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**3** Ministry launches virtual office for patients abroad



**3** Kuwait workforce: Why oil sector careers top the list



**8** Hacking of devices exposes dark corners of Asia's supply chains



**16** Jackson shines as Chelsea overpower West Ham 3-0



## 2 Hezbollah commanders among 37 killed as Zionists hit Lebanon

### Military bombs school-turned-shelter, killing 21

#### Amir's Representative receives UN delegation



**NEW YORK:** Representative of 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, received members of Kuwait's permanent mission to the UN and the delegation participating in the 79th session of the UN General Assembly in New York late Friday, with the presence of Minister

of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya. The meeting was attended by Director General of Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority Sheikh Dr Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Kuwaiti Ambassador to the US Sheikha Al-Zain Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah and Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai. — KUNA (See Page 3)

**BEIRUT:** Lebanon's Hezbollah movement, which has been exchanging fire with Zionists for months, on Saturday announced that two commanders of its elite operations unit had been killed by a Zionist airstrike on Beirut, which authorities said left 37 people dead. Health Minister Firass Abiad said three children were also killed in Friday's strike on an underground meeting room, which journalists said left a huge crater in a densely populated neighborhood of the capital's southern suburbs, a Hezbollah stronghold.

Zionists said the strike killed the head of Hezbollah's elite Radwan Force, Ibrahim Aqil, and several other commanders. The military said Saturday it was again hitting targets "belonging to the Hezbollah terrorist organization in Lebanon", without elaborating. The Iran-backed group later said it targeted at least seven military positions in the north and the annexed Golan Heights with rockets, and AFP correspondents reported heavy Zionist strikes in south Lebanon.

Zionist military also said it targeted a Hamas command centre in Gaza City that it alleged was "embedded inside" a school, where rescuers said 21 people were killed in adjacent buildings used as a shelter. Abiad, Lebanon's health

minister, said emergency services worked "through the night" to recover victims from the Beirut strike, adding that "a residential building collapsed on top of occupants" after the attack.

The Radwan Force has spearheaded Hezbollah's ground operations, and Zionist entity has repeatedly demanded through international mediators that its fighters be pushed back from the border. Hezbollah said a second senior commander, Ahmed Mahmud Wahbi, was also killed on Friday. It said he headed the group's operations against Zionists from the onset of the Gaza war in October until the start of this year.

Confirming the death of Aqil, who was wanted by the United States for involvement in the 1983 bombing of the US embassy in Beirut, Hezbollah hailed him as "one of its great leaders". It was the second strike on Hezbollah's military leadership since the Gaza war began. In July, a Zionist airstrike on Beirut killed Fuad Shukur, a top operations chief. Friday's strike also followed sabotage attacks on pagers and two-way radios used by Hezbollah on Tuesday and Wednesday, which killed 39 people. Hezbollah blamed Zionist entity, which has not commented.

Continued on Page 6

#### NEWS IN BRIEF

##### MoI denies uniform reports

**KUWAIT:** The Interior Ministry denied reporting that it was adopting a new uniform for its personnel, including officers, non-commissioned officers, and individuals. The Ministry clarified in a press statement that the recent meetings reviewed several proposed designs and colors for the police uniform. It said the designs are still being studied, and the final decision on adopting the new uniform will be made after presenting it to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who has the power to approve the official uniform for the Ministry of Interior's personnel. The Ministry called on the media and the public to verify the accuracy and obtain information from official sources to avoid spreading incorrect news. — KUNA

##### Secret Service admits failures

**WASHINGTON:** The US Secret Service has detailed a litany of security failures uncovered by its review of the attempted assassination of former president Donald Trump at a rally in July. Shooter Thomas Matthew Crooks was able to open fire from a nearby rooftop at the outdoor event held by Republican election candidate Trump, who narrowly escaped death and suffered a wound to his right ear. The review "identified deficiencies in the advanced planning and its implementation by Secret Service personnel," Acting Director Ronald Rowe said at a press briefing. "While some members of the advance team were very diligent, there was complacency on the part of others that led to a breach of security protocols." — AFP

### Iran unveils Jihad missile and drone amid tensions

**TEHRAN:** Iran unveiled a new ballistic missile and an upgraded one-way attack drone at a military parade on Saturday, state media said, amid soaring regional tensions and allegations of arming Russia. Iran stands accused by Western governments of supplying both drones and missiles to Russia for use in its war with Ukraine, a charge it has repeatedly denied. The solid-fuel Jihad missile was designed and manufactured by the aerospace arm of Iran's Revolutionary Guards and has an operational range of 1,000 kilometers, state news agency IRNA said.

The Shahed-136B drone is an upgraded version of the Shahed-136, with new features and an operational range of more than 4,000 kilometers, it added.

Continued on Page 6

### A modern 'Trojan Horse': Two days of mayhem in Lebanon

**PARIS:** It's around 3:30 in the afternoon on September 17. People in Lebanon are going about their daily business, doing the shopping, having a haircut, conducting meetings. Hundreds of pagers across the country, and even outside its borders, then simultaneously beep with a message and explode, wounding and killing their owners and also bystanders. The communications devices were used by members of the Iran-backed Lebanese Shiite group Hezbollah, which swiftly blamed Zionists for the operation, as did several international media organizations.

Zionist entity, according to its convention for operations outside its borders, neither confirmed nor denied the charge. But observers say that the simultaneous



**TEHRAN:** Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian looks on, as a 'Qased' missile is displayed during the annual military parade marking the anniversary of the outbreak of the 1980-1988 war with Saddam Hussein's Iraq on September 21, 2024. — AFP

explosions bear all the hallmarks of an operation by Zionist, which appears to have infiltrated the supply chain of the pager production and inserted tiny but potent explosives inside.

Zionist entity may have even set up a shell company to supply the devices to Hezbollah in a years-long project that would seem fantastical even in an espionage thriller, according to analysts. But that was not the end. A day later, on September 18, around the same time in the afternoon, another low-fi gadget, the walkie-talkies used by Hezbollah cadres, exploded, even amid the funerals for those killed in the pager attacks.

The subsequent day, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah, who himself had told group members to use low-fi devices so as not to be targeted by Zionists through the positioning of their smartphones, made his first public comments, admitting an "unprecedented blow" but also vowing "tough retribution and just punishment" for Zionists. Even though there is next to no doubt Zionists were behind the operation, questions abounded. Why now? Is this the start of the widely-feared Zionist offensive into southern Lebanon? Or has Zionists simply



**BEIRUT:** A man holds an Icom walkie-talkie device after he removed the battery during the funeral of persons killed when hundreds of paging devices exploded in a deadly wave across Lebanon. — AFP

activated the explosives now simply because it feared the whole operation risked being compromised?

The explosions were felt Hezbollah's strongholds throughout Lebanon: the southern Beirut suburbs, the south of the country and the Bekaa Valley in the

Continued on Page 6



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# Kuwait, Egypt explore new labor recruitment mechanism

## Egypt ready to leverage infrastructure experience through projects in Kuwait: Shaltout

By Passant Hisham

**KUWAIT:** Following a thorough study of the local labor market needs and demographic structure, Kuwait is set to reopen recruitment from Egypt soon, said Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Ossama Shaltout. This announcement was made during a meeting with a local media delegation on Saturday, which focused on the latest agreements established during the recent 13th session of the Egypt-Kuwait Joint Supreme Committee held earlier this month.

During the session, he said that Egypt has introduced a new online platform designed to connect employers with skilled labor, aiming to facilitate the hiring process by verifying workers' qualifications and certifications, ultimately improving recruitment efficiency. The platform, he said, has already demonstrated success in other Arab and Gulf countries.

This move goes in line with Kuwait's efforts to recruit skilled foreign labor that matches the needs of the labor market. Shaltout mentioned that Egypt's Minister of Labor welcomed the Kuwaiti delegation at the Labor and Workforce Committee, where the platform's features and operations were thoroughly explained. It was also agreed that a technical delegation from Kuwait would visit Egypt to learn more about the platform.

### Strengthening business ties

As a result of the bilateral agreements, Shaltout highlighted that total Kuwaiti investments in Egypt now stand at approximately \$20 billion. During the latest discussions, he added that Egypt's leadership encouraged further Kuwaiti investments through providing a range of incentives, including the "Golden License," which is granted to companies that are established to implement strategic or national projects contributing to achieve sustainable development.

In a separate meeting between Egypt's Prime



Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Ossama Shaltout

Minister Mostafa Madbouly and Kuwait's Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya, Shaltout expressed their mutual eagerness to address and resolve challenges facing Kuwaiti investors in Egypt. For instance, the Egyptian government has assured granting the necessary permits and licenses for strategic investment projects within only a week of proposal submission.

Kuwaiti investments are expected to grow in coming years, particularly in oil and gas, manufacturing, and tourism, said the ambassador. He added that Egypt is also ready to leverage its extensive experience in infrastructure to implement new projects in Kuwait, similar to successful initiatives undertaken in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iraq.

### 22 new bilateral agreements

To bolster business connections, Shaltout noted that the joint committee has also agreed to establish regular exchanges between private sector businessmen from both countries. The Egypt-Kuwait

Cooperation Council, co-chaired by Mohammad Jassem Al-Saqer from Kuwait and Ibrahim Al-Araby from Egypt, will play a pivotal role in these efforts. A meeting with the council is scheduled for next Wednesday to discuss the latest developments in the investment sector.

The ambassador also reported that negotiations for 22 new bilateral agreements between Kuwait and Egypt are progressing well and are expected to be signed during the 14th session of the Joint Supreme Commission, set to take place in Kuwait next year.

### More travel opportunities

In line with these developments, Shaltout high-

lighted the existing electronic visa system and the five-year multiple-entry visa to Egypt for Kuwaiti citizens and other nationalities, which aim to facilitate travel for both tourists and businesspeople.

Tourism between Egypt and Kuwait is poised to expand further, with both countries agreeing to increase flight capacity, said Shaltout. He highlighted tourism destinations that are gaining more attention among people in Kuwait, such as Alamein and the North Coast. Regarding the travel of stateless people, or "bedoon" to Egypt, the two countries have agreed to permit entry only for those seeking medical treatment or educational opportunities, as is the case for bedoon who want to travel to other countries.



KUWAIT: The Egyptian Ambassador is seen during his meeting with local media.

## UK envoy hails joint humanitarian effort with Kuwait

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** The UK and Kuwait are deepening their diplomatic, defense, and cultural ties through recent high-level Joint Steering Group meetings focused on shared security challenges and enhanced collaboration in many fields. During a media lunch, UK Ambassador to Kuwait, Belinda Lewis, expressed optimism about the outcomes, stating, "This Joint



UK Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis (left) poses for a photo with Kuwait Times reporter Faten Omar.

Steering Group represents the long-standing and fruitful relationship between our two countries. We are focused on deepening our cooperation, not just in defense but also in areas like international development, where the UK and Kuwait have a significant role to play globally."

For the first time, the Joint Steering Group intro-

duced a political subgroup, a step welcomed by both nations. Co-chaired by His Excellency Ambassador Sadiq Marafi, Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs, and Melinda Bohannon, Director General for Humanitarian and Development at the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office, the political subgroup concentrated on global crises such as Gaza, Yemen, and Sudan. Discussions centered on increasing collaboration on humanitarian assistance, building upon both nations' efforts to address these pressing issues.

"Our joint humanitarian efforts, particularly in Gaza and Yemen, are not only about providing immediate relief but are part of a broader commitment to ensuring long-term stability in the region. The Political subgroup represents a vital forum for tackling these challenges," Ambassador Lewis said.

She affirmed that Kuwait and the UK's commitment to supporting the Palestinian people continues through joint initiatives, noting that the British Embassy, in partnership with Kuwait's Red Crescent Society and the David Nott Foundation, has trained Kuwaiti doctors to deploy specialist medical techniques in Gaza. Moreover, the collaboration is set to expand with the upcoming appointment of an International Trade Manager under the UK-funded Tasdeer program, focused on boosting Palestinian exports to Kuwait.

Regarding bilateral agreements, she added that a significant memorandum of understanding was signed between the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and the UK, committing \$6 million in joint funding towards UNICEF's efforts to restore clean water supplies in Gaza and enhance primary healthcare services in Yemen. This initiative is expected to benefit 2.5 million people across the two regions.

UK ambassador continued "On September 4, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, His Excellency Sheikh Jarrah, and the UK's newly appointed Minister for the Middle East, Hamish Falconer, signed a memorandum of understanding. The MoU focuses on enhancing Kuwait's civil service sector



KUWAIT: UK Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis is seen with journalists during a media lunch.

through the training and capacity-building programs offered by Kuwait's Civil Service Commission, with the UK providing support through recommended private training providers."

On the defense level, the ambassador indicated that the cooperation remains a cornerstone of the Kuwait-UK relationship. "By the end of 2024, 32 UK military training teams will have visited Kuwait, sharing expertise in areas ranging from diving to bomb disposal and battlefield first aid. Two major joint military exercises are planned for November 2024 and February 2025, aimed at enhancing the readiness of both nations to respond to regional threats." "Our defense collaboration is built on mutual trust and shared goals. We are proud of the ongoing joint training efforts and look forward to the success of the upcoming exercises."

The ambassador also touched on the cultural showcases planned to celebrate the 125th anniversary of Kuwait-UK diplomatic relations. "In Kuwait, British Culture Week, scheduled for November, will feature a headline performance by the UK's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre. Exhibitions of British fashion, classic cars, and murals celebrating the anniversary will also be key attractions, symbolizing the lasting ties between the two countries," she said. "Our shared history spans more than a century and we are delighted to celebrate this important milestone. The planned events reflect the deep cultural ties that continue to thrive between our countries."

She concluded that as both countries look ahead, the Kuwait-UK partnership continues to evolve marked by shared objectives and a commitment to peace, prosperity, and mutual respect, pointing out that the recent Steering Group meetings and cultural events reaffirm the strong foundation upon which future collaboration will be built.

by supporting it with medicines, ambulances, medical supplies to manage the situation in the "rabid" war that targeted health facilities. He pointed out that the occupation forces targeted more than 90 percent of public facilities during its aggression, calling on the international community to support the health cadres working under complex circumstances. Since the start of the aggression on Gaza Strip on October 7, Kuwait has been the first to provide great support to all Palestinian people and various sectors. Kuwait has established an air bridge that carried all the relief, humanitarian and medical aid the Palestinians needed, as well as tents for the displaced, with contributions from the Kuwait Red Crescent Society and official and charitable organizations. — KUNA



A truck loaded with humanitarian aid supplies provided by the Kuwaiti Namaa Charity Association is parked at an UNRWA warehouse in north Gaza.



GAZA: A relief worker hands out food parcels to Palestinians in north Gaza. — KUNA photos



## Aid trucks arrive in north Gaza as part of Kuwaiti campaign

**GAZA:** Wafaa Foundation of Microfinance and Capacity Building announced on Friday the arrival of 14 trucks of humanitarian and relief aid to northern Gaza Strip, organized by the Kuwaiti Namaa Charity Association. Director of Wafaa Foundation's office in Gaza Strip Ghadeer Shahada said, in a press statement to KUNA, that four trucks loaded with vegetables, eggs

and chicken entered the besieged northern Gaza Strip. She added that this came as part of the humanitarian "Convoys of Goodness" campaign, organized by the Kuwaiti Namaa Charity Association and "Kuwait by Your Side" campaign. Shahada said that the food parcels were distributed to thousands of displaced families in northern Gaza Strip through Wafaa Foundation. She pointed out that hunger is spreading in northern Gaza Strip, where more than 700,000 Palestinians live in difficult conditions, adding that the markets have been empty of meat, vegetables and fruits for several months due to the occupation preventing their entry.

Director of Operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)

in northern Gaza Mohammad Shwaidih confirmed, in a press statement, that the humanitarian aid provided by Namaa has reached its warehouses. Shwaidih added that the aid will reach all Palestinian people through a computerized system, including the injured, amputees, or those with osteoporosis and malnutrition. He expressed his thanks to Kuwait and all its institutions, in addition to the Kuwaiti Namaa and Palestinian Wafaa institutions for their assistance in delivering aid to the Palestinian people.

