consumption, rose just 2.1



A general view shows commercial buildings in Yiwu, east China's Zhejiang province on Sept 18, 2024. — AFP

percent in August, compared with around 8 percent growth pre-COVID.

"It's very difficult to expect households to confidently spend if their biggest asset is falling in value every month," said Lynn Song, chief China economist at ING. Plunging prices of new and existing homes in southern China could also set off a chain reaction affecting the country's largest provincial economies including Guangdong, analysts warn. A new wave of reluctant homebuyers would hammer the sales of China's biggest developers, many of which are headquartered in Guangzhou and other southern cities, reining in their investment plans. "A drop of 10 percent in China's overall real estate investment a year could directly drag down gross domestic product by 1.5 percent," said Ma Hong, senior analyst at GDDCE Research Institution.

The reluctance to invest will also slow developers' purchases of land from local governments. Reduced land sales will further weaken the financial positions of local governments, particularly hitting the funds available for investment in local economies, Ma said.

Once a bustling coal city that helped fuel China's industrialization, Hegang has become its cheapest

property market in recent years due to a decline in its mining and industrial sectors and a population outflow. Prices average 1,878 yuan per square meter, according to Anjike, a major Chinese real estate pricing platform. Some still view Hegang's cheap homes as a paradise for young people on small salaries. Phrases like "30,000 to buy a suite in Hegang" and "come to Hegang to lie flat" remain popular hashtags on social media. But in the south, low property prices are seen not as an incentive to buy but as a sign of the broader economic malaise and a red flag for home buyers.

In Guangdong, China's biggest provincial economy, prices in cities like Jieyang, a small textile centre, and Qingyuan, a local logistics hub, have already dropped to Hegang levels.

A 132-square-metre flat in Jieyang can be had for 238,000 yuan (1,831 yuan per square meter), and a 110-square-metre unit for 148,000 yuan (1,345 yuan per square metre), local real estate agents told Reuters. In Qingyuan, average prices have slid 23.9 percent since late 2019 before the pandemic and prior to Beijing's clamp-down on debt among developers, according to Anjike data. — Reuters



CHICAGO: Traders work in the S&P options pit at the Cboe Global Markets exchange following the Fed's announcement on interest rates in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

ahead of a decision, in over 15 years, according to a Deutsche Bank analysis.

"No one's quite sure ... people have landed on different estimates, guesstimates if you will, and right about half of those people are going to be wrong," said Matt Weller, head of market research at StoneX. "So they're going to have to adjust their positions ... One way or another, we could see pretty big moves in the market," Weller said.

Asset classes from stocks, currencies and fixed income could all log swings in the immediate aftermath of the decision, investors said. Stock options are pricing an about 1.1 percent swing, in either direction, for the S&P 500 on Wednesday, according to options analytics service ORATS.

The recent rally in US stocks — the S&P 500 has advanced for seven straight sessions, rising 4.2 percent — leaves stocks ill placed to deal with disappointment in the case of a smaller cut. The S&P 500 rose 0.03 percent on Tuesday, to finish just shy of the

record closing high from July.

"With US equities near all-time highs and likely already reflecting a deep Fed easing cycle, the risk-reward skew for much further upside looks poor," said Tara Hariharan, managing director at global macro hedge fund NWI Management. Traders, who currently expect about 120 bps worth of cuts by year-end may also have to recalibrate their thinking if the Fed decision and Fed Chair Jerome Powell's accompanying commentary shakes their confidence in aggressive rate cuts.

"The market will have to unwind some of this pricing given the US economy continues to be resilient," she said, adding that she expects the front end of the yield curve to steepen. The Fed decision has the potential to roil foreign exchange markets as well with the dollar/yen pair seen as one of the most sensitive to the rate decision. The dollar rose nearly 1 percent against the yen to 141.95 on Tuesday. While a 25 bps rate cut would likely lead to a knee-jerk reaction higher for the US dollar, potentially taking USD/JPY back above the key 142.00 level, a 50-bps rate cut could take the pair back toward the psychologically significant 140 level, StoneX's Weller said. Glen Capelo, managing director of fixed income at Mischler Financial Group, expects heightened interest rate volatility following the Fed's decision due to the market overextending itself. Capelo said a 25-basis-point rate cut will most likely lead to a sell-off in Treasuries, although much will also depend on the Fed's press conference.

Michael Rosen, managing partner and chief investment officer of Angeles Investments, sees the bond market's read on the pace of monetary policy as too aggressive. "The market is pricing in 250 bps of cuts over the next year, a magnitude that only makes sense in the face of a recession. While a recession in the next 12 months is possible, it is not likely, and short-term yields will fall less than the market expects, while long-term rates may even rise from here," Rosen said. — Reuters

Microsoft-BlackRock team to raise \$100bn for AI data centers

SAN FRANCISCO: Microsoft and investment powerhouse BlackRock on Tuesday said they have teamed up to raise as much as \$100 billion for data centers and infrastructure to power artificial intelligence.

The alliance includes Global Infrastructure Partners and the advanced technology investment firm MGX, created in Abu Dhabi this year, according to a joint release.

"We are committed to ensuring AI helps advance innovation and drives growth across every sector of the economy," said Microsoft chief executive Satya Nadella. "The Global AI Infrastructure Investment Partnership will help us deliver on this vision."

Microsoft has invested heavily in artificial intelligence, including pouring more than \$10 billion into ChatGPT-maker OpenAI. "The capital spending needed for AI infrastructure and the new energy to power it goes beyond what any single company or government can finance," said Microsoft president Brad Smith. The partnership will initially seek \$30 billion of private equity capital from investors, looking to ramp up that amount as high as \$100 billion including debt financing, according to the companies.

Investments in expanding or building data centers and creating new sources of power for them will be mostly focused in the United States, with the remainder made in US partner countries, according to the group. Leading AI chip maker Nvidia will support the partnership with expertise, and Microsoft will provide technical advice along with funding, the release said.

"Accelerated computing and generative AI are driving a growing need for AI infrastructure for the next industrial revolution," Nvidia chief executive Jensen Huang said in the release. — AFP

Indonesian central bank announces surprise rate cut

JAKARTA: Indonesia's central bank on Wednesday unexpectedly cut key interest rates for the first time in more than three years as the rupiah strengthens and ahead of an expected US reduction later in the day. Bank Indonesia lowered the seven-day reverse repurchase rate by 25 basis points to six percent, marking the first such move since early 2021. Its two other main rates were also cut by 25 basis points.

"The Federal Funds Rate direction is getting clearer, and the rupiah is relatively stable and even getting stronger," bank governor Perry Warjiyo told reporters. "These two factors are the reason why we lowered the interest rate right now."

The central bank had steadily increased borrowing costs to defend the rupiah amid growing global economic uncertainty and rising inflation. But with price rises slowing, Perry said the decision to cut was consistent with the bank's prediction that inflation would remain low in 2024 and 2025.

"With inflation under control and the rupiah rebounding against the US dollar, further cuts are likely," said Gareth Leather, senior Asia economist at Capital Economics. A World Bank report said in June that Southeast Asia's biggest economy is expected to steadily grow over the next two years on the back of domestic consumption and investment despite weak exports. A new government under Prabowo Subianto will take office next month and its 2025 budget is expected to outline an implementation plan for the new administration's economic goals, and signal its fiscal policy stance. — AFP

Traders brace for least predictable Fed meeting in years

NEW YORK: Traders in global financial markets are facing extraordinary uncertainty as they await the US Federal Reserve's expected rate cut on Wednesday, setting up markets for a burst of volatility. Major brokerages expect the Fed to lower interest rates by 25 basis points at the end of its two-day monetary policy meeting, even as financial markets price in a good chance of policymakers starting the easing cycle with a 50-bps reduction.

Fed funds futures which reflect the market's expectations for the future of monetary policy, have rallied to push the chance of a 50-basis-point rate cut to 61 percent, against 30 percent a week ago. The odds narrowed sharply after media reports revived the prospect of a more aggressive easing. These last-minute moves have left Fed funds futures projecting a record lack of clarity about a Federal Open Market Committee decision, according to a BofA Global Research report.

"It's very rare that you have the market divided on a Fed action 24 hours before the event," George Bory, chief investment strategist for fixed income at Allspring, said. "Usually, at this point in time, the Fed has communicated, or has led the market to expect, a very specific action," Bory said, adding that given the decision is highly uncertain, positioning is unlikely to be deep.