Director General of the Health Authorities in northern Gaza Strip Dr Mahmoud Hammad thanked Kuwait for its generous support for the health sector in Gaza. Hammad said that the Kuwaiti support had a positive impact in preventing the collapse of the health system

by supporting it with medicines, ambulances, medical supplies to manage the situation in the "rabid" war that targeted health facilities. He pointed out that the occupation forces targeted more than 90 percent of public facilities during its aggression, calling on the international community to support the health cadres working under complex circumstances. Since the start of the aggression on Gaza Strip on October 7, Kuwait has been the first to provide great support to all Palestinian people and various sectors. Kuwait has established an air bridge that carried all the relief, humanitarian and medical aid the Palestinians needed, as well as tents for the displaced, with contributions from the Kuwait Red Crescent Society and official and charitable organizations. — KUNA

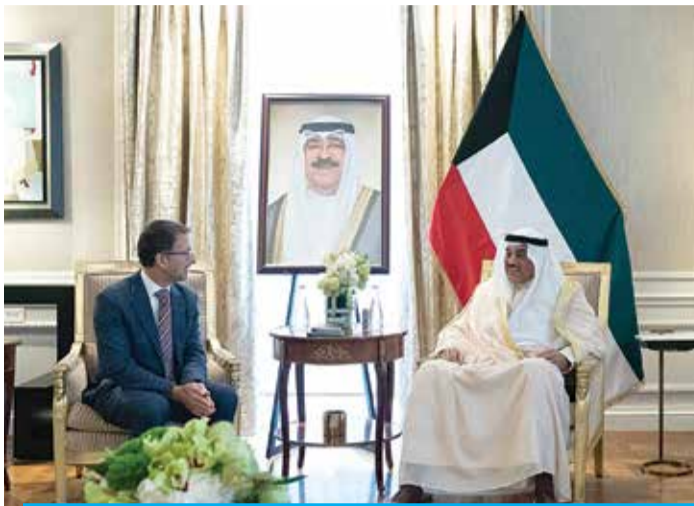
Local

# Crown Prince receives leaders of major US firms in New York

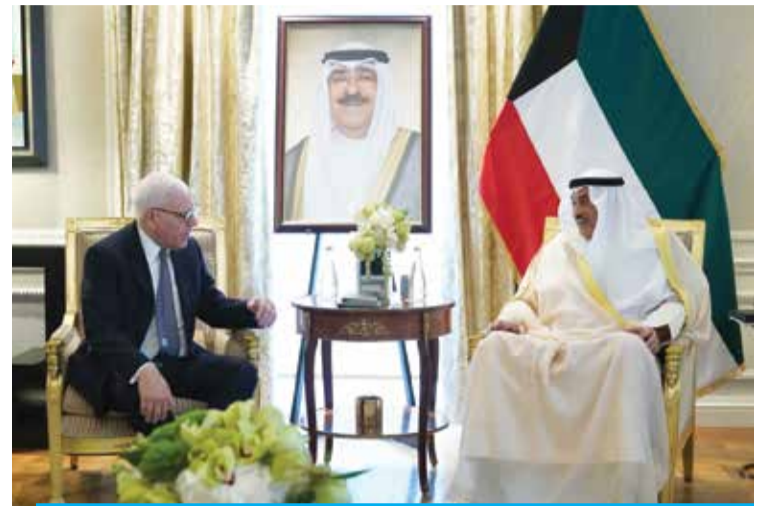
Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled discusses cooperation, investment opportunities for firms in Kuwait



HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah is seen in conversation with President and Chief Operating Officer of Blackstone Jonathan Gray (center).



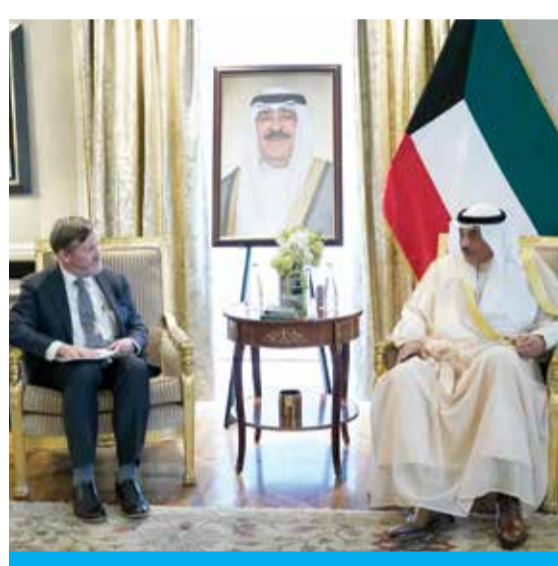
HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Chief Commercial Officer at Microsoft Judson Althoff.



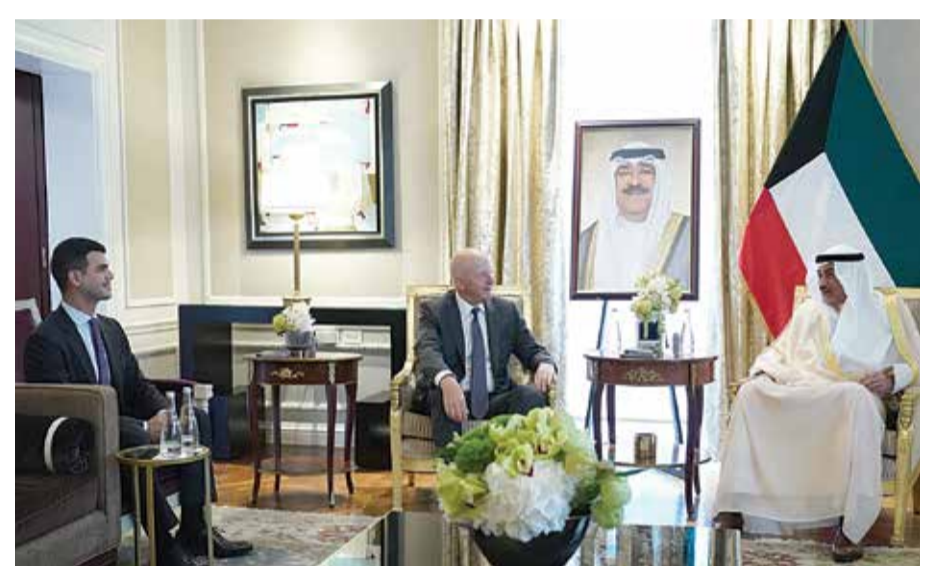
His Highness the Crown Prince receives Co-Founder and Co-Chairman of The Carlyle Group David M Rubenstein. — KUNA photos

**NEW YORK:** Representative of 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, discussed the economic and investment cooperation with representatives of major US corporations and agencies. The Crown Prince received at his New York residence President and Chief Operating Officer of Blackstone Jonathan Gray, Co-Founder and Co-Chairman of The Carlyle Group David M Rubenstein, Chairman and CEO of Goldman Sachs Group David M Solomon, Goldman Sachs Executive Mohammad Al-Derbas and Chief Commercial Officer at Microsoft Judson Althoff.

His Highness the Crown Prince also received Vice President of the US Chamber of Commerce for Middle East Affairs Steve Lutes and a number of representatives of major US firms. He conveyed to his guests the greetings of His Highness the Amir, voicing a desire to strengthen the presence of the global firms in Kuwait to enhance exchanging knowledge and investment cooperation. The meetings were attended by Kuwait Foreign Minister Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya, Director General of Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority Sheikh Dr Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Ambassador to the United States Sheikh Al-Zain Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Tareq Mohammad Al-Banai. — KUNA



NEW YORK: His Highness the Crown Prince receives Vice President of the US Chamber of Commerce for Middle East Affairs Steve Lutes in New York.



His Highness the Crown Prince receives Chairman and CEO of Goldman Sachs Group David M Solomon (center).

## Why an oil sector career is the top choice for Kuwaitis

By Ghadeer Ghloom

**KUWAIT:** The State of Kuwait provides its citizens with the right to employment after graduating from university by submitting a job application to the Civil Service Commission. However, despite the numerous available sectors, Kuwaitis eagerly compete for positions in the oil sector. To understand why Kuwaitis, whether fresh graduates or not, are so eager to join this sector over others, or at least prioritize it among their top choices, Kuwait Times, interviewed locals to listen to their opinions.

Zahra'a Murtadha, a Kuwaiti Industrial Engineer, shared with Kuwait Times her perspective on what makes working in the oil sector a favored choice for Kuwaitis, who make up 90.8 percent of the sector's workforce. "Despite the immense responsibility associated with working in this sector and the challenges employees might face, ... Kuwaitis are usually competing for positions within it due to the privileges it offers more than the other sectors."

She said the financial rewards provided to workers in the sector trump the challenges, which include the long commute to Kuwait City, the great responsibility that comes with the sector's economic importance, long working hours, physical effort, and the hazardous locations. "Employees in the oil industry enjoy higher base salaries than their counterparts in other sectors. They also benefit from a range of allowances that add up to



the overall income, such as remote location and risk allowance, shift allowance, social and child allowance, rising expenses in daily living allowance, housing allowance, travel tickets for the employee and their spouse, health insurance for the whole family, bonuses...etc."

Sarah Al-Mutairi further elaborated that the majority are willing to endure the risks and responsibility of working in this sector because unlike other sectors, the oil sector lifts the overall quality of living not only for its employees but for their whole family, as well. "What makes this sector our first and favorite choice is because it improves the quality of our lives. For instance,

the employee's children are given the opportunity to study at the best private schools in Kuwait, thus, improving the quality of education, which is very important. As an employee in the oil sector, you are also given health insurance that covers your spouse and children, as well. It is true that your working hours are too long, but this is compensated for by longer paid leaves. For instance, you can have 42 days annual leave compared to 30 days in other working places. Thus, for every extra effort compared to other sectors there is a compensating reward that encourages many people to apply for the oil sector and look forward to working there."



Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi, Undersecretary of the Ministry Dr Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi and Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health for External Health Services Affairs Dr Hisham Kalander. — KUNA

## MoH launches 'virtual office', seeks to cut cost

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait is looking to minimize the number of health offices overseas by downsizing staff and closing offices in some countries as a cost-cutting measure, Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi said. The step comes in tandem with a new project called the 'virtual office' that the minister announced Saturday and aims to handle matters related to patients sent by the government for treatment abroad through the Ministry's digital system.

The program, described by the minister as "a quantum leap and unique step in the health system," allows the Ministry to stay in touch with patients abroad virtually to help accelerate their treatment period. It is part of the Ministry's efforts to transition to digital services. The virtual office "aims to accelerate the pace and facilitate communication with patients abroad and measures with Kuwait's embassies through positive cooperation with other countries' foreign ministries," the minister said, adding that the Ministry is considering expanding virtual offices working around the clock.

Kuwait's Health Minister declared on Saturday the launch of a virtual office to deal with overseas patients. The virtual office will lessen cost through minimizing overseas health offices. Al-Awadhi pointed out that programs were implemented after being approved by the Civil Service Commission. He underlined the importance of moving to a digital system in accordance with a well-studied plan. In addition, the minister affirmed that several projects would be inaugurated through the launch of the ministry's strategic plan. He finally reiterated his eagerness to develop the health system in a way that serves citizens, the statement noted.

Meanwhile, Assistant Undersecretary for Foreign Health Services Affairs at the Ministry of Health, Dr Hisham Kalander, said on Saturday that the launch of the virtual health office comes within the Ministry's policy, which is in line with the state's orientation towards rationalizing spending and enhancing effectiveness in resource management.

Dr Kalander said in a press release that the idea of the virtual health office began to crystallize since 2023, when a technical committee was formed to develop the work mechanisms. He explained that cooperation was made with the embassies of Kuwait and permanent missions to international organizations to ensure the success of this initiative, explaining that the pilot phase, which was launched at the beginning of the year, resulted in the application of requests to bear medical expenses in countries such as Thailand. — KUNA



Kuwait Ambassador to Belgium and the head of its mission to the European Union and (NATO) Nawaf Al-Enezi meets with President of the EU Council Charles Michel and other officials. — KUNA

## GCC ambassadors, EU Council chief hold talks

**BRUSSELS:** Ambassadors of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states held talks with President of the EU Council Charles Michel on preparations for the GCC-European summit due in Brussels on October 16. Content of the talks was revealed by Kuwait Ambassador to Belgium and the head of its mission to the European Union and North Atlantic Organization (NATO), Nawaf Al-Enezi, in a statement to KUNA on Saturday.

Ambassador Al-Enezi said the meeting with Michel had been held in the aftermath of his tour to the GCC states where he held talks with the Gulf countries' leaders on preparations for the first Gulf-European summit. Al-Enezi said Michel expressed gratitude for the warm hospitality he was accorded during his recent visit to Kuwait and expressed satisfaction at the outcome of meetings with 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 His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

The forthcoming summit will address a host of files related to means of boosting the Gulf-European partnership in investment, commerce and energy, green transformation and visa relief. During his visit to Kuwait, earlier this month, Michel said in an interview with KUNA that the leaders of the 27 EU member states are motivated to hold the upcoming GCC-

ambassadors, EU Council chief hold talks

## KRCS, Sadu Society sign agreement to empower women

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) has signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Al-Sadu Society, aiming to support and promote women's craft and manual skills through the Sanad Program. KRCS Vice Chairman, Anwar Al-Hasawi, announced that Al-Jahra Public Library has been designated as the official headquarters for the Sanad Program.

The partnership seeks to open new opportunities to empower women by enhancing their craftsmanship and reviving the traditional Kuwaiti art of Sadu, an important part of the nation's cultural heritage. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Sheikha Bibi Duaij Al-Jaber Al-Ali (left) and KRCS Vice Chairman, Anwar Al-Hasawi are seen with the signed memorandum. — KUNA

## Middle East shows highest growth in tourism post-COVID

**MADRID:** A UN specialized agency reported that the international tourism bounced back to 96 percent of pre-pandemic levels in the seven months through July 2024, driven by strong demand in Europe and the re-opening of markets in Asia and the Pacific.

According to the World Tourism Barometer report, issued by the World Travel Organization (UN Tourism or UNTWO) on Thursday, around 790 million tourists travelled internationally in the first seven months of 2024, about 11 percent more than in 2023 and only 4 percent less than in 2019.

Data show the Middle East remained the strongest-growing region in relative terms, with international arrivals climbing 26 percent above 2019 levels in the first seven months of 2024. Africa welcomed 7 percent more tourists than in the same months of 2019. Europe and the Americas recovered 99 percent and 97 percent of their pre-pandemic arrivals respectively during these seven months. Asia and the Pacific recorded 82 percent of its pre-pandemic tourist numbers (-18 percent versus 2019) reaching 85 percent in June and 86 percent in July.

The report shows a strong start to the year, followed by a more modest second quarter. Results are in line with UN Tourism's projection of a full recovery in international arrivals in 2024 despite ongoing economic and geopolitical risks. "International tourism is on track to consolidate its full recovery from the biggest crisis in the sector's history. The ongoing rebound comes despite a range of economic and geopolitical challenges, highlighting the strong demand for international travel as well as the effectiveness of boosting air connections and easing visa restrictions," UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said. "This recovery also highlights the growing need for tourism planning and managing to cater for its impacts on communities in a way that the immense socio-economic benefits are paired with inclusive and sustainable policies".

According to the report, revised data for 2023 shows export revenues from international tourism reaching USD 1.8 trillion (including receipts and passenger transport), virtually the same as before the pandemic (-1 percent in real terms compared to 2019). Tourism GDP also recovered to pre-pandemic levels in 2023, reaching an estimated USD 3.4 trillion, equivalent to 3 percent of global GDP. In 2019, tourism directly contributed to 4 percent of global GDP. The UN Tourism Confidence Index shows positive expectations for the last part of the year. — KUNA

# Cultural week gives Russians a taste of Kuwait's heritage

Kuwait Cultural Week in Moscow features traditional performances, art, cuisine



Performers from Kuwaiti folklore troupe Al-Ameeri give a heritage performance. — KUNA photos

**MOSCOW:** Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) is strengthening Kuwait's cultural presence in Russia through heritage performances, art exhibitions and film screenings. The cultural week organized by NCCAL in collaboration with Kuwait Embassy in Moscow and the Russian ministries of foreign affairs and culture runs between September 17 and 24. The week-long event aims to give the Russian people an insight into the cultural heritage and arts of Kuwait, NCCAL's Assistant Secretary-General and head of Kuwait delegation to Moscow Mosaed Al-Zamel told KUNA.

As part of Kuwait Cultural Week in Moscow, Kuwaiti folklore troupe Al-Ameeri gave a heritage performance featuring 'Al-Nahmah' (local fishermen's songs) and poetry at the Maly Theatre on Thursday. Dr Khalaf Al-Khaledi read an Arabic poem titled 'Bin Al-odabaa Wa Al-olama' (between men of letters and scientists) during the performance.

The activities of the cultural week continued on Friday evening with the screening of a documentary titled "Zeri" and the opening of "Hiwarat Lawniya" (color dialogues) art exhibition at Poklonka Cinema Hall at the Victory Museum. The art exhibition showcases 17 paintings by Mahmoud Ashkanani while the documentary, directed by Habib Hassan, sheds light on traditional embroidery in Kuwait.

Speaking to KUNA, Ashkanani said the docu-



NCCAL's Assistant Secretary-General Mosaed Al-Zamel.



Kuwait's Ambassador to Russia Dr Rashed Al-Adwani.

mentary is a tribute to his own mother who used to be an embroiderer, sewing patterns onto cloth to produce amazing traditional Kuwaiti garb. Ashkanani said the art exhibition features the outcome of nearly five decades of documenting the Kuwaiti cultural legacy and his own artistic experience. After the documentary, Kuwaiti Chef Abdullah Al-Hakimy served Kuwaiti dishes to the guests of the embassy in Moscow, including diplomats and

prominent figures.

The bilateral ties between Kuwait and Russia have been growing in all areas since the establishment of the diplomatic relations in 1963 and the signing of an agreement on economic and artistic cooperation in the following year, NCCAL's Al-Zamel noted. He thanked Kuwait's Ambassador to Russia Dr Rashed Al-Adwani for contributing to the success of the cultural week in Moscow. — KUNA



People attend the opening of "Hiwarat Lawniya" (color dialogues) art exhibition, which showcases 17 paintings by Kuwaiti artist Mahmoud Ashkanani at Poklonka Cinema Hall at the Victory Museum in Moscow.



MOSCOW: The audience watches the screening of "Zeri", which sheds light on traditional embroidery in Kuwait.



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## Omani theater festival invites Kuwaiti professor to critique performances

**KUWAIT:** Theatre enthusiasts in Oman are in for a cultural treat as the 8th Omani Theatre Festival kicks off on September 22, 2024, at the prestigious Al-Irfan Theatre, Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. Kuwaiti intellectuals and artists have been invited to attend the festival, where eight Omani theatrical groups will compete for top prizes, showcasing creative and diverse performances.

Dr Nermin Al-Houti, associate professor at Kuwait Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts, at the Department of Theatrical Criticism and Literature, was selected by Oman's Ministry of Culture, Sports and



Dr Nermin Al-Houti

Youth Undersecretary for Culture Saeed bin Sultan bin Yaarub Albousaeedi to be one of the panelists critiquing the festival's opening performance, 'Al Jadr', to be performed by Luban Troupe on Monday September 23.

In addition to the main performances, the festival will also include art exhibitions and intellectual seminars. Guest artists from across the Arab world will attend, including renowned names from the UAE, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The festival will also honor prominent figures in Omani theatre.

## IWG visits Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center

**KUWAIT:** International Women's Group (IWG) members, headed by Polina Dalmini, president of IWG and wife of the ambassador of the Kingdom of Eswatini, visited the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center. The comprehensive tour, conducted in both Arabic and English, included visits to the Ecosystems Museum, Our Planet Earth Museum,

the Transport and Robotics Museum, the Human Body Museum, the Museum of Islamic and Arabic Science, and the Space Museum.

The delegation was given the opportunity to explore the main activities organized by the center and received an explanation of all the facilities and sections of the museum, as well as the unique exhibits it houses. The group members expressed their admiration for this remarkable cultural landmark and praised its diversity, which caters to the varied interests and desires of its visitors. On behalf of the IWG, Dalmini, along with members of the group's executive board, presented an honorary shield to express their gratitude for the outstanding and informative visit.



KUWAIT: International Women's Group (IWG) members pose for a photo during their visit.

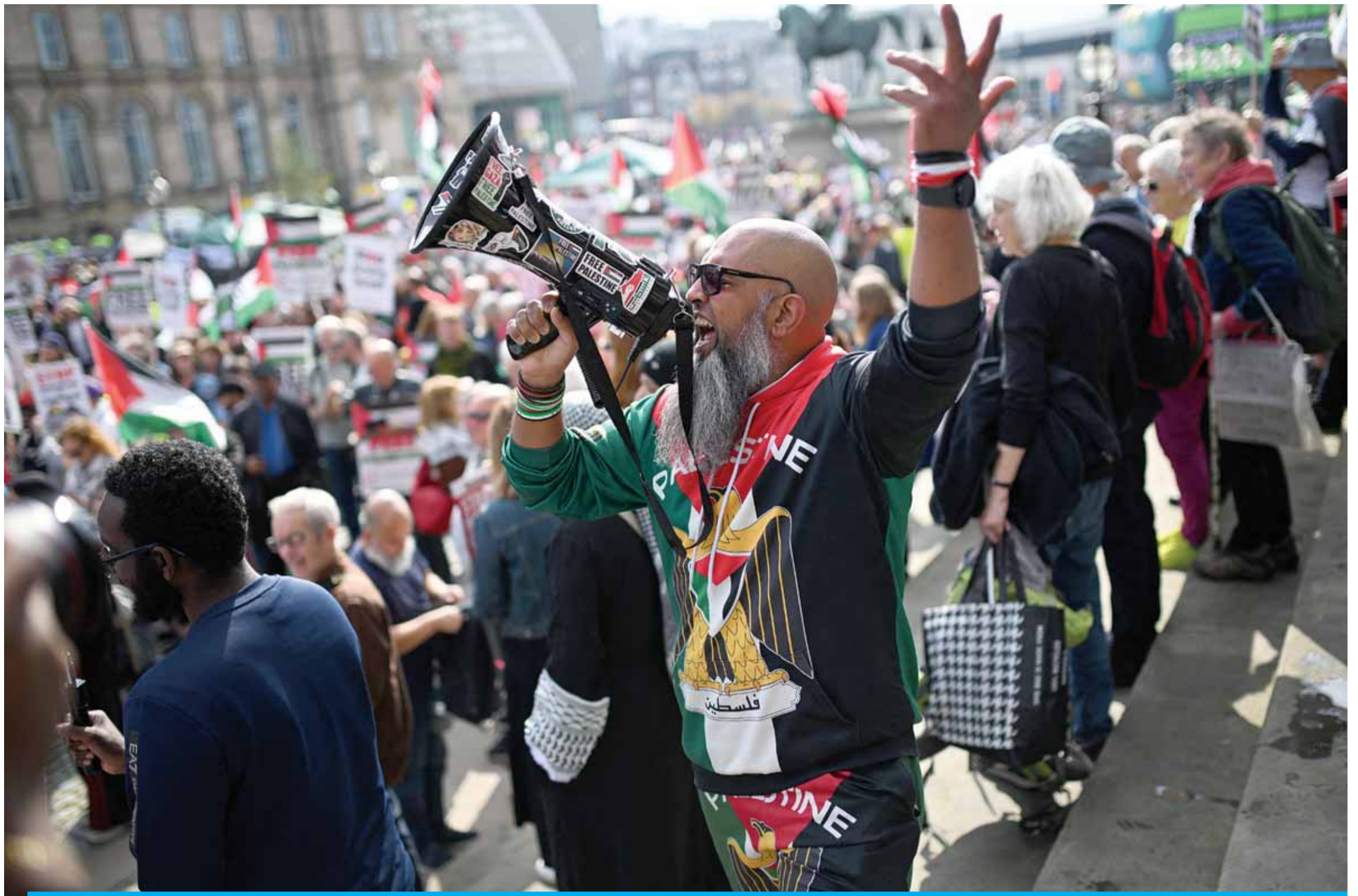


Sri Lanka votes for new president with economic future at stake

## Kyiv says struck ammo depots in southern and western Russia

Page 6

Page 7



LIVERPOOL: Pro-Palestinian protesters gather for the "National March to Labour's Conference: End the Genocide in Gaza – Stop Arming Zionists" on the eve of Britain's Labour Party Conference in Liverpool, northwest England, on Sept 21, 2024. — AFP

# World leaders gather at UN as crises grow and conflicts rage

## Guterres says the world would be able to 'avoid moving to World War Three'

**UNITED NATIONS:** World leaders descend on the United Nation's New York HQ from Sunday for the organization's annual signature gathering against an explosive backdrop of raging wars, growing populism and diplomatic deadlock.

The war in Gaza, soaring Middle East tensions, famine conditions in Sudan's civil war and the grinding conflict in Ukraine are among the rancorous issues on the agenda of the presidents and prime ministers attending the General Assembly's high-level week — the UN's showpiece event.

But UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres insisted this week that the world would be able to "avoid moving to World War Three."

"What we are witnessing is a multiplication of conflicts and the sense of impunity," Guterres said at a briefing. The gathering "could not come in a more critical and more challenging moment," said Washington's UN envoy Linda Thomas-Greenfield.

The list of crises and conflicts that demand attention and action only seem to grow and grow... it's easy to fall into cynicism. "But we can't afford to do that." It is unclear what if anything the grand gathering, the World Cup of diplomacy, can achieve for the millions mired in conflict and poverty globally. With Zionist entity's leader Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas and Iran's new President Masoud Pezeshkian, due to attend, "Gaza will obviously

be the most prominent of these conflicts in terms of what leaders are saying," said Richard Gowan of the International Crisis Group. He suggested the set piece diplomatic speeches and posturing would "not actually make a great deal of difference to events on the ground."

More than 41,272 Palestinians have been killed in Zionist entity's military campaign in Gaza since the war began, according to the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza. The UN has acknowledged these figures as reliable. Fears are high that the conflict could boil over into Lebanon, where a series of deadly explosions apparently targeted Hezbollah's communications this week. Zionist entity has yet to comment.

The action in New York begins Sunday with a "Summit of the Future," Guterres' flagship attempt to get ahead of challenges that will face the world in coming years.

World leaders, expected to include India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will attend to adopt a pact on how to confront the most pressing issues going forward. Despite intense negotiations and Guterres calling on leaders to show "courage," the draft text has been panned by observers as badly lacking in ambition.

"One of the risks, and it's more than a risk, (is) that the Summit of the Future may look like the summit of the past, and in the best-case scenario,

the summit of the present," said another diplomat. Guterres insists the summit has value, saying that "international challenges are moving faster than our ability to solve them."

"We see out of control, geopolitical divisions and runaway conflicts, not least in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan and beyond, runaway climate change, runaway inequalities... and our institutions simply can't keep up," he said. The ICRC's UN representative Laetitia Courtois said it was vital that conflict was tackled "right now," not as "an objective for the next generation."

The summit will be followed by the high-level week at which the UN's 193 members will address each other, kicking off with Brazil. That will be followed by the United States, with President Joe Biden due to speak — likely on ceasefire talks in Gaza, among other issues.

The leaders of China and Russia will be absent as in past years, but Britain's Keir Starmer, Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky, and Brazil's Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva will be present. Zelensky was the star attraction in 2023, but one diplomat said he would struggle to stay in the spotlight this year as he presents his "plan for victory." Ahead of the gala events, a security ring of steel was being erected around the UN's riverfront HQ and local people and businesses braced for traffic paralysis caused by the endless VIP motorcades and street closures. — AFP

## Early voting starts in many US states

**ARLINGTON:** With more than a month to go before the Nov 5 presidential election, some Americans are already lining up to cast their ballots in this tightly contested race. Early in-person voting kicked off Friday in the US states of Virginia, South Dakota and Minnesota as voters pick between Vice President Kamala Harris and former president Donald Trump.

"You just feel that we're part of the process," said 56-year-old Tom Kilkenny, who came to a polling station in Arlington, Virginia, where people were lining up before it even opened early in the morning.

His wife Michelle, 55, said she was happy to set a good example for her friends and neighbors by voting early. "When you... speak with them, I can myself say 'I voted already' and then start spreading the word," said Michelle Kilkenny, whose blue T-shirt was covered in Democratic Party pins.

Each of the country's 50 states has its own voting procedures: early voting by mail or in person, election day voting or a combination of the three. For some Americans casting their ballot as soon as it becomes possible is a family tradition. Nick Vucic and his wife Becca brought their three daughters to the polling station in Arlington. "We want them to be engaged as soon as possible," said Vucic, 38.

In Arlington, just across the Potomac River from the US capital, the city center was dotted with Harris and Trump signs and posters. Activists set up information booths, while voters, mostly Democrats, chatted with one another. Besides electing their next president, voters are also casting ballots in local and state-wide elections. Following a rollercoaster election campaign — which saw President Joe Biden drop out of the race to pass the torch to Harris, two apparent attempts on Trump's life, and explosive televised debates — the stakes could not be higher.

"I can't believe we can pick Donald Trump, when I think about it, I become very worried," said Ann Spiker, 71. "That's why we're out and doing what we can." — AFP

## Feminist author warns of abortion disaster if Trump wins election

**WASHINGTON:** For feminist writer Jessica Valenti, what began as a personal effort to track the torrent of bans and horror stories after the US Supreme Court overturned long-standing abortion rights in 2022 has evolved into a bigger mission. Her Substack newsletter, "Abortion, Every Day," quickly became more than just a way to organize the "chaos in my own brain." It now serves as a daily chronicle of American women's fight for reproductive freedom.

In an interview with AFP ahead of her latest book, "Abortion: Our Bodies, Their Lies, and the Truths We Use to Win," the 45-year-old New Yorker urged progressives to go on the offensive, and she underscored the stakes for Americans as the next election looms.

"If (Kamala) Harris loses, we're absolutely looking at a national abortion ban, even if it's not a formal one through Congress," Valenti said from her Brooklyn home. One of former president Donald Trump's first moves, Valenti warned, could be to replace the head of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and restrict access to abortion pills, potentially by revoking rules that now allow them to be mailed.

Conservative legal scholars go further, suggesting a future administration could interpret a 19th-century obscenity law to block access to all abortion-related supplies — not just pills. That would effectively end the procedure nationwide, even in states where it remains legal. Does that sound far-fetched? Valenti recalls when feminists who warned that Roe could fall were dismissed as hysterical.

"We're being told again that it's never going to happen," she said. "The same pundits refuse to acknowledge we'll probably be correct again." Since the Supreme Court's conservative majority, including three Trump appointees, issued its ruling, 22 states have banned or severely restricted abortion.

Some states allowed exceptions for rape or to save a woman's life, but these have proven widely



US feminist writer Jessica Valenti poses at her home in the Brooklyn borough of New York City. — AFP

inadequate, forcing some women to cross state lines for lifesaving care.

Her latest book comes as ProPublica reported on the deaths of two Black women in Georgia — deaths that might have been avoided if not for the state's criminalization of the dilation and curettage (D&C) procedures commonly used in abortions. — AFP

## International

# Kyiv says struck ammo depots in southern and western Russia

## Zelensky says no UK, US go-ahead to use long-range missiles

**KYIV, Ukraine:** Ukraine said on Saturday it had successfully struck two Russian weapons depots in the southern Krasnodar and western Tver regions, with Moscow announcing more than 1,000 evacuations. Kyiv regularly hits Russian infrastructure with drones as Moscow's offensive drags on for more than two and a half years. The Ukrainian army said it had hit a depot near the city of Tikhoretsk in Krasnodar, calling it one of Moscow's "three largest ammunition storage bases" important to the Russian army's logistics for its Ukraine invasion. It also said it struck an arsenal in Tver region's Oktyabrsky village, resulting in a "fire and detonation".

The governor of the Krasnodar region, Veniamin Kondratyev, announced the evacuation of 1,200 people after a drone attack had caused a fire that "spread to explosive objects" near Tikhoretsk. Videos on social media showed a massive explosion in the dark resembling fireworks at first before blowing up loudly, with online reports that an ammunition depot was struck.

Kondratyev called it a "terrorist attack by the Kyiv regime" and said an unnamed village near the fire had been evacuated, with most people staying with relatives but others placed in temporary accommodation in Tikhoretsk. Videos on social media later showed sirens ringing around the city of some 50,000 people in the daylight, with smoke rising into the air in the distance.

AFP could not immediately verify the authenticity of the images. Krasnodar is separated from occupied Ukraine by the Azov Sea and had been relatively

spared from the type of attacks on Russian border or other southern regions, but has seen increased attacks over the last year. Authorities in the western Tver region also announced a night-time drone attack near the city of Toropets, which lies in the western part of the region. Its governor Igor Rudenya said the "consequences of falling debris" from the attack were being "cleared".

He said there was no evacuation in Toropets but announced a temporary closure of the federal M-9 highway, promising it will reopen soon. The attack also caused some disruption on passenger trains, with railway services saying a train going from Moscow to the western city of Pskov was sent on an alternative route, while another train was delayed.

Russia's defense ministry earlier said it had downed 101 Ukrainian drones, mostly over the border Bryansk region and 18 over Krasnodar. Russia has recently announced shooting down Ukrainian drones almost daily.

The United States and Britain have not authorized Ukraine to use long-range missiles on targets inside Russia possibly fearing an "escalation", President Volodymyr Zelensky said. Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned that firing long-range weapons into Russia would signify that NATO countries were at war with Moscow. "Neither America nor the United Kingdom gave us permission to use these weapons on the territory of Russia, on any targets, at any distance," Zelensky told reporters late on Friday. "I think they are worried about an escalation (of hostilities)," he said. The weapons are supplied by Ukraine's West-



TIKHORETSK, Russia: Volunteers assisting evacuees from an area targeted by a Ukrainian drone on Sept 21, 2024. — AFP

ern allies. Zelensky also said Ukraine's allies had increased their military support to the Ukrainian army, which is struggling to stop the advance of Russian forces in the east of their country. "(Aid) accelerated in September. We are glad. We can feel the difference," he said. Delays in the supply of weapons due to political divisions between allies left Ukrainian forces short of supplies early this year.

Kyiv is heavily dependent on this military support.

Its army has fewer men and weapons than the Russian forces it has been fighting since Moscow launched a full-fledged invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Efforts to end the war have not yet proved successful. Zelensky dismissed a peace plan put forward in spring by China and Brazil as too nebulous. "I don't think it was a concrete plan. I don't see any specific action or stages in it, just generalized procedures," he said on Friday evening. — AFP

## Lawyers in Al-Fayed sex abuse case get over 150 new enquiries

**LONDON:** A legal team representing women alleging rape and sexual assault by the late Egyptian billionaire Mohamed Al-Fayed said on Saturday it received over 150 new enquiries, including from women accusing the former Harrods owner.