While Fed decisions often move markets, the relatively even divide between traders expecting 25 bps versus 50 bps makes it likely that no matter what the Fed delivers it is going to take many traders by surprise. The Fed move is likely to be the largest surprise, relative to market pricing two days

Business

China piles extra work on weary youth to ease pension crisis

Bold policies must help Beijing address its alarming demographic destiny: Expert

BEIJING: China's decision to raise the retirement age will give a brief boost to its strained pension system but risks further discouraging weary young workers and cannot arrest long-term demographic decline, experts say. The ruling Communist Party last week announced a gradual increase in the statutory retirement age starting next year—rising from 60 to 63 for men, from 55 to 58 for white-collar women workers, and from 50 to 55 for blue-collar female employees.

The government said the changes would bring a system that has changed little since the 1950s into line with decades of improvements in public health, life expectancy and education, and help society adapt to a shrinking population and workforce. Analysts told AFP that growing concerns over the sustainability of the nationwide pension system pushed Beijing to act.

"The pension system is under a lot of strain," said Zhao Litao, a senior research fellow at the National University of Singapore's East Asian Institute.

"It is... clear to the leadership that the stakes for postponing the reform (were) getting increasingly high," he said. China's retirement age had been among the youngest in the world, and officials have discussed raising it for more than a decade.

Opposition from lower-wage workers, a slowing economy and high youth unemployment had thwarted change, experts said. Officials could wait no longer, Zhao said, partly because "the pace of population ageing and decline is faster than previously anticipated".

China's sprawling pension system has three pillars: basic state pensions, mandatory plans for company employees, and voluntary plans for private personal schemes. But the state-led scheme lacks coordination at a national level, while the latter two pillars remain underdeveloped, critics say.

A top government think tank said in a 2019 report that one main state pension fund may dry up by 2035 as the workforce shrinks. Around a third of Chinese provinces already run pension deficits, and

local finances have come under more stress since the COVID pandemic. Xiujian Peng, a senior research fellow at Australia's Victoria University, said the higher retirement age would ease pressure on the system "in the short and medium term".

Under the new rules, the age will rise incrementally over 15 years from 2025, so younger people will end up working for longer than those already close to retiring. Workers will eventually need to make a minimum of 20 years of contributions to draw their basic pension, up from the current 15 years. "After the government increases the retirement age, this decline (in the number of workers) will become... slower," Peng told AFP. But, she added, "the labor force is still declining—this is a (longer-term) trend".

But economic necessity has not necessarily bred widespread acceptance. Many posts on Chinese social media have pointed to a perceived lack of transparency over the fate of workers born from the 1990s onwards. Those generations already face widespread joblessness or an intense work culture that leaves many feeling overwhelmed or burnt out.

"For many Chinese individuals, these changes in retirement policies feel like a reneged commitment of social welfare provision—kicking the problem down an already murky road," Yun Zhou, a sociologist at the University of Michigan, told AFP. "As gender- and age-based discriminations remain deeply entrenched in the Chinese labor market, it remains to be seen to what extent workers... can enjoy effective labor rights protection," she said. Dali Yang, professor of political science at the University of Chicago, said the government faced a "loss of credibility" on pensions. Recent economic challenges have already prompted many Chinese to prioritize short-term cash over saving for retirement, he told AFP.

"Now, there is even less of an incentive" for them to keep paying into the pension pot, Yang said. "If enough people do that, it actually becomes a vicious cycle, (and) the less sustainable the system will be."

Chinese state media has said a rise in the retire-



FUYANG, China: Elderly people rest at a park in Fuyang in eastern China's Anhui province on Sept 13, 2024. — AFP

ment age was "inevitable" given the country's development. The current age was set decades ago when scarcity and poverty were common, before market reforms brought rapid gains in living standards.

Life expectancy rose from around 50 in the early 1960s to 79 by 2022, according to World Bank data. But development coincided with families having fewer children, hastened by decades of birth restrictions under the former one-child policy. Now, China is stuck with a growing senior population and fewer young people to fill the gap.

Experts said only a suite of bold policies—from

creating high-quality jobs to raising productivity, expanding public healthcare, fostering better work-life balance and raising the social position of women—could help Beijing adapt to its alarming demographic destiny. Several told AFP that last week's announcement was unlikely to be the last of its kind. "There is still considerable room to further increase the retirement age," Zhao, of NUS, said. But, he added, "if (younger people) have to work longer and contribute more... they want to get answers for questions like job security and quality, and the level of future pension benefits". — AFP

News in Brief

Inflation slows in Canada to 2%

MONTREAL: Inflation in Canada eased to two percent year-on-year in August, hitting the target set by the country's central bank and marking its slowest increase since February 2021, official data showed Tuesday. The easing was due in part to lower gas prices, down 5.1 percent year-on-year after a 1.9 percent increase in July. Statistics Canada said in a statement. But prices of clothes and shoes also dropped month-on-month—a surprise for August when students in Canada are preparing to return to school, fueling demand and usually sending prices up. — AFP

UK train drivers vote on pay deal

LONDON: Train drivers in Britain have voted to accept a new pay offer, their trade union ASLEF said on Wednesday, bringing an end to a long-running industrial dispute and a series of disruptive strikes. About 96.6 percent of members voted to accept the deal, ASLEF said, on a turnout of 88.5 percent. The dispute saw around 13,000 train drivers staging 18 days of strike action over the last two years, affecting 16 train companies. Britain's new government has held negotiations with ASLEF since taking office in July following a thumping election victory for the traditionally union-friendly Labour Party. The pay offer, announced last month, gives train drivers a 5 percent pay rise for 2022/23, 4.75 percent for 2023/24, and 4.5 percent for 2024/25. — Reuters

Ghana's economy surges 6.9%

ACCRA: Ghana's economy grew by 6.9 percent year-on-year in the second quarter of 2024, the fastest rate in five years, boosted by expansion in several key sectors, the country's statistics agency said on Wednesday. The strong growth represents a significant recovery for the producer of gold, oil and cocoa which has been grappling with its worst economic crisis in a generation due to skyrocketing public debt. "The 6.9 percent growth rate is highest since the second quarter of 2019 and it was driven largely by strong expansion in the extractive sector, just as we saw in the second quarter of 2019," government statistician Samuel Kobina Annim said. — Reuters

IMF holds talks with Kenya

NAIROBI: The International Monetary Fund said on Tuesday it has held productive discussions with the Kenyan government on its plans to address the country's economic and fiscal challenges, after nationwide protests forced it to abandon planned tax hikes. President William Ruto abandoned this year's finance bill in June, leaving the heavily indebted government with a bigger budget deficit for this financial year, mounting unpaid bills, and a delay in disbursement of IMF funding. "We remain fully committed to support the authorities on their efforts to identify a set of policies that could support the completion of the reviews under the ongoing program as soon as feasible," the IMF said in a statement. — Reuters

Germany pledges billions for start-ups

FRANKFURT: The German government and private investors pledged Tuesday to work together to pour billions of euros into funding for start-ups over the coming years, in a bid to keep young companies from moving abroad. Under a new program dubbed the "WIN" initiative, Berlin secured financing pledges of up to 12 billion euros (\$13 billion) by 2030 from investors to support the start-up environment in Europe's largest economy. — AFP

Local, foreign firms in Vietnam facing months of recovery

HANOI: Factory roofs blown off, products worth millions of dollars destroyed, supply chains disrupted: Typhoon Yagi has had a disastrous impact on local and global companies in northern Vietnam who could take months to recover, business leaders warn.

The strongest typhoon to hit the country in decades slammed into the important industrial port city of Haiphong before unleashing a torrent of rain across the north, a major production hub for global tech firms such as Samsung and Foxconn. With climate change making destructive storms like Yagi more likely, the disaster raises questions about Vietnam's push to become an alternative to China in the global supply chain owing to its high susceptibility and lack of mitigating measures.

Dozens of factories and warehouses in Haiphong were damaged by Yagi, while some in neighboring Quang Ninh province expect to have no power until the end of the week, business leaders told AFP.

"I can guarantee that (the damage) is more than tens of millions of dollars," said Bruno Jaspaert, chief executive of DEEP C Industrial Zones, home to 178 companies across five industrial areas in Haiphong and Quang Ninh. "At least 85 percent of our customers have sustained damage."

Many companies lost roofs, while another business saw 3,000 square meters (32,300 square foot) of wall panels blown off in gale-force winds, Jaspaert told AFP. At the Haiphong DEEP C industrial zones, energy consumption was at two thirds of its usual rate, Jaspaert said, and was not expected to return to normal for another two or three months. Hong Sun, chairman of the Korean Chamber of Business in Vietnam, told AFP the typhoon had been a "disaster" for his members, with some struggling with staff shortages as flooding stopped workers reaching factories.