The BBC released a documentary and podcast on Thursday in which Fayed is accused by multiple women who worked at the London luxury department store of sexual assault, including five accusing him of rape. The new enquiries included a "mix of survivors and individuals with evidence" about Fayed, the legal team confirmed to AFP, after announcing it was representing 37 women accusing Fayed of sex abuse.

Comparing the scale and nature of the case to claims made against fallen figures like Jeffrey Epstein and Harvey Weinstein, lawyers said the allegations included some girls who were just 15 and 16 at the time of the alleged assault. The team is bringing claims against Harrods for enabling the "systematic abuse" of its employees, many hired as Fayed's personal assistants and secretaries, over a period of 25 years. The accusers say assaults took place at Fayed's apartments in London, residences in Paris, and on trips abroad from Saint-Tropez to Abu Dhabi.

The upmarket department store, which Fayed sold in 2010, said it was "utterly appalled" by the allegations and had received new enquiries as well since



LONDON: The legal team featured in "Al-Fayed: Predator at Harrods", together with alleged victim, Natacha (second right) hold a press conference in London on Sept 20, 2024. — AFP

the BBC investigation. The Harrods website now has a form that victims can complete, adding that it had an "established process" for those affected to claim compensation. The legal team also said it was representing women who were employed by the Ritz hotel — which was also owned by the mogul.

A former manager of the women's team at Fulham FC, also owned by Fayed until 2013, said the players were "protected" from Fayed. "We were aware he liked young, blonde girls. So we just made sure that situations couldn't occur," Gaute Haugen, who managed the team from 2001 to 2003, told the BBC on Saturday. A Fulham FC spokesperson said the club was "deeply troubled and concerned".

"We are in the process of establishing whether anyone at the club is or has been affected," the spokesperson added. — AFP

## Somalia accuses Ethiopia of shipping arms to region

**NAIROBI:** Somalia has accused neighboring Ethiopia of supplying weapons to its northeastern Puntland region, which this year unilaterally declared it would act as an independent state despite protests from the central government. There is a history of stormy relations between Ethiopia and Somalia — a fragile jigsaw of federal states, whose instability weakens the central government's ability to counter a long-running insurgency by Islamist militant group Al-Shabaab. Tensions between the Horn of Africa countries increased on January 1, when Addis Ababa signed a deal with another northern region of Somalia — the breakaway territory of Somaliland — which gives landlocked Ethiopia long-sought-after access to the ocean.

"Somalia strongly condemns unauthorized arms shipments from Ethiopia to Somalia's Puntland region, violating our sovereignty and threatening regional security," the foreign ministry in Mogadishu said on X late on Friday. "We demand an immediate halt and call on international partners to support peace efforts in the Horn of Africa."

Somaliland is located between the Ethiopian border and Puntland. The latter, which has been a semi-autonomous part of Somalia since 1998, said in January it would operate as an independent state due to a row with the central government over changes

to the constitution. In its post on X, the Somali foreign ministry said: "Documented evidence confirms the arrival of two lorries transporting weapons from Ethiopia to Puntland region of Somalia, executed without any diplomatic engagement or clearance."

"This activity constitutes a grave infringement on Somalia's sovereignty and poses serious implications for national and regional security." It did not say when the shipment occurred or who the weapons were sent to.

Ethiopia's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment.

Under the January deal, Somaliland, which unilaterally broke away from Somalia in 1991, agreed to lease 20 kilometers (12 miles) of its coast for 50 years to Ethiopia, which wants to set up a naval base and a commercial port. In return, Somaliland — whose independence is not endorsed by Mogadishu — has said Ethiopia would become the first country in the world to give it formal recognition, although these assertions have not been confirmed by Addis Ababa.

Senior officials in Mogadishu have said this agreement means thousands of Ethiopian soldiers stationed in Somalia to fight Al-Shabaab will now have to leave. The troops are deployed on Somali territory under a bilateral accord and an agreement with the African Union. On August 14, Mogadishu signed a military pact with Ethiopia's rival Egypt, which has offered to join the AU force in Somalia in 2025. Turkey has been mediating since July between Somalia and Ethiopia in discussions aimed at resolving their differences. Two rounds of talks in Ankara failed to produce tangible progress and a third round, scheduled for last week, was cancelled without any comment from either the host or the protagonists. — AFP

## 2 Hezbollah commanders...

Continued from Page 1

Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah vowed that Zionists would face retribution for those blasts. Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, said the world body was "very concerned about the heightened escalation" and called for "maximum restraint" from all sides. Zionist military said it conducted a "targeted strike" against Aqil, which a source close to Hezbollah said killed 16 Radwan Force members. "The command of the Radwan Force was meeting in the basement of the building," the source said.

Washington had offered a \$7 million reward for information on Aqil, calling him a "principal member" of an organization that claimed the 1983 US embassy bombing which killed 63. Zionist troops and Hezbollah fighters have battled each other along the Lebanon border since October 7 attack. Hezbollah says it is acting in support of Hamas. After Friday's strike, Zionist Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Zionist "enemies" would find no refuge, not even in Beirut's southern suburbs.

Military spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said Zionist entity was "not aiming for a broad escalation in the region", but Hamas called it a "brutal and terrorist aggression and an escalation". Iran accused Zionist entity of seeking to "broaden the geography of the war". Months of near-daily cross-border exchanges have killed hundreds in Lebanon, mostly fighters, and dozens in Zionist entity and the annexed Golan Heights, forcing tens of thousands on both sides to flee their homes.

## Iran unveils Jihad missile and drone...

Continued from Page 1

New President Masoud Pezeshkian attended the annual parade in Tehran, commemorating the 1980-88 war with Saddam Hussein's Iraq. "Today, our defensive and deterrent capabilities have grown so much that no demon even thinks about any aggression towards our dear Iran," he said.

"With unity and cohesion among Islamic countries... we can put in its place the bloodthirsty, genocidal usurper Zionist entity, which shows no mercy to anyone, women or children, old or young." Supreme

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delayed by a day his departure for the United States, where he is due to address the UN General Assembly. On Friday, the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk, told the Security Council the attack on Hezbollah communications devices violated international law and could constitute a war crime. The pagers and walkie-talkies exploded as their users were in supermarkets, walking on streets and attending funerals, plunging Lebanon into panic.

"I am appalled by the breadth and impact of the attacks," said Turk, adding that it "is a war crime to commit violence intended to spread terror among civilians". International mediators, including the United States, have been scrambling to stop the Gaza war from becoming a regional conflict. On Saturday, Gaza's civil defense agency said an airstrike on Al-Zaytoonah School C, which had been turned into a displaced shelter, killed 21 people including 13 children and six women, one of them pregnant.

Zionist military said the Hamas militants targeted were "embedded inside" the adjacent Al-Falah School. An AFP reporter confirmed Al-Zaytoonah School C was hit. Military did not provide a death toll but said "numerous steps were taken to mitigate the risk of harming civilians". In late August the United Nations said Zionists had struck at least 23 school shelters since July 4. Zionist entity has repeatedly accused Hamas of operating from such facilities in highly urbanized Gaza, a charge the militants deny.

The October 7 attacks that triggered the Gaza war resulted in the deaths of 1,205 people. Zionist retaliatory military offensive has killed at least 41,391 people in Gaza, most of them civilians, according to figures provided by the Hamas-run territory's health ministry. The UN has acknowledged the figures as reliable. — AFP

leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei delivered a similar tirade against Zionists to delegates to an annual meeting of Muslim clerics hosted by Iran, calling on Islamic countries to "completely cut off their economic relations" with Zionists and "weaken political ties."

"This inner strength can eliminate the Zionist regime, this malignant cancerous tumor, from the heart of the Islamic community in Palestine and get rid of US domination and coercive interference in the region," he said. Middle East tensions have soared since October 7 attack which sparked war in Gaza — drawing in Iranian allies around the region. The tensions have intensified in recent days as the focus of Zionist firepower has shifted north to the Lebanon border where its troops have been battling Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah. — AFP



BEIRUT: Rescuers sift through the rubble at the scene of a Zionist strike that targeted Beirut's southern suburbs a day earlier, as search and rescue operations continue on September 21, 2024. — AFP

## A modern 'Trojan Horse': Two days...

Continued from Page 1

east, as well as in Syria. At least 37 people were killed in the two attacks and thousands injured. The wounded included Iran's ambassador to Lebanon. But those killed also included a 10-year-old girl and another child. As the hospitals filled up the most common wounds were mutilated hands and eyes.

"Hezbollah suffered a very serious blow on a tactical level, a very impressive and comprehensive one that affects the operational side, the cognitive side," said Yoram Schweitzer, a former intelligence officer now at the The Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University. Peter Harling, founder of the Synaps Lab think tank added: "The targets may have been Hezbollah members, but many were caught in the midst of their ordinary lives, and in the heart of their communities."

"This is also a breach that is extraordinarily hard to explain." UN rights chief Volker Turk warned that the simultaneous targeting of thousands of individuals "whether civilians or members of armed groups" without knowledge as to who was around them at the time "violates international human rights law". International humanitarian law prohibits the use of "booby traps" precisely to avoid putting civilians at grave risk and "produce the devastating scenes that continue to unfold across Lebanon", said Lama Fakih, Middle East and

North Africa Director at Human Rights Watch.

Espionage professionals have meanwhile expressed their admiration for how the operation was put together. "It's not a technological feat," said a person working for a European intelligence service, asking not to be named. But "it's the result of human intelligence and heavy logistics." The small devices, bearing the name of the firm Gold Apollo in Taiwan, were intercepted by Zionist services before their arrival in Lebanon, according to multiple security sources who spoke to AFP, asking not to be named.

But the Taiwanese company denied having manufactured them and pointed to its Hungarian partner BAC. Founded in 2022, the company is registered in Budapest. Its CEO, Cristiana Barsony-Arcidiacono, appears there as the only employee. The devices in question have never been on Hungarian soil, according to the Hungarian authorities. The New York Times, citing three intelligence sources, said BAC was "part of a Zionist front" with at least two other shell companies were created as well to mask the real identities of the people creating the pagers who were intelligence officers. It described the pagers as a "modern day Trojan Horse" after the wooden horse said to have been used by the Greeks to enter the city of Troy in the Trojan War.

The attack comes nearly a year after the October 7 attack on Zionist entity, sparking the war in Gaza. The focus of Zionist firepower has since been on the Palestinian territory, but Hezbollah fighters and Zionist troops have exchanged fire almost daily across the border region since October, forcing thousands on both sides to flee their homes. — AFP

## International

# Sri Lanka votes for new president with economic future at stake

## Wickremesinghe, Premadasa, Dissanayake frontrunners: Opinion poll

COLOMBO: Sri Lankans voted on Saturday in an election to pick a president who will face the task of bolstering the country's fragile economic recovery following its worst financial crisis in decades.

The election is predicted to be a close contest between President Ranil Wickremesinghe, main opposition leader Sajith Premadasa and Marxist-leaning challenger Anura Kumara Dissanayake. Dissanayake narrowly led in one recent opinion poll.

Voting closed at 4 pm (1030 GMT) and counting started afterward, with results expected to be announced by the Election Commission on Sunday. Postal votes were to be counted first, senior commission official Saman Sri Ratnayake, told Reuters. The country's election system allows voters to cast three preferential votes for their chosen candidates. If no candidate wins 50 percent in the first count, a second round of counting determines the winner between the two top candidates, using the preferential votes. Analysts say this will likely be the case given the close nature of the election.

Saturday's voting was peaceful across the South Asian island nation and queues outside booths lengthened as the day progressed, local TV channels showed. More than 13,000 polling stations were set up and 250,000 public officials were deployed to manage the election, the election body said.

More than 17 million of Sri Lanka's 22 million people were eligible to vote in the election, contested by some 38 candidates. At Visakha Vidyalaya, a school about 15 km (9 miles) from Colombo, brisk polling was seen early in the morning as families, some of them accompanying their ageing parents, lined up next to coir ropes that created orderly lines for voters.

"I think we desperately need a change and I think a lot of people feel the same way. For us to have a future the entire country must have a future, first," said Niroshan Perera, 36, a supporter of Dissanayake. This was Sri Lanka's first election since the economy buckled in 2022 under a severe foreign exchange shortage, leaving the country unable to pay for imports of essentials including fuel, medicine and cooking gas.

Thousands of protesters marched in Colombo in 2022 and occupied the president's office and residence, forcing then-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to flee and later resign. Buttressed by a \$2.9 billion bailout program from the International Monetary Fund, the economy has posted a tentative recovery but the high cost of living is still a critical issue for many voters. Although inflation cooled to 0.5 percent last month from a crisis high of 70 percent, and the economy is forecast to grow in 2024 for the first time in three years, millions remain mired in poverty and debt, with many pinning hopes of a better future on their next leader. "This is an election that will change the history of Sri Lanka. People are voting enthusiastically," Dissanayake said after casting his vote at a temple in the outskirts of Colombo.

The winner will have to ensure Sri Lanka sticks with the IMF program until 2027 to get its economy on a stable growth path, reassure markets, attract investors and help a quarter of its people climb out of poverty. "The people have to decide the future of this country. I ask everyone to vote peacefully," Wickremesinghe, accompanied by his wife, said after voting at the University of Colombo. "We have stabilized the government and the democratic system. I'm happy I've been able to make a major contribution to that." — Reuters



COLOMBO: National People's Power (NPP) party's presidential candidate Anura Kumara Dissanayaka (center) arrives at a polling station to cast his ballot during voting in Sri Lanka's presidential election in Colombo on Sept 21, 2024. — AFP

## India's Manipur on high alert over influx of 900 from Myanmar

IMPHAL, India: India's northeastern state of Manipur has been placed on high alert after intelligence reports of a potential influx of 900 suspected Kuki militants from Myanmar, a senior security official said on Friday. Kuldeep Singh, Manipur's security adviser, told reporters at a press briefing the information regarding the militants has been shared with various intelligence agencies.

Since May 2023, Manipur has been embroiled in violence between the majority Meitei and minority Kuki communities, driven by disputes over economic benefits and quotas. "The border police have been alerted, and combing operations are underway," he said, adding that hill districts, home to Kuki tribes, were put under heightened vigilance. The Kuki people, residing in southern Manipur, share ethnic ties with the Chin tribe in Myanmar.

The latest intelligence follows reports of attacks involving explosives delivered by drones that officials allege were carried out by Kuki militants. Kuki representatives have denied the attacks were carried out by people in their community. In response to the attacks, Meitei protesters have held massive gatherings in Imphal, demanding action against Kuki militants.

Despite ongoing efforts to quell the unrest, sporadic clashes persist, with the latest violence resulting in 11 deaths earlier this month. Since May of last year, the conflict has resulted in at least 237 deaths and displaced over 60,000 people in Manipur, which is home to 3.2 million people.

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has repeatedly attributed the violence to an influx of refugees following Myanmar's 2021 military coup. Last year, the government revoked a long-standing policy permitting visa-free movement along the 1,650-km (1,000-mile) porous border, and announced plans to construct a border fence at a projected cost of 310 billion rupees (\$3.71 billion).

These measures have drawn criticism from Kuki groups due to their ties across the border.

Manipur remains divided into two ethnic enclaves - a Meitei-controlled valley and Kuki-dominated hills - separated by a no-man's land monitored by federal paramilitary forces. — Reuters

## Dozens in China disciplined over deadly January fire

SHANGHAI: Chinese authorities have disciplined more than 50 officials and arrested 10 people suspected of criminal liability in a deadly fire that killed dozens in January, state media reported Saturday.

The fire in the city of Xinyu in central China's Jiangxi province trapped many people, killing 39 and injuring nine. Public prosecutors approved the arrest of 10 people, including representatives of the businesses that owned the store and hotel where the blaze took place, according to state broadcaster CCTV. Multiple officials from the local government have been sacked, with a total of 55 public officials "seriously held accountable", CCTV said.

State news agency Xinhua reported at the time that the cause of the blaze had been the "illegal" use of fire by workers in the building's basement.

The Jiangxi government has since vowed to "fully protect the safety of local residents' lives and property", CCTV said. Fires are common in China due to lax safety standards and poor enforcement.

The Xinyu fire occurred the same month as a late-evening blaze at a school in central China's Henan province that killed 13 children as they slept in a dormitory. In July, a fire killed at least 16 people at a mall in the southwestern Sichuan province. — AFP

## Bangladesh troops open fire amid ethnic clash; 4 die

DHAKA: The Bangladeshi military said Friday troops opened fire after being shot at by a tribal group during ethnic violence in a remote border region, with authorities and witnesses saying at least four people killed. The remote Chittagong Hill Tracts region that borders India and Myanmar has seen sporadic violence between tribal groups and newer Bengali-speaking arrivals from the plains over resources and access to land.

The latest violence was set off by the lynching of a Bengali-speaking man purportedly caught stealing a motorbike, according to local residents and Bangladeshi media.

In retaliation, shops and establishments owned by the tribal community were attacked and set on fire.

Bangladesh's military said members of the United People's Democratic Front rebel group "opened fire on an army patrol" as the tribal community

led by the UPDF tried to stop soldiers from ferrying a dying man to the hospital. "In retaliation, they (soldiers) fired back, leading to the deaths," a military statement said.

"Three people died and many were injured in the exchange of fire" between troops and the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) rebel group, the statement said, without specifying who was killed. A witness, Naresh Tripura, told AFP that troops "opened fire" after the tribal community had gathered in Khagrachhari district on Thursday to protest against an arson spree targeting their properties. Khagrachhari police chief Md Arefin Jewel said two people in the district had been shot dead, but the source of the gunfire was "unclear". A third person was killed by a "sharp object," he said, without giving details.

He told AFP the situation was "now under control" in Khagrachhari. The violence also spilled over to neighboring Rangamati district, where one person was killed, authorities said — bringing the toll to four in the region.

Bangladesh interim leader Muhammad Yunus said his government was "deeply saddened and distressed



People walk past vandalized shops following a clash between a tribal group and settlers in Rangamati, in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts on Sept 20, 2024. — AFP

by the ongoing attacks, and loss of lives, death of an individual after a mob attack." "All the incidents related to violence will be investigated and the responsible individuals will be brought to justice," he added in a statement. Rebel groups fought a decades-long battle for a tribal homeland in the Chittagong Hill Tracts before signing a 1997 peace deal.

Despite the treaty and the withdrawal of most troops from the region, unrest has continued as tribal groups demand key clauses of the deal be implemented, including dismantling settlers' villages and army camps. UPDF is an armed group that rejected the deal and continues its battle for regional autonomy and the full withdrawal of military bases. — AFP

## One dead, 7 missing as heavy rains trigger floods in central Japan

TOKYO: One person was killed and at least seven were missing on Saturday, officials said, as "unprecedented" rains triggered floods and landslides in Japan's quake-hit region of Ishikawa, where authorities told tens of thousands to evacuate. A dozen rivers in the region, on the west coast of central Japan that was hit by a large quake on New Year's Day, had burst their banks by 11 am (0200 GMT), land ministry official Masaru Kojima said.

One person was killed, three people were missing and two people were seriously injured in Ishikawa, the region's government said in a statement, with two of the missing reportedly carried away by strong river currents. Another four people, who were working for the land ministry to restore a road in Wajima, were also missing, ministry official Koji Yamamoto told AFP.

"About 60 people have been working to restore a road hit by the quake but a landslide occurred" on Saturday morning, Yamamoto said. "I asked (contractors) to check the safety of workers... but we are still unable to contact four people," he said. Rescue workers were on their way to the site but were "blocked by landslides". About 20 workers were taking shelter inside a tunnel

## New Zealand pilot freed in Indonesia after 19 months

JAKARTA: New Zealand pilot Phillip Mehrtens has been released from captivity by rebels in Indonesia's restive Papua region and is in good health despite the 19-month ordeal, Indonesian and New Zealand authorities said Saturday. Mehrtens, 38, was working for Indonesian airline Susi Air when he was snatched by rebels from the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPNPB) insurgent group at Papua's Nduga airport on February 7 last year.

A joint task force of police and military forces collected Mehrtens in a village of Nduga district early Saturday, before he was given medical and psychological checks and flown to the Papuan city of Timika, said the unit's head Faizal Ramadhani. Mehrtens will be flown onwards to the capital Jakarta, the unit head said at a press conference, without detailing where the pilot would go afterwards.

"Today I have been freed. I am very happy that shortly

they had been working to restore, Yamamoto said.

Japan's Kyodo news agency said as many as 10 people were missing in Wajima. Many buildings were undated, with landslides blocking roads, some 6,000 households without power and an unknown number of households without running water, the Ishikawa government said. Communication services were also cut for some people, operators said. The cities of Wajima and Suzu, as well as Noto town, ordered about 44,700 residents to evacuate, officials said.

Another 16,700 residents in Niigata and Yamagata prefectures north of Ishikawa were also told to evacuate, the fire and disaster management agency said.

The Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) said it issued its highest-level warning for Ishikawa, advising of a "life-threatening situation". The areas under the warning were seeing "heavy rain of unprecedented levels", JMA forecaster Satoshi Sugimoto told reporters, adding "it is a situation in which you have to secure your safety immediately". More than 120 millimeters (4.7 inches) of rainfall per hour was recorded in Wajima in the morning, the heaviest rain since comparative data became available in 1929.

Footage on NHK showed an entire street submerged in Wajima. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida instructed the government "to do its best in disaster management with saving people's lives as the first priority", top government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters. Self-Defense Force personnel have been sent to the Ishikawa region to join rescue workers, he said. Wajima and Suzu,

"I will be able to go home and meet my family," Mehrtens told reporters in Timika, speaking in Indonesian. "Thank you for everybody who helped me today, so I can get out safely in a healthy condition." New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters said Mehrtens was "safe and well" and had been able to speak with his family.

"This news must be an enormous relief for his friends and loved ones," Peters added.

Mehrtens was providing vital air links and supplies to remote communities at the time of his abduction. The task force released footage of an emotional Mehrtens taking a phone call from his family, with one unidentified loved one heard saying "hang in there".

His release came after intense diplomatic efforts by Wellington and Jakarta. Indonesian President Joko Widodo said Saturday that Jakarta had secured Mehrtens's freedom through negotiation, not force.

"We prioritized the safety of the pilot who was held hostage. It took a long process and I appreciate the authorities," he told reporters. Rebels had demanded Indonesia recognize Papua independence in return for his freedom. A TPNPB spokesman, Seby Sambom, said another faction of the rebel group agreed to a deal with the Indonesian government, accusing them of accepting a payment without providing evidence.



SUZU, Japan: Residents look at a closed-off road after part of it collapsed due to flooding caused by heavy rains in the city of Suzu, Ishikawa prefecture on Sept 21, 2024. — AFP

in central Japan's Noto peninsula, were among the areas hardest hit by the huge New Year's Day earthquake that killed at least 236 people. The region is still reeling from the magnitude 7.5 quake that toppled buildings, ripped up roads and sparked a major fire.

Parts of Japan have seen unprecedented rainfall in recent years, with floods and landslides sometimes causing casualties. Scientists say human-driven climate change is intensifying the risk of heavy rain in the country and elsewhere because a warmer atmosphere holds more water. — AFP



TIMIKA, Indonesia: New Zealand pilot Phillip Mehrtens (left), who was snatched by rebels in Indonesia's restive region of Papua in February last year, checking a smartphone following his release, at a press conference in Timika. — AFP

The rebels had at one point threatened to kill Mehrtens if talks were not forthcoming. The group had said foreign nationals were targets because their governments had ties with Indonesia. The Indonesian military said armed separatists ambushed soldiers searching for Mehrtens in April, killing at least one. In February 2023, TPNPB rebels set fire to a Susi Air plane and released five passengers, but held on to Mehrtens. — AFP

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2024

# Ethiopians struggling with bitter pill of currency reform

Country of 120 million suffering high inflation amid drought, war



ADDIS ABABA: Vendors sell clothes in the historical Merkato district in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on Sept 14, 2024. — AFP

**ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia:** In a small fashion store in Ethiopia's capital, Medanit Woldegebriel's dresses have almost doubled in price in the past two months, sending customers fleeing. "Business is slow," admits a downhearted Woldegebriel, whose shop in the sprawling Merkato market of Addis Ababa imports clothes from Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

On July 30, Ethiopia took the painful decision to let its currency float freely against the dollar, and the birr lost a third of its value overnight. The decline has continued since then — it now takes 112 birr to buy \$1, compared with 55 birr before the change. The government had little choice. Its exports (primarily flowers, tea and coffee) brought in just \$11 billion last year, compared to imports (food, machinery and fuel) that cost \$23 billion. On the

eve of the currency reform, Ethiopia had only enough dollars to pay for two weeks of imports. International investors had long argued that pegging the birr to the dollar was unsustainable. A \$3.4 billion aid program from the IMF and \$1.5 billion financing plan from the World Bank were held back until Ethiopia accepted the inevitable and liberalized the currency. But for regular Ethiopians, a third of whom live below the poverty line of \$2.15 a day, the impact has been tough.

Buying a few tomatoes and some school books for his children, one shopper in Merkato said prices were up by a third across the board. "We have family who live abroad who can send us foreign currency," said Abrish, a civil servant whose name has been changed due to his concerns about criticizing the government.

"Without it we could not survive."

The country of 120 million was already suffering high inflation — peaking at 30 percent in 2022 — due to combined impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, a severe drought and its own devastating conflict in the Tigray region. Tewodros Makonnen Gebrewolde, an economist with the International Growth Center (IGC), admits "the pill is hard to swallow in the short term".

But he says it was the only option. The reforms will make exports more competitive and include new rules that will give more businesses access to dollars, which were previously reserved for key strategic sectors. The old restrictions meant many businesses were operating far below full capacity because

they were unable to import raw materials and machinery.

"The authorities have promised better access to foreign currency for companies, which will allow them to increase their productivity and thus be able to produce more," said Gebrewolde. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has called the reforms "critical to relieving (foreign currency) shortages, removing constraints to private sector investment and growth."

Closing the gap between the official dollar rate and the black market — which was around double before the reform — should also help undermine smugglers, bringing more trade back into official channels, said Gebrewolde. But after years of economic problems and rising prices, shoppers like Abrish have lost faith. "I don't see the situation improving," he said. — AFP

## Hacking of devices exposes dark corners of Asia supply chains

**TOKYO/SHANGHAI/TAIPEI:** The lethal hack of Hezbollah's Asian-branded pagers and walkie-talkies has sparked an intense search for the devices' path, revealing a murky market for older technologies where buyers may have few assurances about what they are getting.

While supply chains and distribution channels for higher-margin and newer products are tightly managed, that is not the case for older electronics from Asia where counterfeiting, surplus inventories and complex contract manufacturing deals can sometimes make it impossible to identify the source of a product, analysts and consultants say. The response from the companies at the centre of the booby-trapped gadgets that killed 37 people and wounded about 3,000 in Lebanon this week has underlined difficulties in discerning how and when they were weaponized.

Taiwan-based Gold Apollo put the blame on a Europe-based licensee of its pager, sparking investigations in Hungary, Bulgaria, Norway and Romania into the origins of the deadly device. Japan's Icom initially said it could not tell if the walkie-talkies bearing its name were real, in a market awash with fake products. It issued a statement on Friday saying it was highly unlikely that the exploded products were theirs. Icom cited Lebanese telecoms minister Johnny Corm as saying the devices were not imported through a distributor and that counterfeit products of the same model number were being imported from other countries.

Physical examination of the devices that exploded would be needed to conclude they were not



NEW TAIPEI CITY: Hsu Ching-kuang (left), head of Taiwanese company Gold Apollo, speaks to the media outside the company's office in New Taipei City on Sept 18, 2024. — AFP

Icom products, but in light of multiple pieces of information that have been revealed, chances are "extremely low" that they were Icom's, the Japanese maker said. "If the supply chain was compromised to put explosives inside ... it's incredible engineering to do that. But the actual supply chain compromise is not that hard. Probably the easiest part was the supply chain compromise," said David Fincher, a China-based technologist and consultant.

He said counterfeit products are prevalent, especially in big manufacturing centers like China where fake components can be easily produced, adding that it isn't a big leap to go from fake components to supply chain compromise. "As the technologist I am, I can tell you getting a little explosive in a radio is not that hard."

Hezbollah acquired the devices around five months ago, according to a security source, who

This matched a level last seen in the early 1960s, the ONS added. Prime Minister Keir Starmer, whose Labour party was elected in early July, has warned Britons that the budget announcement on October 30 will be "painful", with tax rises and spending cuts expected.

This warning has been echoed by finance minister Rachel Reeves, who will deliver the country's fiscal plans to parliament at the end of next month. The government is already facing criticism from all sides over scrapping a winter fuel-benefit scheme for 10 million pensioners.

Starmer has repeatedly defended the move as a necessary "tough choice" to help fill a £22-billion (\$29 billion) "black hole" in public finances which Labour claimed was left behind by the previous Conservative administration.

added that the armed group thought it was buying the pagers from Gold Apollo. The hand-held radios, which the source said were purchased around the same time as the pagers, had labels bearing the name of Osaka-based Icom and the phrase "Made in Japan", images of one exploded device showed.

Both companies have ruled out the possibility that any of the deadly components were made in factories in either of their home locations. Taiwan's Economy Minister Kuo Jyh-huei has also said the components used in the pagers that detonated in Lebanon were not made in Taiwan.

A preliminary investigation by Lebanese authorities into the devices found that the explosives were implanted before they arrived in the country, according to a letter to the UN Security Council by Lebanon's mission to the United Nations. — Reuters

Friday's data also showed "the highest August borrowing on record, outside the (COVID) pandemic", Darren Jones, a senior official at the UK Treasury, said in a statement.

"Debt is 100 percent of GDP, the highest level since the 1960s. Because of the £22 billion black hole in our public finances we have inherited this year alone, we are now taking the tough decisions now to fix the foundations of our economy," he added. Looking much further ahead, a government watchdog last week forecast that UK state debt could almost treble over the next 50 years owing to an ageing population and climate change. The projection came from the Office for Budget Responsibility, which the government relies on for UK growth and inflation predictions. — AFP

## Rate cut could lift consumer spirits before US elections

**WASHINGTON:** The US Federal Reserve's decision to cut interest rates by half a percentage point gives consumers a much-needed psychological boost ahead of November's presidential election. Analysts expect any economic impact of the first rate cut for four years to be modest, and some see it as having only a marginal impact on voting. But that could still move the needle in an election where Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris is essentially tied with her Republican opponent, former president Donald Trump.

Voters have consistently named the economy as their top concern. In a close election like 2024, "rate cuts at the margin help Vice President Harris," Oxford Economics senior economist Nancy Vanden Houten told AFP. Rate cuts typically lower borrowing rates over time, putting more money in consumers' pockets, which in turn fuels demand in the economy. But this takes time — something Harris doesn't have, given the election is less than seven weeks away. "We might not see a huge difference in the economic data, but one thing it might do is give consumer spirits a bit of a lift," she added.

US consumer confidence rose for much of the 2010s under Barack Obama and Trump, before taking a nosedive at the onset of the COVID pandemic from which it has yet to recover, according to survey data from the Conference Board. Given the lags with which monetary policy works, any economic benefits from the Fed's rate cut are unlikely to be felt before the election, according to KPMG chief economist Diane Swonk. "The Fed doesn't have a horse in that race," she wrote in a recent blog post, adding: "That will not stop politicians on both sides of the aisle from blaming the Fed." It's also hard to guarantee that a rate cut will have a positive impact on the economy, given all of the other factors that shape it. "The economy is not going to go in one direction or another as a function of a 50 basis point rate cut," EY chief economist Gregory Daco told AFP.

"Most people have no idea what the fed funds rate is," David Wessel, a senior fellow in economic studies at the Brookings Institution, told AFP, referring to the bank's benchmark lending rate.

"They know if they got a raise. They know what the price of eggs are. They know if their kid graduated from college and couldn't find a job," he said. "Given the choice we face as a society between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump, I find it really hard to believe that interest rate moves of a quarter, a half, even a full percentage point, are going to really make a difference," he added. One area where the Fed hopes its cuts will have an impact is on the labor market, which has shown signs of cooling, with unemployment rising and job creation slowing in the high interest rate environment. — AFP



NEW YORK: A woman walks through the financial district near the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) on Sept 19, 2024. — AFP

## UK govt debt hits landmark high before key budget

**LONDON:** UK state debt is equivalent to the country's annual output, data showed Friday, as the new government warns of tough decisions on tax and spending ahead of its maiden budget. "Public sector net debt... was provisionally estimated at 100 percent of gross domestic product at the end of August," the Office for National Statistics said in a release.



# Alghanim Industries introduces BYD Auto Alghanim, ushers in a new era of sustainable mobility in Kuwait



Luxury electric sedan BYD HAN

## Part of a broader strategy to bring advanced energy solutions to Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** As part of a broader strategy to bring advanced energy solutions to Kuwait, Alghanim Industries (Kutayba Alghanim Group), one of the largest privately-owned companies in the region, is proud to announce the launch of BYD Auto Alghanim, bringing the global leader in new energy vehicles and power batteries to Kuwait. This launch marks a significant milestone in Kuwait's automotive industry.

BYD Auto Alghanim is poised to transform the market with a range of advanced plug-in hybrids and



Kutayba Y Alghanim, Executive Chairman of Alghanim Industries

fully electric vehicles designed to offer a sustainable and technologically advanced driving experience. Alghanim Industries will also provide home charging solutions and installations for all BYD Auto Alghanim customers, ensuring a seamless and convenient transition to electric mobility.

Kutayba Y Alghanim, Executive Chairman of Alghanim Industries, stated: "Our partnership with BYD is a pivotal step as we embrace the future of sustainable mobility and green technology. By introducing BYD's advanced electric and new energy vehicles to Kuwait, we are offering our customers cutting-edge solutions that align with the country's vision for a more sustainable future."

"This partnership is aligned with a broader strategy to explore new opportunities in energy and sustainability, reaffirming our commitment to driving innovation and excellence in Kuwait's automotive industry and beyond." As part of the brand reveal, BYD Auto Alghanim will be present at the Auto World Motor Show starting Sunday until Sept 28 at the Kuwait International Fair, Mishref, Hall 6. Customers will have their first chance to engage with the BYD Auto Alghanim brand, explore the innovative lineup, and book a test drive for the latest models poised to redefine sustainable mobility in Kuwait. Attendees will experience firsthand the cutting-edge technology and exceptional performance that have established BYD as a global leader in sustainable automotive solutions.