Samsung—Vietnam's largest foreign investor—said its operations were running as normal, but a warehouse belonging to Korean giant LG Electronics was flooded last week, Hong said, damaging fridges and other home appliances. LG told AFP it had resumed production of some products shortly after the storm and was making "every effort to swiftly recover".

Among businesses from Japan, another major in-

US may decide on Nippon Steel bid only after election

WASHINGTON/TOKYO: The US national security panel reviewing Nippon Steel's \$14.9 billion bid for US Steel let the companies refile their application for approval of the deal, a person familiar with the matter said, delaying a decision on the politically sensitive merger until after the Nov 5 presidential election. The move offers a ray of hope for the companies, whose proposed tie-up appeared set to be blocked when the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) alleged on Aug 31 the transaction posed a risk to national security by threatening the steel supply chain for critical US industries. CFIUS needs more time to understand the deal's impact on national security and engage with the parties, the person said on Tuesday. Refiling sets a new 90-day clock to review the proposed tie-up and make a decision.

The review was expected to take close to the full 90 days, another person familiar with the matter said. Japanese public broadcaster NHK reported on Wednesday



HA LONG, Vietnam: This aerial picture shows damaged buildings and debris on a street after Super Typhoon Yagi hits Ha Long, in Quang Ninh province, on Sept 8, 2024. -- AFP

vestor, around half reported some kind of damage—while around 70 said their business had been interrupted or suspended, according to Susumu Yoshida at the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Floods and landslides triggered by Yagi have killed more than 500 people across Southeast Asia -- 292 in Vietnam, according to government figures.

The southeast Asian nation of 100 million people has long been seen as a likely key beneficiary of the decoupling between the United States and the world's second-largest economy. Investors have expanded into the country as part of a "China plus one" strategy and US President Joe Biden made a high-profile state visit to Hanoi a year ago. Biden symbolically upgraded diplomatic ties and pushed Vietnam as a solid partner for "friendshoring"—diversifying manufacturing supply chains away from China towards friendly countries. Executives from tech behemoth Google, chip makers Intel and GlobalFoundries, and aviation giant Boeing joined Biden for investment talks in Hanoi.

But Vietnam is one of the world's most vulnerable countries to human-caused climate change, and without adaptation and mitigation measures, the World Bank estimates it will cost about 12 percent to 14.5 percent of GDP a year by 2050. A study earlier this year said Southeast Asia—and Haiphong specifically—was facing "unprecedented threats" from longer and more intense

typhoons because of climate change. Vietnam's communist government has set a target to become a high-income country by 2045, but the World Bank says damage caused by climate change poses a "critical obstacle" to this goal. Vietnam's government has already said Yagi caused an estimated \$1.6 billion in economic losses, and would slow GDP growth in the second half of the year. But if Vietnam's susceptibility is a worry for investors, most see a lack of climate-safe alternatives.

"Vulnerability due to climate change is subject to any region... (so) it will not affect Japanese investment," said Yoshida. However, some hope the disaster may incentivize investors to consider renewable energies such as solar that could help shore up supply when storms or floods occur.

Solar and wind power grew tenfold to 13 percent of electricity generation from 2015 to 2023, on par with the global average and exceeding some Southeast Asian peers, according to Ember. But Vietnam is still heavily reliant on coal, as well as hydropower which is vulnerable in heavy floods. A shift "would depend on the existing policies for making more solar energy viable", according to Dinita Setyawati, senior electricity policy analyst for Southeast Asia at independent energy think tank Ember. "These are the opportunities that the Vietnamese government should tap into." — AFP



TOKYO: This picture shows an office building (center) where Nippon Steel's head office is located in Tokyo on Dec 19, 2023. — AFP

that Nippon Steel had refiled an application with the CFIUS for its US Steel acquisition plan by Wednesday, quoting people familiar with the matter.

Nippon Steel declined to comment. CFIUS and US Steel did not immediately respond to requests for comment from Reuters. "Extending the timeline takes some pressure off the parties and, importantly, pushes the decision past the election in November," said Nick Klein, a CFIUS lawyer with DLA Piper.

The deal has become a political hot potato. This month, Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic presidential nominee, said at a rally in Pennsylvania, the swing state where US Steel is headquartered, that she wanted US Steel to remain "American owned and operated," echoing a view held by President Joe Biden. The White House reiterated that position on Tuesday.

Harris' Republican rival Donald Trump has pledged to block the deal if elected. Both candidates have sought to woo union votes. Postponing the decision to after the US elections will "dial down" the political temperature but does not guarantee approval, said David Boling, a former US trade official who is now an analyst at Eurasia Group. "Regardless of the CFIUS review, Nippon Steel still must reach an agreement with the United Steelworkers," Boling said. "Without that, it's very hard to see this deal happening." The United Steelworkers Union, which vehemently opposes the deal, said on Tuesday "nothing

has changed regarding the risks that Nippon's acquisition would pose to national security or the critical supply chain concerns that have already been identified." The deal is being closely watched in Japan, a close US ally and its biggest foreign investor. "Further strengthening economic relations, including expanding mutual investment between Japan and the US... are essential for both countries," Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroshi Moriya told reporters on Wednesday. — Reuters

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2024

The absurd helps us 'see more', says Austrian artist Wurm



A visitor passes by the work "Self-Portrait as Pickles" by Austrian artist Erwin Wurm.



Austrian artist Erwin Wurm poses next to works during the preview.



Visitors react during the preview of the 70th-Birthday Retrospective of Austrian artist Erwin Wurm at the Albertina Modern museum in Vienna. — AFP photos



General director of Albertina Klaus Albrecht Schroeder (left) and Austrian artist Erwin Wurm react next to his work "Fat Convertible".



A visitor looks at creations of Austrian artist Erwin Wurm.



A visitor looks at creations of Austrian artist Erwin Wurm.



A visitor looks at creations of Austrian artist Erwin Wurm.

A fat Ferrari, pickles on pedestals and two sausages in an intimate embrace -- welcome to the weird world of Erwin Wurm, one of Austria's most famous contemporary artists, who wants us to embrace the absurd. If we look at "our world from another perspective, from the perspective of the absurd, we might see more", Wurm told AFP as a retrospective of his work opened in Vienna's Albertina Museum to mark his 70th birthday. "Everything seems normal to us," he said, but if we took another look "we might see different things, and that might be interesting for us to understand things differently".

The show is a reflection on social norms, consumerist society and the diktats of appearance and even identity, with his quirky take on quintessentially Austrian staples such as sausages and pickled cucumbers alongside luxury bags on giant legs, miniature houses and stacks of clothing. "He likes to take everyday things... and present them as abstract elements, to make artworks out of them," said curator Antonia Hoerschelmann.

Playful

Born in the central city of Bruck an der Mur, Wurm wanted to become a painter, but after a university entrance exam found himself in a sculpture class instead. "It was a big shock... I was frustrated and sad, but then after some time I thought that maybe it's a challenge. And

from then on I started to think about the notion of sculpture," Wurm recalled. His walk-in rural school allows visitors to squeeze inside through a small entrance, recalling Wurm's 2010 work "Narrow House" based on his parental home.

Wurm said he was trying to recreate the "claustrophobic" and "quite rigid" post-World War II Austria where he grew up. But he also offers more playful approaches. In his famous "One Minute Sculptures", the public is invited to lie down for a minute on tennis balls or slip into sweaters to "connect them much more to a piece". There is a darker undercurrent to some of his most recent creations, such as a sculpture of what seems like someone wearing a shirt and pants but with no head.

"Instead of the people I have the clothes. It's like a shadow of something... We still can recognize something, a human being, but not a person. So the personality is cut out," he said, evoking a "dystopian future". "I'm not happy with our world. How it's progressing and how we treat each other. It's just unbelievable, terrible," he said. The idea of having a retrospective of his works did not appeal to him right away. "I'm not interested in looking back but in looking forward," he said. "I like to work, it's the center of my life and I would like to go on and develop new ideas and develop the old ones." —AFP



A visitor looks at creations of Austrian artist Erwin Wurm.



Austrian artist Erwin Wurm poses next to works during the preview.



Archaeologists excavate the floor of the Notre-Dame Cathedral after the discovery of a 16th century lead sarcophagus in Paris. — AFP photos



A 16th century lead sarcophagus discovered in the floor of the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, on March 15, 2022.