In addition, Alghanim Industries is actively contributing to the development of Kuwait's public EV charging infrastructure as one of the early members of a national committee focused on this effort. This involvement underscores the company's role in supporting the growth of sustainable transportation in the country.

### A diverse lineup of advanced vehicles

BYD Auto Alghanim will offer Kuwaiti consumers a range of plug-in hybrid vehicles as well as fully electric vehicles, each offering unique features and advanced technology:

**BYD QINPLUS DM-i:** A plug-in hybrid sedan featuring an 18.3 kWh lithium iron phosphate battery and a 1.5L engine. It provides a total maximum output of 145 kW (194 hp) and 325 Nm of maximum torque, with an electric range of up to 95 km and a combine driving range of up to 795 km (WLTC). The BYD QINPLUS DM-i accelerates from 0 to 100 km/h in around 7.3 seconds and has a top speed of 185 km/h.

**BYD SONG PLUS DM-i:** A versatile plug-in hybrid SUV powered by a 1.5T engine paired with an electric motor, delivering a combined output of 270 kW (362 hp). It features an electric range of up to 80 km with a 18.3 kWh battery. It also gives a combined range of up to 890 km (WLTC). The BYD SONG PLUS DM-i offers advanced safety features and a spacious interior for a comfortable driving experience.

**BYD HAN:** A luxury electric sedan equipped with a 85.4 kWh battery, providing a range of up to 565 km

BYD Auto Alghanim will be present at the Auto World Motor Show from Sunday until Sept 28 at the Kuwait International Fair, Mishref, Hall 6.



BYD QINPLUS DM-i



Interior of BYD QINPLUS DM-i



BYD HAN



Interior of BYD HAN

on a single charge (WLTC). It can reach a top speed of 180 km/h and accelerates from 0 to 100 km/h in just 3.9 seconds. The Han EV combines elegant design with cutting-edge technology, advanced safety features, and a state-of-the-art infotainment system.

**BYD SEAL:** An electric vehicle designed for various driving needs, featuring an 82.5 kWh battery that offers a range of up to 570 km on a single charge (WLTC). It includes a sleek design, comfortable interior, and

innovative driver-assistance technologies, making it ideal for daily commutes and family outings.

**BYD ATTO 3:** A compact electric SUV with a 60.48 kWh battery, offering a range of up to 420 km (WLTC). It is equipped with a front electric motor producing 150 kW (201 hp) and 310 Nm of torque, ensuring a balanced and dynamic driving experience. The BYD ATTO 3 features a spacious interior with advanced infotainment and safety systems.

To mark the launch of BYD Auto Alghanim, special promotions and exclusive offers will be available for early adopters at the Auto World Motor Show and at the dedicated BYD showrooms in Al-Rai and Fahaeel, opening in Q4, 2024. These showrooms will provide an immersive environment for customers to experience the full range of BYD's advanced vehicles and technologies. For more information, visit the BYD Auto Alghanim's website [www.bydalghanim.com](http://www.bydalghanim.com) or account on social media, @bydautokw.



BYD Song Plus DM-i



BYD Seal Exterior



BYD Seal



# Bank of Japan leaves key interest rate unchanged

## Ueda hints hikes remain on the cards as inflation firms to 2.8%

**TOKYO:** The Bank of Japan left interest rates unchanged on Friday, but governor Kazuo Ueda said further hikes remain on the cards if the economy grows as predicted. Two days after the US Federal Reserve slashed rates for the first time since the start of the pandemic, the BoJ's decision came as data showed inflation in the world's fourth-largest economy picked up in August.

Japanese central bank officials said borrowing costs would be left at 0.25 percent, a widely expected decision after a surprise hike at the previous meeting. The BoJ raised borrowing costs in March for the first time since 2007 and again in July, signaling that more were on the cards — a move that pushed the yen sharply higher and fuelled turmoil across world markets.

UBS economists Masamichi Adachi and Go Kurihara said this week that they saw "no reason for the Bank to raise its rate, which could surprise the market and public again, especially when market sentiment is still cautious". On Friday afternoon, the yen weakened past 143.70 per dollar, having initially strengthened to 141.74 after the announcement.

BoJ boss Ueda told reporters that

"the economy is recovering moderately, although there are some signs of weakness", adding that the bank would continue to raise interest rates if the economy grows in line with its outlook. "However, developments in overseas economies, particularly the US economy, have increased uncertainty about the future," he said, according to the Nikkei business daily.

The BoJ was for a long time an outlier among major central banks - sticking to an ultra-loose monetary policy in an attempt to see demand-driven inflation of two percent fuelled by wage increases. Price rises have been above this target since April 2022 - accelerating slightly to 2.8 percent in August - but the BoJ questioned the extent to which this was caused by temporary factors such as the war in Ukraine. The July rate hike came on the same day the Fed indicated it was ready to start cutting, and was followed by a big miss on US jobs creation.

This sent markets into a tailspin on US recession worries and as traders unwound huge "carry trades" in which they used the yen to buy higher-yielding assets such as stocks.

The yen, which in July had just hit



Bank of Japan (BoJ) governor Kazuo Ueda attends a press conference at BoJ headquarters after a monetary policy meeting in central Tokyo on Sept 20, 2024. — AFP

a four-decade low against the dollar, rocketed and the global stocks sell-off on August 5 saw Tokyo's Nikkei 225 dive more than 12 percent - its worst day since Black Monday in 1987. Japanese stocks have since recovered but remain volatile.

The sharp slide prompted the BoJ's deputy governor Shinichi Uchida to signal that there would be no more interest rate hikes until financial markets had stabilized. But around 70 percent of economists surveyed by Bloomberg expect another increase by December. Capital

Economics predicted the next rate hike would come in October as inflation was likely to stay close to the BoJ's two percent target "until early 2025".

Stefan Angrick at Moody's Analytics sounded a note of caution as "deeper price metrics have been slowing for most of the past year given the virtual absence of demand-driven price pressures". "The central bank has made clear that it will raise interest rates. At best, rate hikes will be an added drag on growth. At worst, they could precipitate a broader downturn," he warned.

Meanwhile, Japanese inflation rose slightly in August, with prices up 2.8 percent year-on-year, official data showed Friday, hours before the Bank of Japan was widely expected to leave interest rates unchanged. The core Consumer Price Index (CPI) data, which excludes volatile fresh food prices, followed a reading of 2.7 percent in July and was in line with market expectations.

On Wednesday, the US Federal Reserve cut its key lending rate by half a percentage-point in its first reduction since the pandemic, sharply lowering borrowing costs shortly before November's presidential election. — AFP

## German economy minister offers help to Volkswagen

**EMDEN, Germany:** German Economy Minister Robert Habeck said on Friday that he wants to help Volkswagen get through a period of cost-cutting without having to resort to site closures, reflecting concerns about the country's biggest carmaker. During a visit to the Volkswagen's factory in Emden, Germany, the minister said he also wants to ensure that personnel policy measures remain within the normal collective bargaining framework. Habeck's comments come as Volkswagen's management is set to enter heated talks with powerful unions over new wage agreements and possible plant closures in Germany, considerations that have sent shockwaves through the global car industry. Habeck said there were limits to what his government could do to support Volkswagen, adding that the structure and viability of the business was down to company policy.

"A large part of the tasks have to be dealt with by Volkswagen itself," he told reporters. "This is the company's job." Politicians could help by improving the framework and sending the right market signals, the minister said, adding that this included incentivizing the switch to electric motors.

In a sign of deteriorating conditions in the industry, with both BMW and Mercedes-Benz cutting outlooks over the past ten days, Habeck will talk with senior executives and industry representatives on Monday. A spokesperson for the Economy Ministry said this would be a virtual exchange with carmakers and suppliers, with the aim being to make Germany a leading market for electric vehicles. Germany's government is currently closely watching the situation at Volkswagen, which employs around 300,000 people in Europe's top economy, and that it was in talks with all sides. — Reuters

## Extreme weather adds to fiscal strains in central Europe

**PRAGUE/WARSAW:** Just a week ago, before deadly floods swept through central Europe, the Czech Republic looked on track to become the first country in the region since COVID-19 to pull its budget deficit firmly below the 3 percent of GDP cap set by European Union rules.

Now that small victory for public finances hangs in the balance as the Czech Republic and Poland, which have borne the brunt of the deluge, count the cost of the worst floods to hit the region in at least two decades. Based on estimates from local officials, the damage to infrastructure could reach a combined \$10 billion in these two countries alone. Poland's finance minister said the \$5.6 billion allotted from EU funds would cover some, but not all of the costs to recover from the floods.

Economic losses linked to extreme weather are adding to strains on state finances in a region still squeezed by the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the inflation surge following Russia's 2022 invasion of neighboring Ukraine. Since the pandemic when EU member states set aside the bloc's stipulation that they keep annual deficits to 3 percent of gross domestic product, budget shortfalls in the region ballooned to as much as 9 percent of GDP in Romania and 7 percent in Poland and Hungary.

Inflation and elections in Poland, Hungary and Romania - with the inevitable promises of largesse - further hampered deficit cuts. Higher military investment, inflation-linked spending on pensions and increased debt servicing costs are also stretching budgets.

On Thursday, the Czech finance ministry said it would allocate 30 billion crowns (\$1.3 billion), or 0.4 percent of GDP, for flood damage in a 2024 budget amendment, 25 percent above an initial estimate by ING economist David Havrnt early this week. This could push the Czech deficit close to the 3 percent set under EU rules, up from an original 2.5 percent target, with next year's deficit now also projected above earlier plans. Steffen Dyck, Senior Vice Pres-



KRNOV: Porubka brook is flooded in a suburb of Ostrava as Central Europe faces heavy rainfall expected to cause floods. — AFP

ident at Moody's Ratings, said that although the region appeared better prepared than in the past to manage flooding, it was having to deal with incidents and their economic impact more regularly.

"There might still be an impact on government spending, depending on the ultimate damage, and some countries, like the Czech Republic and Poland, have already announced immediate emergency fiscal support," Dyck said. The unexpected pressure on Czech finances highlights the scale of the challenge facing the rest of the EU's eastern member countries still grappling with larger deficits ranging from nearly 7 percent in Romania to more than 5 percent in Poland and Hungary.

A Reuters analysis of draft budgets and government announcements on fiscal plans shows Poland and Hungary could take most of this decade to reduce shortfalls to below 3 percent while Romania may not achieve this until the 2030s. For Poland, the region's largest economy, Moody's predicts general government debt could rise to 60 percent of GDP

by 2027 due to increased borrowing, which will lift debt-related expenditure. Moody's expects the Polish budget deficit to exceed 5 percent of GDP in 2025, followed by "very gradual consolidation" towards a 3 percent shortfall over the next four to five years.

Saddled with the cost of flood repairs, Poland will now push for some more EU leeway in shoring up its state finances. Fitch Ratings said spending pressures in Poland were "greater than anticipated" after Warsaw unveiled its 2025 budget draft, though a solid revenue base provided support. The floods hit a region already reeling from a weak German economy, the destination for 20-30 percent of central European exports, with possible long-term ramifications for state finances. "CEE growth prospects could suffer if Germany's economic weakness proves structural and protracted," Karen Vartapetov, Director and Lead Analyst for CEE and CIS Sovereign Ratings at S&P Global said. "Weaker medium-term growth in turn could pressure CEE public finances at a time when government funding costs remain high." — Reuters

## US poll uncertainty clouds UN climate finance progress

**NEW YORK:** Countries could use next week's UN meetings in New York to resolve big differences over boosting the world's annual goal for climate finance, but uncertainty over the US election could jeopardize progress ahead of the next UN climate summit in November.

Negotiators told Reuters that countries were reluctant to stake out their positions before knowing who might win the Nov 5 US presidential vote and be setting climate policy for the world's largest economy - and biggest polluter - for the next four years. But by waiting until November for that answer, countries could be risking the chance of reaching a new deal before the world's current \$100 billion financing pledge expires at the end of this year, the negotiators and observers warned. "The elections are in the calculus" of global climate talks, said finance negotiator Michai Robertson of the Alliance of Small Island States.

Governments are analyzing different scenarios for possible wins by Vice President Kamala Harris, who along with President Joe Biden helped pass the biggest domestic climate spending bill in US history, or by former President Donald Trump, a climate denier who wants to boost fossil fuels. They're also considering a third scenario with the US in limbo for months over an uncertain or delayed election result. "It's an unspoken understanding that US election uncertainty is affecting how countries are positioning," Robertson said. While some wealthy countries have said they'd offer more money - they aren't saying how much more and instead want to "wait to see what direction the US will go."



CAPILLA DEL MONTE, Argentina: Burnt trees are seen during a forest fire in Dolores, Cordoba province, Argentina, on Sept 20, 2024. — AFP

This week's UN General Assembly marks the last all-country gathering before the COP29 climate summit begins on Nov 11 in Baku, Azerbaijan - less than a week after the US vote. But agreeing on a new target, and whether to expand the donor base, is proving tricky. A target too high could mean countries again fail to meet the full amount, which would likely sow tension and mistrust among the developing countries relying on these funds. A target too low would leave too many vulnerable and underserved as global warming continues to escalate. UN climate agency chief Simon Stiell has estimated the annual need to be in the trillions in order to adequately help poorer countries shift to clean energy and prepare for the conditions of a warmer world.

Failing to set a new target before the start of

2025 could jeopardize future climate negotiations, warned a senior official with Azerbaijan's COP29 presidency. Azerbaijan doesn't even want to consider the possibility of failure, the COP29 official told Reuters. Regardless of who wins the US vote, this year's US climate negotiators are already limited in what they can pledge, although a Harris presidency would ensure more continuity. "Negotiators work for the current administration, not a future one," noted Jonathan Pershing, a former US delegate who helped lead the country's talks at the Paris climate summit in 2015. As candidate for president, Harris has said she supports Biden's climate negotiating positions, including a pledge at last year's COP28 in Dubai to contribute \$3 billion to the global Green Climate Fund. — Reuters

## US Fed dissenter calls for 'measured' pace of rate cuts

**WASHINGTON:** The sole holdout in the US Federal Reserve's 11-to-1 vote cementing a larger interest rate cut said Friday that the move "could be interpreted as a premature declaration of victory."

Earlier this week, Fed governor Michelle Bowman became the first voting member of the central bank's rate-setting committee for more than two years to dissent from a rate decision, signaling at the time that she would have preferred a more modest cut of a quarter of a percentage-point.

Bowman said in a statement Friday that, given the progress made on inflation since last summer, she felt it was "appropriate to recalibrate the level of the federal funds rate and begin the process of moving toward a more neutral policy stance."

"In my view, however, a smaller first move in this process would have been a preferable action," she added. A smaller cut would have been a more conventional step, while the larger move does more to stimulate demand, but also carries a greater risk of reigniting inflation. "I see the risk that the Committee's larger policy action could be interpreted as a premature declaration of victory on our price stability mandate," Bowman said. "I believe that moving at a measured pace toward a more neutral policy stance will ensure further progress in bringing inflation down to our 2 percent target," she added. The US central bank's decision to cut rates to between 4.75 and 5.00 percent affects the rates at which commercial banks lend to consumers and businesses, bringing down the cost of borrowing on everything from mortgages to credit cards. — AFP

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2024

# From TikTok to Hollywood, the irresistible rise of Italy's Khaby Lama

Compared by some to Charlie Chaplin or Buster Keaton, the most followed TikToker in the world, Khaby Lama, is preparing to launch a film career in Hollywood following his dizzying global success on social media. "Now I'm dedicating



Influencer and TikToker Khaby Lama is pictured during an interview with AFP.

myself to cinema. I hope this will be my job for life. It's something I've dreamt of since I was a child," said Lama, all smiles, in an interview with AFP.

"And I've always dreamt of having an Oscar, maybe more than one." The 24-year-old Italian influencer with Senegalese roots holds top spot on the TikTok app, with 162.8 million followers. He has until now been famous for his short silent videos mocking the convoluted tutorials of tips that abound on the Web.

Why do it simply when you can make it more complicated, he jokes on social media, offering his own easy remedies with his trademark gesture - palms turned towards the sky, accompanied by a knowing smile and wide eyes.

When did he realize his dazzling success? "The first sign was when I started seeing other people around the world on television and some Real Madrid players like Vinicius Junior doing the same thing. I understood that it was becoming a global thing," he said.

Lama is discreet in his black baseball cap and beige leather jacket, his expressive eyes hidden be-



Influencer and TikToker Khaby Lama poses for a picture with a fan.

## Sultry screen legend Sophia Loren turns 90

Italian star Sophia Loren, a cinema icon with two Oscars to her name in Hollywood, celebrates her 90th birthday in Rome Friday, just a few days before French actress Brigitte Bardot.

The two divas helped define film in the 20th century, becoming international cultural icons and revered by millions around the world.

"Sophia Loren, the myth is 90 years old", crooned the headline on Il Corriere della Sera daily.

Loren, who was born in Rome on September 20, 1934, blew out her 90 candles at a private party in a luxury hotel in the historic centre of the Italian capital.

After a tribute organized in a Rome movie theatre by the Cinecittà studios and the minister of culture, the actress met some 150 friends, colleagues and family members for a dinner on the hotel terrace overlooking the Baths of Diocletian. There, she also inaugurated a suite bearing her name, according to the newspaper Il Corriere della Sera.

Loren dressed for the occasion by her friend and favorite couturier, Giorgio Armani.

Italy's main newspapers looked back Friday at the extraordinary, decades-long career of Loren, one of the last surviving actresses from Hollywood's Golden Age. During her career, Loren played opposite the greatest actors of the day, from Anthony Quinn and Clark Gable, to Marlon Brando, Cary Grant, Peter Sellers, John Wayne and Frank Sinatra.

La Repubblica newspaper paired her birthday with that of Brigitte Bardot, who will turn 90 on September 28. "Splendid ninety-year-olds", wrote the paper, saying the duo "redefined the feminine imagination of the 20th century".

Loren's 90th birthday marked by a retrospective at the Lincoln Center in New York City.

Italy's public broadcaster Rai has planned several reruns of her films, including a restored version of "Marriage Italian Style" with Marcello Mastroianni, her favorite co-star who died in 1996.

That choice incorporates several key dates: the 60th anniversary of the film released in 1964, the



Italian actress Sophia Loren, accompanied by her husband Carlo Ponti (right), and Mr Fabre-Lebret, president of the Festival, waves to the crowd, during the Cannes International Film Festival, on April 30, 1964.



Italian actress Sophia Loren attends the Jean-Paul Gaultier's ready-to-wear Fall/Winter 1994/95 collection fashion show, on March 8, 1994 in Paris.

centenary of Mastroianni's birth on September 26, 1924 and the 50th anniversary of the death of its director Vittorio De Sica.

Widowed since the 2007 death of her husband, film producer Carlo Ponti, Loren made a comeback on Italian television in 2010 in a movie about her life in which she played her own mother.

In 2014 upon turning 80, she published her memoir, "Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow". Her last film appearance was in 2020's "The Life Ahead", directed by her son Edoardo Ponti. — AFP



Influencer and TikToker Khaby Lama walks the runway during the Boss collection show at Milan's Fashion Week Womenswear Spring / Summer 2025. — AFP photos

hind thick sunglasses.

But he does not hesitate to pose for selfies with his fans, who call out to him as he leaves a restaurant opposite Milan's majestic Duomo cathedral.

After a brief stint in the Italian fashion capital this week, where he appeared on the catwalk for German brand Hugo Boss on Wednesday, Lama returned to Los Angeles, the TikTok star's new home and springboard for his Hollywood debut.

In an action comedy film called "00Khaby" - which he says will be shot in Brazil, India and the United States - Lama will play a food delivery man recruited as a spy by the American secret service.

"But I will continue to make videos for TikTok!" he promised his followers.

### Dyslexic, like Tom Cruise

Lama's TikTok idea came to him while wandering around the housing project where his family lived in Chivasso, near Turin, after losing his factory mechanic's job in March 2020, on the cusp of the coronavirus pandemic. "I thought it was just an app for dancing or children but during the pandemic I started using it because there wasn't much to do," he recalled.

His posts took off - helping him to gross an estimated \$16.5 million through marketing deals with companies in the period between June 2022 and September 2023, according to Forbes.

Not bad for the former mechanic who had worked a series of odd jobs to get by.

"I was a bricklayer, a window cleaner, I worked at Amazon and I was a kitchen assistant," he recalled.

School was a fiasco, he admitted. "I always liked to make people laugh and so I always used to act the clown a bit. In the end they failed me two or three times". His double handicap, being both "dyslexic and dyscalculic" didn't help matters either.

But Tom Cruise "gave me a lot of advice, being dyslexic himself", Lama said. "I asked him if there were any problems in learning a script. He told me that in the end, it all comes down to good will. "That's the advice I get from most actors or famous people."

### Redford gives advice

No less than Hollywood legend Robert Redford advised him against taking acting classes.

"He said it would be better to be as natural as possible," said Lama, who is focusing instead on English lessons. Redford chose Lama for a documentary series illustrating the ravages of climate change in African countries, including Senegal, where Lama was born before migrating to Italy at the age of one.

"We'll show how it's affecting populations, kids... in some regions which water doesn't reach any more," he explained. Another project is a film Lama is co-writing with his manager, Nicola Paparusso about the life of Tommie Smith.

The black US sprinter shot to fame for raising his black-gloved fist to protest against racism when he took to the medals stand for winning gold at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics.

It will be the opportunity, Paparusso said, to show that Lama "is not just a silent actor who doesn't speak or a comic actor" but an artist who has "dramatic verve". "He is a born actor, a genius." — AFP



Influencer and TikToker Khaby Lama is pictured during an interview with AFP in Milan.



Italian actress Sophia Loren and film producer Carlo Ponti (second left) arrive at the Palace Festival, during the Cannes International Film Festival, on May 27 1976. — AFP photos



Italian actress Sophia Loren, UNHCR "goodwill" ambassador, poses on November 22, 1992 with children on the Kenyan-Somalian border where 50,000 refugees have gathered in search of food and security.

# PRADA'S MILAN 'SUPERHEROES' ARE NOD TO BRAND'S ECLECTIC PAST

Prada presented an eclectic "superhero" collection for Milan Fashion Week Thursday heavy on S&M steel rings and mirrored metallics - with ribbed leggings and bodysuits imparting a cosy, grungy touch.

The Spring/Summer 2025 women's catwalk show from artistic director team Miuccia Prada and Raf Simons came as Prada enjoys outlier status in the luxury industry, having posted strong growth in the first half of the year even as its rivals see their sales slump.

The Italian brand's collection presented Thursday was an eclectic fashion romp down memory lane, teasing 1990s grunge looks with sadomasochism paraphernalia, a rainbow of colored leggings, and even a nod to the space age mirrored looks of 1960s French designer Andre Courreges.

"There is a plurality of Prada, elements from different eras coexisting simultaneously to challenge any theory of chronology, creating impossible contradictions, points of difference," said the brand in its show notes, citing "the notion of the superhero" as "the centrality of the individual".

Backstage, the designers broke it down, explaining they wanted to explore all of Prada's past references, mixing up "the past, the present, the cool, the sexy, the serious..."

There were leather belts with thick steel rings that held up, garter style, low-slung pleated skirts - paired with barely-there bandeau tops - while the same steel hardware adorned a black shift dress, clinking as the model sauntered down the runway.

An oversized black sweater dress was adorned with long beige fringe at the knee and bold stripes at the chest, while a black transparent dress with exaggerated ruffled sleeves covered a green bodysuit worn with witchy black pumps.

Among its most daring looks was a lightweight black dress covered in feathers jutting out from the body, paired with a neon orange anorak.

But Prada showcased its refined side as well with a stunning buttercup coat dress with a shawl collar and three-quarter sleeves worn over an electric violet ribbed bodysuit, or a 60s-inspired simple black dress with ivory bands at the waist and short sleeves.

The '60s again made a bold appearance with bright metallic dresses in fabric encrusted with mirrors. Falling halfway down the shin, one space age look was paired with a canary yellow windbreaker and an oversized straw visor - with no top - encircling the head.

### Deconstruction

Prada continues to be a cult brand, and one of the most sought-after in the industry, ranking third in the "hottest brands" index of Lyst, the fashion search engine, directly behind its Miu Miu brand and Loewe in first place. In July, Prada company reported 17 percent revenue growth in its first half of the year on a constant currency basis.

Growth of 93 percent at Miu Miu gave a boost to six percent rise in sales from Prada - making the company an outlier among its luxury fashion rivals who are battling falling sales.



Models walk the runway during the Prada collection show at Milan's Fashion Week Womenswear Spring/Summer 2025 in Milan. — AFP photos

"Prada's strength is to have always remained faithful to its DNA, provoking a real cult while remaining discreet," said Antonio Bandini Conti, a designer and coordinator of haute couture at Milan's European Institute of Design. Miuccia Prada, who has been the brand's creative director since 1978, was interested in "the wardrobe of the bourgeois woman...she be-

gan to deconstruct it, to destructure it," he said.

She introduced elements that jar, or look like a mistake, whether a visible seam or torn collar, "all while maintaining divine proportions and a refined taste," he added. "By staying the course, it has built a distinctive identity and built a loyal customer base," said Conti.

The CEO of Prada, Andrea Guerra, told investors

in July that the difficult macroeconomic context, in which low customer confidence, inflation and an economic slowdown in China has cut into sales, "requires us to be agile and precise in our product range, our communication and our global positioning." — AFP



MILAN FASHION WEEK





Vienna Fashion Week

# Senior with style: Retirees take center stage at Vienna Fashion Week



Members of a group of retired people present their own line of upcycled clothes at the Vienna Fashion Week at the Museum Quartier in Vienna, Austria. — AFP photos



Style is ageless, say a group of retirees who have just debuted their self-made collection at the Vienna Fashion Week. "It's time to really ditch (the idea) that grannies and grandpas sit around doing nothing," 63-year-old Brigitte Hrdlicka told AFP ahead of this week's show. Hunched over her Singer sewing machine to make some last-minute adjustments, the retired hospital administrator said she was excited about seeing pieces that she had carefully crafted from second-hand materials showcased.

More than a year ago, she joined a sewing club for the city's pensioners run by Irina Reichel, who was determined to break into the notoriously closed world of fashion this year. "Having these ten ladies take to the catwalk means taking a stand against age discrimination, but in favor of social inclusion," said Reichel, pointing to her "sparkling" proteges donning an elegant evening gown and even a wedding dress.

The fashion show was a big success, with the audience cheering on the senior models' catwalk show, which could hold a candle to the other fashion brands present. Fashion Week manager Zigi Mueller-Matyas, who advocates fashion that includes everyone, said



that many young models at this week's show were intrigued by the initiative, asking to sneak a peek at what their seniors were doing. "I believe that the fashion industry is coming on board and getting involved," she added.

In the audience, Verena Heger said she saw herself in these models strutting down the catwalk, saying they were just "as beautiful" as the



others because they were "radiating from within". "Modernity is ageless," said Heger, who retired two years ago, before a septuagenarian sporting a transparent blouse and a black bra walked past to thunderous applause. — AFP



Members of a group of retired people create their own line of upcycled clothes at their club in Vienna, Austria.



## Sports

# New Zealand thump Australia 31-28 in Bledisloe Cup thriller

## NZ snap a two-game losing streak

SYDNEY: New Zealand (NZ) snapped a two-game losing streak with a nail-biting 31-28 win over Australia on Saturday, holding off a second-half charge to retain the Bledisloe Cup. Both sides scored four tries on a warm Sydney afternoon as the All Blacks rebounded from consecutive Rugby Championship defeats against world champions South Africa. New Zealand took a commanding 28-14 lead into the break and, despite Australia storming back into contention, held on to retain a trophy they have owned since 2003, dominating possession, set plays and the breakdown.

"It's a bit of a relief, to be honest," said New Zealand captain Scott Barrett. "In the last 15 (minutes), we found ourselves in a bit of a hole, but we hung on with a bit of scrambled defense and managed to hang on. "It's the nature of the Aussies, they certainly don't lie down." The writing was on the wall with New Zealand winning their past seven Tests against Australia, heaping more pressure on Wallabies coach Joe Schmidt, whose side were humiliated 67-27 in Argentina a fortnight ago. Despite the fightback, it proved a disappointing way for prop James Slipper to celebrate becoming the most capped Wallaby with his 140th appearance, surpassing George Gregan.

The victory elevated New Zealand above Los Pumas into second on the Rugby Championship ladder, with one game left against Australia, who prop up the table, in Wellington next week. Argentina host the table-topping Springboks later. "We're obviously gutted to not get the result,"

said Australia captain Harry Wilson. "Giving a 21-0 head start to the All Blacks was always going to make it tough for us, but I am super proud of the effort and the way we fought back. "We just didn't want to give up and played for each other."

In a blow, New Zealand veteran Beauden Barrett was ruled out with illness an hour before kick-off, meaning Will Jordan moved to fullback and Sevu Reece came in on the wing. Australia also switched things up, with Nic White and Noah Lolesio thrust in as the halves pairing, while centre Hunter Paisami and fullback Tom Wright returned from injury. But it made little difference with the hosts exposed inside two minutes when Jordan sliced open the defense to dot down between the posts, with Damian McKenzie adding the extras. The All Blacks kept their foot to the floor and raced 14-0 clear after nine minutes with centre Reiko Ioana collecting their second try in a move stemming from a break by Caleb Clarke.

Australia were bereft of ideas and Clarke powered over in the corner for the visitors' third. New Zealand momentarily went to sleep and Nic White exploded into a hole before offloading for Fraser McReight to dive over and finally give the 68,061-strong at Sydney Olympic Stadium something to cheer about. But it was a temporary blip with Ardie Savea sprinting over for another try in the 24th minute after a sloppy Australian spoon pass was picked up by Reece. With McKenzie nailing a fourth straight conversion, they moved into an ominous 28-7 lead. The Wallabies, though, kept plug-



SYDNEY: New Zealand All Blacks' captain Scott Barrett (center) holds the Bledisloe Cup trophy after winning the Rugby Championship and Bledisloe Cup Test match between Australia and New Zealand at Stadium Australia in Sydney on September 21, 2024. — AFP

ging away and were rewarded when hooker Matt Faessler charged ahead of the half-time hooter to give them a glimmer of hope. An early second-half penalty stretched New Zealand's lead, but it was a much bet-

ter Australia that fronted up. New Zealand had a try disallowed for a forward pass and Australia capitalized with a try of their own through Paisami after a break from Lukhan Salakaia-Loto to narrow the gap to 10

points with 15 minutes left. It lit a fuse under the home side, who scored another try through Tom Wright with a minute left to set up a grandstand finish, only for the All Blacks to cling on. — AFP

## Norris sets Singapore pace; Verstappen 15th



SINGAPORE: McLaren's British driver Lando Norris drives during the second practice session ahead of the Formula One Singapore Grand Prix night race at the Marina Bay Street Circuit in Singapore. — AFP

SINGAPORE: McLaren's Lando Norris went fastest Friday to lead Ferrari pair Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz in second practice for the Singapore Grand Prix. The session could not have panned out much better for Englishman Norris, who trails Max Verstappen by 59pts at the top of the drivers' standings. The second practice in Singapore is pivotal for the teams as it is the only session which is run under the same night conditions as the race around the 4.94km Marina Bay Circuit.

But Verstappen had 60 minutes to forget and was only 15th fastest in a skittish Red Bull that looked at times like it was on ice. The Dutch three-time world champion was a massive 1.294 seconds adrift of Norris's fastest lap of 1min 30.727sec. Leclerc, who had been fastest in first practice, clocked 1:30.785, just 0.58sec slower than Norris, but Sainz, who won in Singapore 12 months ago, was almost six tenths behind his teammate. Yuki Tsunoda in a much-improved RB was fourth ahead of the second McLaren of Oscar Piastri, fresh from his victory in the Azerbaijan Grand Prix in Baku last weekend.

The second RB driven by Daniel Ricciardo was sixth. George Russell's Mercedes, Sergio Perez's Red Bull, Alex Albon's Williams and the Haas of Nico Hulkenberg completed the top 10. Russell crashed gently into a wall at turn eight near the end of the session, but managed to limp back to the pits without his front wing which he left embedded in the barrier. His teammate Lewis Hamilton has won four times before in Singapore but the seven-time world champion was way off the pace.

On being told by race engineer Pete Bonnington his qualifying simulation lap on soft tyres had been only good enough for 11th place, an exasperated Hamilton replied: "It's unbelievable, mate." Singapore was the only race Red Bull failed to win last year in a dominant season. They returned 12 months later having lost their lead at the top of the constructors' standings to McLaren, who are 20 points ahead. 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. History suggests that Verstappen's fortunes will not improve around the unpredictable city centre track where he has never won. Red Bull traditionally struggle in Singapore where tropical storms, intense humidity, concrete barriers, safety cars and red flags are ever-present dangers. Sergio Perez did win in Singapore in 2022, but that was Red Bull's only victory here since Sebastian Vettel in 2013.

Meanwhile, McLaren said Friday they would modify their controversial rear wing after other teams, led by Red Bull, questioned its legality. Governing body the FIA had said the wing, which was dubbed by some observers as a "mini-DRS (drag reduction system)" after footage showed it moving at high speed, was legal and no modifications were needed. — AFP

## Surrey win 3rd straight County Championship

LONDON: Surrey were crowned English county champions for a third straight season on Friday, with Somerset's defeat against Lancashire guaranteeing them the title. The London-based county crushed Durham by 10 wickets at the Oval - their sixth victory in seven home games in the first-class compe-

## Paris Olympics sports equipment moves to new homes

PARIS: In western Paris, the swimming pool where national hero Leon Marchand won four gold medals at this summer's Olympics in the French capital is being stripped down and prepared for a move. The pool was part of one of the many temporary sports facilities used during the Games, built inside the Paris Defense Arena, a stadium to the west of the city which was deafening during each of Marchand's medal-winning exploits. Around 25 kilometers of scaffolding are being pulled down by the pool, while the 50-metre water basin itself - made of hundreds of aluminum panels bolted together - will soon be dismantled and sent by truck to a new home in a northern suburb.