NOTRE DAME'S DEAD POET MYSTERY CLOSE TO SOLUTION

Centuries-old mystery surrounding a poet buried in Notre Dame in Paris could be close to being solved thanks to archaeological digs at the world-famous cathedral, researchers said on Tuesday. The exact whereabouts of the tomb of Joachim de Bellay, a French Renaissance poet, has puzzled researchers for many years. De Bellay, a member of a literary group known as La Pleiade, died aged 37 in 1560. His family asked for him to be buried in Notre Dame's Saint-Crepin chapel. But when the site was renovated in 1758, no trace of his remains could be found.

His remains' precise location was shrouded in mystery until 2022 when archaeologists, sifting through the site in the aftermath of the 2019 fire that destroyed much of Notre Dame, found two tombs at the cathedral's crossing. The scientists, working for the national institute for preventative archaeology, rapidly identified one of them as that of Antoine de La Porte, a cleric who died in the early 1700s. But they could not immediately figure out who was buried in the other one. Using modern methods of analysis, the researchers began to find clues as to his possibly identity. All pointed to de Bellay. A deformation of his iliac bone told them that he did a lot of horse-riding. De Bellay "was a skilled rider, he went from Paris to Rome on horseback", Eric



An archaeologist of INRAP Institute works on a skeleton in a tomb at the burial site discovered in the nave of the Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral during its reconstruction, on the Ile de la Cite in Paris, on Dec 8, 2023.

Cubrey, a doctor and archaeologist, told reporters. In addition, an incision made by a saw in the corpse's skull, as well as a broken sternum, suggested the body had undergone an autopsy before being embalmed -- just like de Bellay. The final, and most telling, clue was traces of a rare illness, a bone tuberculosis leading to chronic meningitis, consistent with the poet's medical history.

French daily Le Monde, describing

the mystery around the missing corpse as "a cold case", said the latest find was the "most spectacular result" of the Notre Dame digs launched after the 2019 catastrophic fire. The archaeologists themselves preferred to remain cautious. "There are still some doubts," said Christophe Besnier, one of the scientists in charge of the excavation site. — AFP

More than 3,600 food packaging chemicals found in human bodies

More than 3,600 chemicals used in food packaging or preparation have been detected in human bodies, some of which are hazardous to health, while little is known about others, a study published on Tuesday said. Around 100 of these chemicals are considered to be of "high concern" to human health, said lead study author Birgit Geueke from the Food Packaging Forum Foundation, a Zurich-based NGO. Some of these chemicals are relatively well-studied and have already been found in human bodies, such as PFAS and bisphenol A -- both of which are the target of bans.

Both little is known about the health effects of others, Geueke told AFP, calling for more research into how chemicals used in packaging end up being swallowed along with food. The researchers had previously catalogued around 14,000 food contact chemicals (FCCs), which are capable of "migrating" into food from packaging made of plastic, paper, glass, metal or other materials.

They can also come from other parts of the food-making process, such as from conveyor belts or kitchen utensils. The researchers then searched for these chemicals in existing biomonitoring databases, which track chemicals in human samples. The team was expecting to find a few hundred FCCs, Geueke said. Instead, they were surprised to find 3,601 -- a quarter of all the known FCCs.

Geueke emphasized that this study could not show that all these chemicals necessarily ended up in bodies from food packaging, as "other exposure sources are possible". Among the "high concern" chemicals were numerous PFAS, also known as forever chemicals, which have been detected in many parts of the human body in recent years and linked to a range of health problems. Also detected was bisphenol A, a hormone-disrupting chemical used to

make plastics that has already been banned from baby bottles in many countries. Another hormone-disrupting chemical was phthalates, which has been linked to infertility. Less is known about oligomers, which are also byproducts of plastic production. "There is almost no evidence on the health effects of these chemicals," Geueke said.

Reduce contact with packaging

When it comes to toxicology, an old saying is that "the dose makes the poison". A limitation of the study was that it could not say whether there were particularly high concentrations of any of the chemicals, Geueke acknowledged. But she warned that these chemicals can interact with each other, pointing to a single sample that had up to 30 different PFAS. Geueke recommended that people reduce their contact time with packaging -- and to avoid heating up food in the packaging it came in.

Duane Mellor, an expert in evidence-based medicine at the UK's Aston University and not involved in the research, praised the "very thorough piece of work". "However, it does not cover how much of these chemicals we are exposed to and hints at other sources of these chemicals in our environment," he told AFP. Rather than being "unduly alarmed", Mellor suggested that people "demand better data and minimize unnecessary exposure to chemicals which may ultimately impact our health".

Some of the chemicals are also already facing bans. The European Union is in the final stages of banning the use of PFAS in food packaging. The EU has also proposed a similar ban for bisphenol A from the end of this year. The study was published in the Journal of Exposure Science and Environmental Epidemiology. —AFP

Milan Fashion Week



Models walk the runway during the Fendi collection show at Milan's Fashion Week Womenswear Spring/Summer 2025, on September 17, 2024 in Milan. — AFP photos

Fendi sees Roaring 20s at Milan Fashion Week in challenging times

Milan transformed once again into the world's fashion capital Tuesday, with Fendi launching Spring-Summer 2025 women's shows with a flowing 1920s-inspired collection — just enough to make one temporarily forget industry headwinds. In an elegant and understated start to Fashion Week, Fendi Artistic Director Kim Jones presented a collection to celebrate 100 years of the Italian luxury brand focused on "movement, lightness, excellence and ease".

Rife with dropped waists, elongated shapes, transparent organzas and shimmering beading, the looks were inspired by the seminal decade of the 1920s, with the show notes citing the 1925 Paris Art Deco exhibition and the publication of F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby." Bands of black or grey were slung low on the waist of

transparent skirts, while long, while elaborate bead-work marked V-neck dresses in silk and organza — all in never-boring neutrals of cream, black, pearl grey and rich beige.

The Roaring Twenties may have been top of mind at Fendi, but the luxury industry is more at a whimper during the 2020s a century later, facing a challenging environment, fuelled by inflation, low consumer confidence and weakness in the key market of China. Still, that won't stop the glamour of Fashion Week, which runs through Sunday and benefits this season from the addition of one more day — the better to squeeze in 57 live catwalk shows attended by buyers, reporters and other industry professionals.

Highlights of the week include Italy's best-known luxury fashion labels, from Prada and Gucci to Bottega Veneta, Versace and Dolce &

Gabbana. Fashion Week stalwart Giorgio Armani, however, will not be showing his namesake line this season, having chosen New York for his women's collection on October 17, timed to coincide with the inauguration of a new building on Madison Avenue. His mid-level Emporio Armani line will get two shows in Milan, followed by a party Thursday in the futuristic theatre located at his fashion headquarters.

Moncler has also shunned Milan this season, opting for Shanghai for its show on October 19, with MSGM, Blumarine and Tom Ford also absent from the calendar. Tom Ford announced two weeks ago that Haider Ackermann would be its new artistic director — with his first collection for Fall 2025 in Paris — while David Koma is to take the helm at Blumarine, following the sudden exit of Walter Chiapponi after just one season.



US tennis player Taylor Fritz walks the runway during the Boss collection show.



Models walk the runway during the Boss collection show at Milan's Fashion Week Womenswear Spring/Summer 2025, on September 18, 2024 in Milan.





Less rosy
In presenting Milan Fashion Week's lineup to the press, the general director of Agenzia ICE, a division of Italy's Trade Agency that promotes Italian companies abroad, highlighted the industry's 108 billion euros (\$120 billion) in turnover and exports of 81.6 billion euros. A crucial sector that represents five percent of Italy's gross domestic product (GDP), the health of Italy's fashion industry is currently less rosy than the upcoming catwalk shows would suggest. So far this year, turnover is down 6.1 percent, according to figures from the National Chamber for Italian Fashion, with the trend expected to continue in the second half of the year.
Forecasts suggest the industry's revenue this year will end up down 3.5 percent from 2023 lev-

els, with recent results from top luxury groups confirming the findings, which are in sharp contrast to years of double-digit growth. French luxury conglomerate LVMH, which owns the Italian brands Fendi and Loro Piana, saw its 2024 first-half revenue slip one percent to 41.7 billion euros (\$46.4 billion).
Rival Kering — owner of Gucci and Bottega Veneta — saw an 11 percent drop in revenue to nine billion euros, with net profit falling by half. Around 245,000 people, of which 56 percent are Italians, flood Milan during the two weeks of Milan women's fashion — in February and again in September — spending on average 1,638 euros per person per edition, according to a recent study. — AFP



Fashion's Game of Thrones as creative heads play musical chairs

Who will take over at Chanel and where will Pierpaolo Piccioli go now that he has left Valentino? The fashion world is awash with such questions at a time of turmoil as sales slump and artistic directors play musical chairs. Resignations, new appointments — the swirl of changes has begun to resemble a fashion version of "Game Of Thrones" as Milan Fashion Week begins. Not a month has gone by this year without its share of shock announcements: Piccioli left Valentino in March after more than two decades, with the Roman luxury brand announcing within a week the arrival of former Gucci

head Alessandro Michele, whose official debut comes in Paris later this month.
At Chanel, Virginie Viard, who took the reins after Karl Lagerfeld's death in 2019, bowed out in June, leaving vacant the top position at France's iconic privately run label. Amid a flood of rumors as to who could take over the house of Coco Chanel, the name of Simon Porte Jacquemus, the young French designer with his namesake label, keeps being mentioned. Also in June, Dries Van Noten, the cult couturier from Antwerp, took his last bow, retiring after nearly 40 years at the top.
Just last week, the suspense surrounding Givenchy — which has been without an artistic head since the departure of American designer Matthew Williams in January — finally ended. British designer Sarah Burton, who spent more than two decades at Alexander McQueen, will take the helm of the French haute couture brand. In Milan this week, both Tom Ford and Blumarine are not showing on the catwalk, due to recent changes at the top.
Tom Ford announced two weeks ago that Haider Ackermann would be its new artistic director — with his first collection for autumn 2025 in Paris — while David Koma is to take the helm at Blumarine, following the sudden exit of Walter Chiapponi after just one season.



French fashion designer Virginie Viard acknowledges the audience after the Chanel Women's Fall-Winter 2022-2023 Ready-to-Wear collection fashion show in Paris, on March 8, 2022. — AFP photos

'Results in record time'
Dismissed artistic directors are often subject to non-compete agreements of one to two years with the risk of a heavy financial penalty, preventing them from taking over rivals right away. But nothing prevents new employers from covering this cost themselves in order to allow a candidate to start work immediately. In this context, rumors are rife. How much longer will Kim Jones remain at Fendi? What about John Galliano, whose contract at Maison Mar-

giela is nearing an end and whom some predict will end up back at Dior or Fendi?
"Artistic directors must make the numbers in one season, two at the most, and if the results are not there, on to the next one," said Alessia Pellarini, founder of The AP Archive, which rents out thousands of iconic fashion pieces. The work of an artistic director at the top of an iconic brand "takes time", said Pellarini, with an ability to understand its history and heritage and to "offer something new but without turning everything upside down".
"This short-term vision to meet market demands only lowers the cultural quality of the offer," she said. A former Fendi design director, Pellarini noted that, even amid the musical chairs seen in the industry, "the typical profile continues to be a white European man." Some designers are eschewing luxury and heading to bigger but more mainstream brands.
Britain's Clare Waight Keller, the former Chloe and Givenchy designer who made Meghan Markle's wedding dress, this month became creative director of Uniqlo, the Japanese casual brand. Meanwhile, Spanish fast-fashion retailer Zara said it was doing a limited collection from Italy's Stefano Pilati, the former creative director at Yves Saint. — AFP



US designer Tom Ford attends the Vanity Fair Oscars Party at the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts in Beverly Hills, California, on March 10, 2024.



Fashion designer for Givenchy Clare Waight Keller, acknowledges the audience at the end of the Givenchy Women's Fall-Winter 2019/2020 Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris, on July 2, 2019.

Sports

Kamindu Mendis century rescues Sri Lanka against New Zealand

It's a special hundred this one, as this came in my hometown: Kamindu

GALLE: Sri Lanka's Kamindu Mendis scored a courageous century against New Zealand Wednesday as the hosts wrestled back the initiative to reach 302 for seven at stumps on the first day of the first Test. Sri Lanka had slumped to 106 for four just after lunch but Kamindu — player of the series for Sri Lanka during their recent tour of England — provided a confident and calm performance that steadied the team.

Kamindu said the Sri Lankans were aiming to "get close to the 350 mark" on Thursday to make them "on top of the game". The all-rounder's innings came to an end on 114 in the penultimate over of the day when Ajaz Patel turned the ball sharply and it popped off the glove for an easy catch at first slip.

"It's a special hundred this one, as this came in my hometown," Kamindu said. "I should have gone on to get a big one, but I couldn't do much about that ball." Kamindu, known for his ability to bat and bowl with both hands, is playing in his seventh Test match. He has already notched up four centuries and four half-centuries in scoring more than 800 runs.

Sri Lanka were in a little trouble going into tea at 178 for five but a 103-run stand between Kusal Mendis and Kamindu rescued them and provided a reasonable first innings total. Kusal posted a half-century but fell soon afterwards to an unusual dismissal when the ball struck Tom Latham at short leg, with skipper Tim Struoc snapping up the catch.

'Knock them over'

Rookie New Zealand fast bowler William O'Rourke had earlier rattled Sri Lanka's top order, taking two wickets as the hosts reached 88 at lunch. The Kiwis took a gamble by leaving out veteran pace bowler Matt Henry but 23-year-old O'Rourke soon justified his inclusion. He surprised Dimuth Karunaratne with extra bounce in the fourth over and the left-hander nicked the ball to wicketkeeper Tom Blundell, departing for two.

Fellow opener Pathum Nissanka, fresh from a match-winning performance against England last week, was cleaned up by a yorker that swung in late after posting 27. Dinesh Chandimal clipped South-ee's fourth ball after lunch to mid-wicket, where Michael Bracewell took a diving catch.

Sri Lankan skipper Dhananjaya de Silva was then bowled through the gate to give part-time spin bowler Glenn Phillips success in his first over. Angelo Mathews, who was forced off by a blow to his thumb, returned to bat before being dismissed on 36 in the last over before tea, nicking O'Rourke to the wicketkeeper.

O'Rourke said that "honors are pretty even" at the end of day one, giving "credit to the Sri Lankan batters to get themselves back into the game". But he said New Zealand were eager to begin their innings early on Thursday. "We are looking forward to knock them over soon," he said.

Sri Lanka last won a Test series against New Zealand in 2009. The Black Caps have since won four series and drawn two against the hosts. World Test Championship points are on the line, with New Zealand third on the table behind India and



GALLE: Sri Lanka's Kamindu Mendis (L) dives as New Zealand's wicketkeeper Tom Blundell fields the ball during the first day of the first Test cricket match between Sri Lanka and New Zealand at the Galle International Cricket Stadium in Galle. — AFP

Australia. Sri Lanka are fifth. The first Test, on the imposing grounds beneath the walls of the 17th-century Galle Fort, will have a rest day on

Saturday when Sri Lanka votes in a presidential election. The second Test will also be played in Galle, from September 26. — AFP



Tomoooh Sports Club delegation before their departure to Cairo.

Tomoooh Sports Club to participate in 5th Heliopolis Championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Tomoooh Sports Club for the Special Needs delegation left for Cairo, Egypt to participate in the 5th Heliopolis International

Championship. The championship includes swimming, equestrian, table tennis and athletics for all age groups. Tomoooh Club players will participate in athletics and table tennis with three players over the age of 21, they are Mohsen Al-Mashmoum and Hassan Al-Mutawaa. Mohammad Rabee Al-Otaibi will participate in the 100 and 200 meter race.

The delegation is headed by the club's Assistant Secretary Fahad Al-Sahly, Executive Director Huda Al-Khaldi and coach Bilal Al-Hamami.

Al-Sahly said Tomoooh Club is keen on partic-



News in Brief

Diamond League to increase prize money

PARIS: The Diamond League athletics circuit said on Wednesday it will increase its prize money to record levels from next season. The new overall figure is \$9.24 million, almost a third higher than during the Covid-19 period of 2021-2024. Between \$30,000-\$100,000 will be on offer for each discipline at each meeting for the 2025 campaign. "The Wanda Diamond League remains committed to rewarding the athletes more, whilst at the same time ensuring the long term sustainability of the series," Diamond League chief executive Petr Stastny said in a statement. "We provide the world's best athletes the opportunity to compete at the highest possible level. "Having competitors from around 100 countries every year allows for TV audiences in 150 countries and territories, making our series a truly universal and global league," Stastny added. — AFP

Eriksen will wait to settle Man Utd

LONDON: Christian Eriksen will wait to settle his Manchester United future after speculation that the Denmark midfielder could leave Old Trafford. Eriksen was one of Erik ten Hag's first signings as United manager in 2022, but the 32-year-old had a diminished role last season. The former Tottenham star, who suffered a cardiac arrest at the 2021 European Championship, was linked with a move to his old team Ajax, as well as Belgian side Anderlecht, during a close-season of transfer rumors. But Eriksen remained with United after the transfer deadline passed and has made a positive impact since returning to the starting line-up. He made his first start of the season in Saturday's 3-0 win at Southampton, which he followed up with a brace in the 7-0 rout of Barnsley in the League Cup third round on Tuesday. — AFP

Carroll signs for fourth-tier Bordeaux

BORDEAUX: Former England striker Andy Carroll, who played for Newcastle, Liverpool and West Ham has signed for fourth division Bordeaux, the six-time Ligue 1 champions announced on Wednesday. The 35-year-old, who has been with Ligue 2 side Amiens since 2023 passed his medical on Tuesday before signing his contract. "Welcome Andy Carroll. The club is thrilled to welcome the England international forward," Bordeaux posted on X. "Loads of experience at the top level with nearly 450 professional matches, bolstering the attacking options for Bordeaux!" Carroll, who took part in his first training session with his new teammates at Le Haillan on Wednesday, was capped nine times by England, scoring twice. — AFP

Ponting named Punjab Kings head coach

NEW DELHI: Former Australian skipper Ricky Ponting was named as the head coach of Punjab Kings on Wednesday for the next four seasons of the money-spinning Indian Premier League tournament. The announcement was made some two months after Ponting and Delhi Capitals parted ways, ending his seven-year stint at the franchise. "We are delighted to have Ricky on to guide and build our team for the next four seasons," Punjab Kings CEO Satish Menon said in a statement. "His ability to develop cricketing and leadership skills will play a crucial role in our success." — AFP

Indian bowlers finally getting due recognition

CHENNAI: Indian cricket fans are traditionally obsessed with batsmen but star pacemen, including yorker king Jasprit Bumrah, were finally bringing overdue recognition to the side's bowlers, coach Gautam Gambhir said Wednesday.

Gambhir took over from Rahul Dravid in July and will oversee his first Test for India in a two-match series against Bangladesh in Chennai from Thursday. The 42-year-old former opener praised India's world-class bowlers for making a difference to the set-up. "It has not happened many times in India where we have started talking about the bowler now. It has always been about batters, batters, batters. India at one stage was a batting-obsessed nation," Gambhir told reporters. "Jasprit Bumrah is the best fast bowler in the world in all three formats," he said. "It's an honor that we have got someone like Jasprit Bumrah sitting in that dressing room who can make a difference at any stage of the game."

Bumrah's slinging action has a knack for choking an opposition's flow of runs and bagging wickets. The 30-year-old has claimed 159 Test wickets since his debut in 2018. Spin bowling usually prospers on Indian pitches and the hosts' chances are likely to hinge on Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja.

Ashwin has claimed 516 wickets, while Jadeja, a left-hander who is also an attacking batsman, is six short of 300. "India has been fortunate that we have got people like Ashwin and Jadeja, and they have bowled well in tandem, and we know what they can contribute," Gambhir said. "Those two can create a lot of impact in Indian conditions." Gambhir, a talented left-handed batsman who played a key role in India's ODI World Cup win in 2011, coached Kolkata Knight Riders to an Indian Premier League title this year. The former politician is also known for his short fuse and once had an ugly on-field altercation with Virat Kohli during an IPL match.

But Gambhir said he had good relations with all the senior players, including Kohli and ODI and Test skipper Rohit Sharma. "My relationship with all the senior players has been really good," he said. "Sometimes people have made a lot of hue and cry about other things, but that's not true." India remain clear favorites on home soil, but Bangladesh last month celebrated a landmark 2-0 series sweep in Pakistan — their first series win over the Asian rivals. "We played very good cricket against Pakistan but that is the past," Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto said. — AFP



BAKU: McLaren's Australian driver Oscar Piastri celebrates with the team after winning the Formula One Azerbaijan Grand Prix at the Baku City Circuit in Baku. — AFP

Verstappen vows Red Bull fightback

SINGAPORE: Max Verstappen declared "the fight is not over" as Red Bull head to Singapore this week having been knocked off the top of the constructors' world championship for the first time in two-and-a-half years.

McLaren leapt into a 20-point lead after Oscar Piastri's masterful victory at the Azerbaijan Grand Prix was compounded by Sergio Perez's late tangle with Carlos Sainz that ended with both in the wall.

McLaren's Lando Norris, who carved his way to fourth place after starting 15th on the grid, is hunting down the Dutchman Verstappen at the top of the drivers' standings. The triple world champion's lead has been reduced to 59 points with seven grands prix and three sprints to go, leaving a maximum of 207 points up for grabs.

Verstappen won seven of the first 10 races this season but he has not triumphed in the last seven as McLaren, Ferrari and Mercedes have all taken race wins. Red Bull's influential adviser Helmut Marko said after Baku that they have no chance of retaining the constructors' championship, but Verstappen has not conceded yet. "We are going to work together as a team and the fight is not over," declared Verstappen after coming fifth. "You win or lose as a team and we won't give up. It is as simple as that." But history

suggests that Verstappen's fortunes are unlikely to see an uptick around the unpredictable Marina Bay Circuit this weekend.

Red Bull have consistently struggled under the lights in Singapore. It was the only race Red Bull failed to win last year, Ferrari's Sainz taking the chequered flag to deny Verstappen a record-extending 11th consecutive GP victory. Norris was second.

Verstappen has never won on the tight city-centre street circuit where tropical storms, intense humidity, concrete barriers, safety cars and red flags all add to the uncertainty. Street circuit specialist Perez did win in Singapore in 2022, but that was Red Bull's only victory there since Sebastian Vettel in 2013.

After a strong start to the campaign, Red Bull are on the back foot. "We have lost out on some significant points in the championship," team principal Christian Horner said after their messy Azerbaijan outing. "However, we will brush ourselves down and fight back hard." McLaren, by contrast, are in buoyant mood as they target a first team world title since 1998. "First in the constructors' championship is an important milestone in our journey," said team principal Andrea Stella.

"However, the team remain clearly focused on the task ahead. We quickly turn our attention to Singapore." The high downforce track in Singapore has traditionally been of benefit to Mercedes. "We've also got lots of data to work through ahead of Singapore," said Lewis Hamilton, trying to take some positives from a ninth-place finish in Baku after an engine change forced him to start from the pit lane. — AFP

Sports

Stylish Liverpool strut past Milan in confident Champions League opener

Perfect return to form after a shock home defeat to Nottingham Forest

MILAN: Liverpool strutted to a 3-1 win at AC Milan on Tuesday as the Reds got their campaign in the revamped Champions League off to a stylish start. Arne Slot's team reacted superbly to going behind in the third minute to a Christian Pulisic goal and ended up cruising to the three points thanks to strikes from Ibrahima Konate, Virgil van Dijk and Dominik Szoboszlai.

Fashion Week got underway in Milan on Tuesday and it was the away team who made all of the slick moves at the San Siro in a clash of European football royalty. Liverpool and Milan have been crowned continental kings 13 times and have beaten each other in Champions League finals but the Reds were a class above and would have won by more had the woodwork not twice denied Mohamed Salah in the first half.

"It was a great day to celebrate your birthday at a stadium like this, and then to win," said Slot, who turned 46 on Tuesday, to Prime Video. "I wouldn't have said this after five minutes but it went quite well." For Liverpool it was a return to perfect form after falling to a shock home defeat to Nottingham Forest at the weekend while Milan again struggled under new coach Paulo Fonseca ahead of Sunday's Milan derby. Fonseca has failed to convince Milan supporters, a large number of whom stayed away on Tuesday night with fewer than 60,000 turning up for their team's highest profile fixture of the new league phase of Europe's top club competition.

And Milan will likely have to face Italian champions Inter Milan, who take on Manchester City on Wednesday, without France goalkeeper Mike Maignan who limped off with a knee injury early in the

second half. "It's a difficult start for us and we have to change things," Pulisic told Sky in Italy before looking for an immediate response against Inter at the weekend. "Of course it (the derby) is a big match for us," he said. "We need to turn things around. We have a big opportunity to do that."

Liverpool hit back

Milan fans put up a giant display which read "fearless" before kick-off and the hosts tore straight into Liverpool. Virgil van Dijk desperately clearing Tijjani Reijnders low cross. And Pulisic quickly had Milan ahead with his super low finish, punishing Liverpool's dawdling defence after being brilliantly sent scurrying towards goal by Alvaro Morata at the end of a move which was started by Maignan.

Liverpool quickly responded however and were unlucky in the 16th minute when Salah smashed an effort with his weaker right foot off the crossbar. And the away side, whose pressing had started to force Milan into giving the ball away cheaply, were level when Konate nodded home Trent Alexander-Arnold's floated free-kick. With the Reds taking control, Milan should have been behind before Van Dijk nodded Liverpool ahead, as Diogo Jota wasted a great chance seconds after Konate's leveller and Salah smacked another shot off the bar on the half-hour mark.

Things got even worse for the home team in the 51st minute when Maignan, who had already dropped to the ground in pain twice during the first half, limped off after being clattered by Fikayo Tomori as the England defender desperately tried to stop Jota from extending Liverpool's lead.



MILAN: Liverpool's Colombian forward #07 Luis Diaz fights for the ball during the UEFA Champions League 1st round day 1 football match between AC Milan and Liverpool FC. — AFP

Maignan was replaced by teenager Lorenzo Torriani and the rookie could only look on in the 67th minute as Szoboszlai bundled home Cody Gakpo's teasing cross after the Netherlands forward eased past sluggish Strahinja Pavlovic.

Disappointed Milan fans began streaming towards the exit long before the final whistle, after which a deluge of whistles and boos, and loud chants for their team to "show some balls", met a thoroughly deserved defeat. — AFP

Roma sack De Rossi after poor start to season

ROME: Roma sacked coach and club icon Daniele De Rossi on Wednesday after a poor start to the season which has left the Serie A team without a win and languishing near the relegation zone. In a statement, Roma said that former Italy midfielder De Rossi "has been relieved of his duties" after just eight months in charge following the sacking in January of Jose Mourinho.

"The club's decision is made in the best interests of the team, to get back on the desired path as soon as possible at a time when the season is still in its early stages," said Roma in a statement. Roma said that "communication regarding the team's technical guidance will follow" after firing De Rossi, who was filmed smiling with and signing autographs with fans as he left the club's Trigoria training centre on Wednesday morning.

A World Cup winner with Italy in 2006, De Rossi was dismissed as his boyhood club, with whom he signed a contract until 2027 in June, sit 16th in Serie A with three points after four matches. The sudden sacking comes after Roma drew 1-1 at Genoa on Sunday, throwing away what would have been a first win of the cam-

paign in the final seconds of the match.

Italian media report that Ivan Juric, who most recently managed Torino, and Massimiliano Allegri are among the coaches in with a chance to take over from De Rossi. De Rossi is an idol for Roma fans as a local boy done good who played in some of the club's best teams of the last two decades, alongside fellow icon Francesco Totti.

Local hero

The 41-year-old, who grew up in a rough and ready beachside suburb of Rome, won over fans who saw in his passionate style of play one of their own on the pitch, despite a lack of silverware. He won two Italian Cups and the 2007 Italian Super Cup, before finishing his career at Boca Juniors in early 2020 after less than a season in Argentina. De Rossi had been a shock interim replacement for Mourinho as his only previous managerial experience had been four months at lower league outfit SPAL.

He was sacked in February last year in a season which finished with SPAL being relegated to the third-tier Serie C. However he got off to a stunning start to life as Roma boss, revitalizing what had become a moribund team under Mourinho and taking them to the semi-finals of the Europa League where they were beaten 4-2 on aggregate by German champions Bayer Leverkusen.

De Rossi had led Roma to two brilliant wins over Brighton and AC Milan in the previous two

statement. Schillaci played for Juventus and Inter Milan after beginning his career in the early 1980s at Messina and had modest success in the club game.

His best club season came just before the 1990 World Cup, when he scored 21 times in all competitions as Juventus won the UEFA Cup and the Italian Cup. But he went from hot club striker to national hero that summer by scoring six times as Italy reached the semi-finals of Italia 90.

"At Juve we were lucky to be excited by him before he did the same to the whole of Italy during that incredible summer of 1990," said Juventus. "Goodbye, Toto. Thank you." Schillaci won the Golden Boot for being top scorer and won the Golden Ball as player of the tournament ahead of the likes of Lothar Matthaus and Diego Maradona, the former of whom won the tournament with the then West Germany.

Italy were knocked out on penalties by Argentina in the last four, as Napoli legend Maradona helped dump out the host nation in front of his own fans in Naples. Schillaci, who was capped 16 times for his country, only scored one other goal for Italy in his career and four years after the 1990 World Cup left Inter for Jubilo Iwata in Japan, where he ended his career. — AFP



ROME: (FILES) Roma's Italian coach Daniele De Rossi reacts during the Italian Serie A football match between AS Roma and Lazio on April 6, 2024 at the Olympic stadium in Rome. — AFP

rounds and briefly looked like guiding them to qualification for the Champions League for the first time since 2019. But Roma's form tailed off at the end of the last campaign and they missed out on Europe's top club competition despite Serie A having five places for direct qualification.

That, and just three draws and a defeat collected from their four opening league fixtures of the season against largely modest opposition, cost De Rossi his job less than three months after committing his future to Roma. Roma host Udinese on Sunday before taking on Athletic Bilbao in their Europa League opener next week. — AFP



Salvatore Schillaci

Barca hopeful of Champions League revival

BARCELONA: Approaching a decade since Barcelona last won the Champions League, the Catalan giants face Monaco in this season's European opener on Thursday aiming to make a statement. The club are desperate to battle their way back into the European elite after years in the wilderness and after a strong start under new coach Hansi Flick, their hopes are rising.

There were some signs they were on the right track in Europe last season when they reached the quarter-finals for the first time in four years. After a 3-2 win at Paris Saint-Germain in the first leg they collapsed at home after Ronald Araujo was sent off in the first half with Barca leading by a goal.

PSG netted three times to oust Xavi Hernandez's side 6-4 on aggregate and the coach was sacked at the end of a disappointing trophyless season. Flick's Barcelona have five wins from five in La Liga and have Spain's teenage Euro 2024 star Lamine Yamal playing a decisive role in their attack.

The winger has developed at an alarming rate since making his Barcelona debut aged just 15 in April 2023. Now 17, Yamal struck twice as Barcelona thrashed Girona 4-1 in the league on Sunday, avenging two heavy defeats by their fellow Catalans last season and demonstrating the team's early progress.

"Lamine is a difference-maker... for me, he is already one of the best players in the world at 17 years of age," said admiring Girona coach Michel Sanchez. "It is difficult to imagine that after (Lionel) Messi another one would come along, but I hope that Lamine keeps improving because he's a player than can reach that level."

Even though comparisons to eight-time Ballon d'Or winner Messi, Barcelona's best ever player, pile pressure on Yamal, they keep flooding in. Yamal's emergence is yet another feather in the cap of the club's feted La Masia youth academy and as shown on the way to glory with Spain in Germany this summer, he can make the difference for his team in any match.

The winger already has three goals and four assists this season, well on the way of matching his tally of 12 goal contributions last term. Barcelona are still stricken by economic difficulties, signing only Dani Olmo from RB Leipzig this summer and struggling for a few weeks to register him with La Liga, but they have an immediate superstar in Yamal. — AFP

Italy's 1990 WCup icon Schillaci dies aged 59

MILAN: Former Italy striker Salvatore "Toto" Schillaci, most famous for being top scorer at the 1990 World Cup, died on Wednesday at the age of 59. Juventus were among Italy's football clubs to pay tribute to Schillaci, who became an icon for his unexpected goalscoring exploits at his country's home World Cup, simply saying "Ciao Toto" on social media with a picture of him in a Juve shirt.

Italian media report that Schillaci died at Palermo's "Civico" hospital after suffering from bowel cancer. The country's football federation (FIGC) said that all matches played in Italy between now and the end of the coming weekend would have a "minute of reflection" before kick-off.

"His goal celebrations, in which his face became the symbol of a collective joy, will remain forever part of Italian football heritage," FIGC chief Gabriele Gravina said in a

Classifieds

Clinics

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908

Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, Sylvester holder of Passport No. M7064690 do hereby change my name to Sylvester Cyril (as given name) Lobo (surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Sylvester Cyril Lobo and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (# 6167 19/09/2024)

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 changed my name from Shaiq Nawaz to Shaikh Nawaz in my Passport No. W0760072 on my own free will & 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, Elvira Thomas John Fernandes d/o Edward Fernandes & Clara Fernandes, holder of Passport No. S2393400, do hereby change my name to Elvira D'Costa for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Elvira D'Costa and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (19/09/2024)

I, Abdul Kadar, holder of Passport No. Z3201026 have 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)

Bayern hit nine, Real Madrid win as new Champions League kicks off

Villa make perfect start on CL return after 41-year absence



MADRID: Real Madrid's English midfielder #05 Jude Bellingham kicks the ball next to Stuttgart's German forward #26 Deniz Undav during the UEFA Champions League 1st round day 1 football match between Real Madrid CF and Stuttgart VFB. — AFP

PARIS: Bayern Munich became the first team to score nine goals in a game in the modern Champions League as the new format of Europe's elite club competition kicked off on Tuesday, with title holders Real Madrid and Liverpool also among the winners.

Harry Kane scored four goals, including three penalties, as Vincent Kompany's Bayern hammered Croatian champions Dinamo Zagreb 9-2 at the Allianz Arena. Michael Olise scored twice on his Champions League debut, while Raphael Guerreiro, Leroy Sane and Leon Goretzka were also on target for the home team in Germany.

Dinamo were 3-0 down at the break but scored twice in two minutes just after half-time to give the hosts a scare, with Bruno Petkovic and Takuya Ogiwara on target. But Bayern then scored six times from the 57th minute onwards. "An amazing game, a bit of a crazy game," Kane told broadcaster DAZN.

"It's the first time I've scored three (penalties) in a game. That doesn't happen at all really." Bayern had been the last team to score eight in a Champions League match, when they beat Barcelona 8-2 in

the quarter-finals in 2020. It was a remarkable way to mark the opening night of the brand-new Champions League, with the competition now featuring 36 teams all pooled together in one giant league instead of the old group stage.

Every participant now plays eight games against eight different opponents, with the top eight teams at the end of the league phase advancing automatically to the last 16. Those finishing from ninth to 24th will go through to a play-off round to decide the remaining sides in the last 16, while the bottom 12 will be eliminated.

UEFA, European football's governing body, introduced the new format to ward off the threat of a breakaway Super League by the biggest clubs, but it also hopes the changes will breathe new life into the competition.

Mbappe on target for Real

There was plenty of excitement around the continent on Tuesday, with reigning champions Madrid made to work hard before beating VfB Stuttgart 3-1

at the Santiago Bernabeu. Kylian Mbappe marked his first game in the competition with Real by scoring the opening goal just after half-time.

However, Deniz Undav equalised midway through the second half for a Stuttgart side appearing in the Champions League for the first time since 2010. Real nevertheless emerged victorious as Antonio Rudiger headed them back in front against his old side seven minutes from time, and Brazilian youngster Endrick got the third goal in stoppage time.

"I know I can do more, each game I feel better and now I'm scoring goals, and I'm happy here," new signing Mbappe told broadcaster Movistar. "What we know is that the Champions League has changed and it's important to win quickly to see if we can qualify quickly or not."

Villa back in the big time

Aston Villa enjoyed a 3-0 win away to Swiss champions Young Boys in Bern in their first ever match in the modern Champions League, 41 years after they last appeared in the old European Cup.

Youri Tielemans and Jacob Ramsey scored in the first half for the 1982 European champions, and Amadou Onana completed their victory late on.

Villa boss Unai Emery wanted his team to take three points as a tribute to the club's former striker Gary Shaw, a member of their European Cup-winning side who died on Monday aged 63 after being injured in a fall.

"Forty-two years (ago) they achieved winning the Champions League. We want to try and follow what that team achieved," Emery said. Elsewhere Juventus beat PSV Eindhoven 3-1 in Turin, with Kenan Yildiz opening the scoring in some style and Weston McKennie and Nicolas Gonzalez also netting. Ismael Saibari pulled one back.

Portuguese champions Sporting beat Lille 2-0 at home, with impressive Swedish striker Viktor Gyokeres on target before a Zeno Debast pile-driver. The French side had Angel Gomes sent off. The action continues on Wednesday, including a rematch of the 2023 final between Manchester City and Inter Milan. — AFP

Man United hit Barnsley for seven in League Cup rout

LONDON: Manchester United crushed Barnsley 7-0 as troubled winger Antony scored his first goal this season and Marcus Rashford struck twice to extend his revival in the League Cup third round on Tuesday. While United ran riot, Fulham made unwanted history as the Premier League club were beaten by second-tier Preston 16-15 on penalties after the tournament's longest ever shoot-out.

Languishing in 10th place in the Premier League after two defeats in their first four games, United were never in danger of an upset against their third-tier opponents at Old Trafford.

Rashford, Antony and Alejandro Garnacho all netted before half-time to effectively seal United's second successive victory after Saturday's Premier League win at Southampton.

Rashford and Garnacho each scored again after the interval and Christian Eriksen's double wrapped up United's biggest win since boss Erik ten Hag arrived from Ajax in 2022.

"It is the first time this team is playing together. Once we found our patterns we scored some great goals," Ten Hag said. "We played with a lot of speed and were ruthless. The key was the right attitude and to be 100 percent concentrated."

"Last season was for everyone difficult, but we ended with the FA Cup. We hit our target and that is what we aim for this season, we want to progress."

Despite promising to take the League Cup "very seriously", Ten Hag made eight changes, with Manuel Ugarte handed his first start after the midfielder's arrival from Paris Saint-Germain.



MANCHESTER: Barnsley's English defender #32 Josh Earl tackles Manchester United's Brazilian midfielder #18 Casemiro during the English League Cup third round football match between Manchester United and Barnsley. — AFP

Ten Hag's raft of switches were no hindrance for United as they made a flying start to their bid to win the tournament for the second time in three seasons.

The Dutchman had described Rashford as being like a bottle of tomato ketchup after he scored his first goal of the season at Southampton last weekend.

Having rarely scored during a difficult campaign last season, Ten Hag claimed Rashford would enjoy a spurt of success after breaking his duck.

His prediction looked spot on in the 16th minute as Garnacho's raking pass picked out Rashford and he cut inside Marc Roberts before firing high past Barnsley keeper Gaga Slonina into the top corner. It was the first time the 26-year-old had scored in suc-

cessive games since March. Antony was making his first start this season and the out-of-favour Brazilian international converted a 35th-minute penalty after being fouled by Slonina as he ran through on goal.

Garnacho stabbed in United's third goal from close range in first-half stoppage time. Garnacho netted again in the 49th minute, sprinting onto Eriksen's pass and slotting home.

Rashford bagged his brace in the 58th minute, taking Garnacho's pass and finishing with aplomb. With Barnsley utterly outclassed, Eriksen steered in two clinical finishes in the 81st and 85th minutes. At Deepdale, it took 34 penalties in total before Preston beat Fulham after their 1-1 draw. — AFP

Usyk handcuffed at Polish airport

WARSAW: Ukrainian boxing champion Oleksandr Usyk was handcuffed at a Polish airport after he became "upset" when his travelling companion was denied boarding for disruptive behaviour, the airline and border guards said Wednesday.

World heavyweight champion Usyk described the incident late Tuesday as a "misunderstanding" while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he was "disappointed by this attitude towards our citizen".

The 37-year-old boxer had been planning to fly from Krakow airport to Thessaloniki in Greece along with another man on a flight Tuesday operated by Polish airline Buzz, a subsidiary of Ryanair. "The passenger travelling with Mr Usyk was correctly refused boarding... by the airport gate agent at Krakow Airport due to his disruptive behaviour," Ryanair said in a statement to AFP on Wednesday.

"Mr Usyk was not refused boarding, however (he) chose not to board," the airline said, adding that the gate agent later called for assistance from airport police. The two men "were somewhat upset. They didn't want to leave the departure gate. So in accordance with the procedure, our officers intervened," local border guard spokesman Jacek Michalowski told AFP.

"They were issued a warning and released," he said, denying that they had been detained. Video footage circulating on social media showed officers walking a handcuffed Usyk through the airport. "As you saw online, one of these people was handcuffed, but that was only for preventative reasons because they were upset and we needed to bring them to the room in peace," Michalowski said. Usyk on Tuesday tweeted that "a misunderstanding took place. It was quickly resolved". Zelensky said Tuesday he spoke with Usyk on the phone after the incident. "I was disappointed by this attitude towards our citizen and champion," Zelensky added on X. — AFP