The Paris Games relied more than any previous Olympics on the use of temporary sports facilities in a deliberate bid to keep costs and carbon emissions low. It was also a way of avoiding the sort of wasteful spending that has plagued previous Games which have seen shiny new venues fall empty and into disrepair once the Olympics carousel moves on. "We didn't put in place the gifting strategy recently. We've had it mind since the start of the project," Marie Barsacq, head of impact and legacy at Paris 2024, stressed to reporters. "We learned a lot from previous editions."

### Legacy

The 50-metre pool is destined for Sevran, a disadvantaged, high-immigration part of the Seine-Saint-Denis suburb northeast of Paris which has around a quarter of the number of pool facilities per inhabitant as the national average. Sevran plans to call it the "Leon Marchand pool", with the Paris 2024 organizing committee paying donating the pool, while the local council will pick up the tab for most of the running costs.

"The greatest story and symbol we could create for our project is making these Games useful, making them games that encourage people to do sport," Paris 2024 operations director Edouard Donnelly

## Embiid, 76ers seal contract extension

WASHINGTON: Joel Embiid has signed a contract extension with the Philadelphia 76ers, the team announced on Friday, with the Cameroon-born center saying he wants to stay a Sixer his NBA entire career. Multiple reports said the deal was a maximum extension for three years and about \$193 million that would keep him with the 76ers through the 2028-29 campaign. "Philadelphia is home. I want to be here for the rest of my career," Embiid posted on his Instagram account. "I love this community and everything you've given me and my family. There is a lot more work to do. You guys deserve a championship and I think we're just getting started!"

tion this season. Somerset needed to beat relegation-threatened Lancashire on the fourth and final day of their match at Old Trafford to stay in the hunt for their first-ever Championship title. But they slipped to a 168-run defeat and, with one game remaining, can no longer catch their rivals, whom they beat last week.

Rory Burns' side are the first team since Yorkshire in the 1960s to win three titles in a row. "To do it three times in a row is very satisfying," Surrey head coach Gareth Batty told the BBC. "We shall enjoy today and then start the hard work tomorrow

to do it all again. "Every time you get over the line it's the hardest one because other teams are trying to close the gap, trying to improve their squads, improve their players. "I feel like we are still keeping some distance, in a healthy, confident way, not in an arrogant way, because we're working incredibly hard trying to improve our performances year in and year out." Surrey, who face Essex at Chelmsford in the final round of the Championship, have now won the competition 23 times, 10 fewer than record holders Yorkshire. — AFP



PARIS: This photograph shows the Paris 2024 Olympics and Paralympics torch designed by French Mathieu Lehanneur at the Elysee Palace during the 41th edition of the 'European Heritage Days' in Paris, on September 21, 2024. — AFP

told reporters. A second pool used for training at the Defense Arena is set to be cut in two, with half of it to form a new 25-metre pool in the Bagnolet area of Seine-Saint-Denis. The Seine-Saint-Denis region, the poorest in mainland France, has received around 80 percent of public infrastructure spending linked to the Games, including a new aquatics centre that was one of only three permanent new venues built.

### Redistribution

Elsewhere around the French capital, workers are pulling down the scaffolding at other temporary stadiums built at historic locations around the city which served as the telegraphic backdrops for the Games. The BMX park at the urban sports centre on Place de la Concorde has been dismantled and sent to Cluses in the French Alps where it will be used for a world BMX event in 2027. The sand from the

beach volleyball court in front of the Eiffel Tower has been sent to a sports centre in Marville in Seine-Saint-Denis. Marville is also expected to be the final destination of one of the skate parks - if it can be dismantled without too much damage - while another is heading to southern Montpellier.

Southwest of Paris, workers have moved in to convert the mountain-biking competition track near the town of Elancourt into a facility that can be used by local riders, as well as walkers, from April next year. Pierre Rondeau, a sports expert at the left-leaning Jean-Jaures Foundation, said the transfers of sports equipment from wealthy central Paris to poorer parts of the capital region and the rest of France made sense. "Paris can afford to give this infrastructure away," he told AFP. "Paris already has stadiums, infrastructures, clubs. The city is well equipped. "It's the rest of France and other towns that will benefit." — AFP

reer-high accuracy from 3-point range and the free throw line. "Joel has cemented himself as one of the greatest Sixers of all time and is well on his way to being one of the best players to ever play the game," 76ers president of basketball operations Daryl Morey said. "We're ecstatic that this extension keeps him and his family in Philadelphia for years to come."

"He's an elite two-way player with a combination of size, strength, and athleticism that this league has rarely, if ever, seen. He's integral to this franchise's quest for another NBA championship and we're honored that he continues to choose this organization as his NBA home." Embiid, the third pick in the 2014 NBA Draft, has averaged 27.9 points, 11.2 rebounds, 3.6 assists and 1.7 blocked shots over 433 games with the Sixers. The 76ers have reached the playoffs in each of the past seven seasons but have not reached the Eastern Conference finals during the run. — AFP

Sports

# Arsenal's defense faces acid test to shut out City again

## Relentless Haaland aims to fire Man City five points clear

MANCHESTER: Arsenal's Premier League title ambitions face the ultimate test on Sunday when a relentless Erling Haaland aims to fire Manchester City five points clear of the Gunners at the top of the table. Mikel Arteta's men managed to stop City scoring twice last season, but still could not deny the English champions a record fourth consecutive Premier League title. For the past two seasons Arsenal have finished second to Pep Guardiola's winning machine. Many believe this is their season to end a 21-year wait to win the title since Arsene Wenger's "Invincibles" romped to glory without losing a game.

City remain their biggest obstacle, although the path could be cleared should the holders be hit by a points deduction for 115 alleged breaches of Premier League rules by the end of the campaign. Haaland has struck a record nine times in the first four matches of the new Premier League campaign. The Norwegian's stunning form has ensured City are the only side in the English top-flight yet to drop points. But Arsenal are on their tails again - just two points behind - after proving their title credentials in battling away wins at Aston Villa and Tottenham.

### Solid foundations

Arsenal's challenge is built on rock solid defensive foundations. Centre-back pairing William Saliba and Gabriel Magalhaes are earning comparisons to legendary partnerships of the past, while goalkeeper David Raya has an extraordinary showreel of saves from the past month alone. In five matches in all competitions, Arsenal have conceded just once - a goal that arrived when down to 10 men against Brighton. "We all want to achieve something. Winning this Premier League is not easy, but when you finish twice second, you want to win," said Saliba "We will give everything, even more than last season, because



LONDON: Manchester City's Norwegian striker #09 Erling Haaland takes part in a team training session at Manchester City's training ground, in Manchester. — AFP

we don't want to finish second, third or fourth. We want to win this league and we'll give everything."

When Arsenal shut out City in a 0-0 draw on the final day of March, there were muted celebrations

from the visitors as they left the Etihad still on top of the table. But City did not drop another point in the final nine games of the season to snatch the title by two points. "In Premier League history (City) has been the most consistent ever, not only in terms of results but in terms of dominance and consistent top performances," said Arteta on Friday. "This is the challenge, we have to go there and prove that again we've made another step and we can compete."

If Arsenal are to emerge victorious on a ground where they have not won since 2015, their centre-back combination will be to the fore. Haaland did not even manage a single shot on target in the two league meetings when up against Saliba and Gabriel last season. "I'm good, he's good. We both speak French and we play now in our third season together," added Saliba on how the pair have formed such a potent partnership. "We know each other so well and it's a pleasure to play every game with him. We grow together because he's young as well, so it's really good to have him by my side."

In 65 Premier League games with that duo together at the back, Arsenal have kept 30 clean sheets and conceded just 51 goals. "William Saliba and Gabriel are on the threshold of joining elite company," wrote former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher in The Telegraph. "Provided they stay together, we will eventually reference Saliba and Gabriel in the same breath as the two stand-out partnerships of my generation: Chelsea's John Terry and Ricardo Carvalho, and Manchester United's Rio Ferdinand and Nemanja Vidic." Yet, to gain that level of recognition, Arsenal need to add silverware to their impressive stats. For all of the impressive progress over the past three seasons, they do not have a single trophy to show for it. Ending City's near two-year unbeaten run on home soil would strike a telling early blow that this time the title race could end differently. — AFP

## 2024 Homeless Football WCup kicks off in Seoul

SEOUL: The 2024 Homeless World Cup kicked off in the South Korean capital of Seoul on Saturday, marking the first time the event has ever been held in Asia. Held each year since 2003, the event bills itself as helping participants change their lives for the better through football, while also challenging society's perceptions of those experiencing homelessness.

This year's edition features 52 teams from 38 countries worldwide, according to local organizers, and got under way Saturday on the main pitch at Seoul's Hanyang University. This is the tourney's first outing since FIFA signed an agreement in August to partner with the Homeless World Cup Foundation in organizing it. "FIFA is excited to contribute, because we share the view of the Homeless World Cup Foundation that football is a force for good," FIFA president Gianni Infantino said via Instagram last month. Under the agreement, FIFA is providing medals and trophies, and broadcasting the event on its streaming platform FIFA+.

The Big Issue Korea, one of the local organizers, said a goal of the event was to "raise awareness among the residents of the host city about the issue of housing rights". The organization hopes the tournament will help "broaden the scope of policies related to homelessness in South Korea and address the lack of mandatory support measures", Ahn Byung-hun, its executive director, told AFP. The South Korean team is made up of eight players from diverse backgrounds, including an individual with disabilities, an asylum seeker and a teenager living in a shelter. The event will be open to the public free of charge, and runs until September 28th. — AFP

## Nice hand 'ashamed' Saint-Etienne 8-0 Ligue 1 mauling

PARIS: Nice handed out an 8-0 mauling to Saint-Etienne in France's Ligue 1 on Friday after racing six goals clear in the first half. Nice's 20-year-old striker Mohamed-Ali Cho was the chief tormentor, ripping Saint-Etienne's left flank to pieces, scoring the third goal and providing assists in three others. "We were overrun, 6-0 at half-time, it's just dreadful," said Saint-Etienne defender Dennis Appiah.

Defender Leo Petrot added: "We are ashamed, there are no words to describe this". A Dylan Batubinsika own-goal was followed by strikes from Tanguy Ndombele, Cho, two from Youssoufa Moukoko, Evann Goussand, Sofiane Diop and a late penalty from new signing Pablo Rosario as Nice celebrated their 120th anniversary in style.

Saint Etienne had conceded seven goals in three defeats since coming up into Ligue 1 via the play-offs, but beat Lille 1-0 last weekend. "This 120 years will remain engraved in memories and in mine because matches with such scores do not happen often, if ever," said Nice coach Franck Haise. League leaders Paris Saint-Germain travel to Reims on



NICE: Nice's Canadian defender #64 Moise Bombito (center) fights for the ball with Saint Etienne's Congolese defender #21 Dylan Batubinsika (left) during the French L1 football match between OGC Nice and AS Saint-Etienne at the Allianz Riviera stadium in Nice on September 20, 2024. — AFP

Saturday chasing a fifth win from five and are unbeaten in 26 consecutive away games in the league. Roberto De Zerbi's Marseille, second in the table,

two points behind PSG will aim to extend their almost perfect start to the season when they visit struggling rivals Lyon on Sunday. — AFP

## Late surge lifts Jeeno to LPGA Queen City lead

LOS ANGELES: Athaya "Jeeno" Thitikul birdied three of her last four holes on Friday to take a one-shot lead over another former world number one, Lydia Ko, at the US LPGA Queen City Championship in Ohio. Thailand's Jeeno, who announced last month she preferred to be known by her longtime nickname, had seven birdies in her second straight six-under par 66 at TPC River's Bend, which is hosting the event near Cincinnati for the first time.

New Zealand's Ko, who followed up Olympic gold in Paris with a victory in the Women's British Open last month, had an eagle and four birdies in her six-under round. Ko had set the early target, but Jeeno squeezed past with a birdie at her final hole, the ninth — one of the toughest on the course. "You have water on the front, and then if you go long it's going to be in the rough and a downhill lie," Jeeno

noted. "But just commit to the shot," she added. "I had pitching wedge, so it's kind of easier than the practice round when I had, like seven- or eight-iron."

The Thai made a belated start to the season after battling a thumb injury but teamed with Yin Ruoning to win a third LPGA title in June in the Dow Championship pairs event. She started the day one stroke off South African Ashleigh Buhai's lead and picked up four birdies in her first nine. After a bogey at the 10th she added birdies at the par-five sixth and eighth before her final flourish. Ko had more ground to make up, but produced her second straight bogey-free round to shoot up the leaderboard.

The highlight was an eagle at the eighth, where Ko watched playing partners Charley Hull and Rose Zhang hit it close. "I had missed the green," Ko said. "So I was like, man, I want to at least make up and down for a birdie. I hit it exactly the way that I was envisioning. As soon as it came off the club face and landed Charley said 'good shot' and, like, five seconds later it went in the hole." Ko, who said this week that her big wins last month were "kind of like being punched in the face twice in a very good way," said taking advantage of the course's reachable par-fives was key. — AFP



Jeeno Thitikul of Thailand

## Zamalek creep and Berkane cruise into CAF Cup group stage

JOHANNESBURG: CAF Confederation Cup title-holders Zamalek of Egypt and Renaissance Berkane, the Moroccan club they beat in the last final, made contrasting entries to the 2025 group stage on Friday. A gift goal for Nasser Maher helped Zamalek win 2-1 at home against African debutants Police of Kenya and 3-1 on aggregate. Berkane, twice winners and twice runners-up in the past six editions of the African equivalent of the UEFA Europa League, hammered Daje of Benin 5-0 for a 7-0 overall victory.

They were joined in the mini-league phase by 2009 Confederation Cup winners Stade Malien of Mali, who triumphed 3-1 at home to Paynesville from Liberia and advanced 3-2 on aggregate. Another 13 clubs will join them after three second round, second leg qualifiers on Saturday and 10 on Sunday. Having won 1-0 in Nairobi last weekend, 12-time CAF title winners Zamalek were expected to win convincingly in Cairo. But it took the White Knights 56 minutes to break the return-match deadlock with veteran forward Ahmed 'Zizo' Sayed netting.

As Police tried to pass their way out of their area four minutes later, disaster struck when Maher intercepted the ball and scored. Jesse Were halved the second-leg deficit with a goal on 66 minutes that shook Zamalek and they qualified after an unimpressive performance. Brazilian Mateus Santos and Burkina Faso international Issoufou Dayo, from a penalty, were among the scorers for Berkane, who lost the 2024 final against Zamalek on away goals.

Malien wasted little time overcoming a 1-0 away loss to Paynesville with Moctar Cisse, Soumaila Magassouba and Souleymane Drame putting the hosts three goals ahead after 24 minutes in Bamako. Mark Paye pulled one goal back just before the hour with his fourth of the CAF campaign to create a tense finish, but the second goal the Monrovia outfit needed to qualify eluded them. — AFP

# Classifieds

### Clinics & Hospitals

#### Clinics

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

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

#### Hospitals

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

### Change of Name

I, **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)

in the name Elvira D'Costa and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (19/09/2024)

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

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)

## Liverpool crush Bournemouth 3-0

Chelsea overpower West Ham 3-0; Jackson shines; Spurs bounce back



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's French defender #05 Ibrahima Konate collides with Bournemouth's Burkinabe striker #11 Dango Ouattara during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Bournemouth on September 21, 2024. — AFP

**LIVERPOOL:** Liverpool moved to the top of the Premier League (EPL) with a resounding 3-0 win over Bournemouth as Tottenham eased the pressure on Ange Postecoglou by beating Brentford 3-1 on Saturday. Nicolas Jackson scored twice as Chelsea cruised to a 3-0 win at West Ham, while Aston Villa are level on points at the top after coming from behind to beat Wolves 3-1. Liverpool suffered the first setback of Arne Slot's early days in charge when Nottingham Forest shocked Anfield seven days ago. But the Reds responded in style to blow Bournemouth away before half-time. Luis Diaz was rested for an impressive 3-1 win at AC Milan to start Liverpool's Champions League campaign in midweek.

Restored to the starting line-up, the Colombian struck twice inside two minutes. Diaz pounced on a misjudgement

from Kepa Arrizabalaga to latch onto Ibrahima Konate's long ball and round the stranded Spanish goalkeeper before sweeping into an empty net. Trent Alexander-Arnold then teed up Diaz to fire in his fifth goal of the season. Darwin Nunez was making his first start of the season and ended his 14-game goal drought at club level in spectacular fashion by curling into the far corner. A three-goal margin of victory takes Liverpool ahead of Manchester City and Aston Villa, who also have 12 points, on goal difference.

### Solanke off the mark

Spurs had won just one of their opening four league games to continue a downward trend in form spilling over from the end of last season. Postecoglou's men also had a narrow escape with two late goals to avoid a League Cup exit to second-tier Coventry

in midweek and got off to a nightmare start against Brentford. Bryan Mbeumo's thumping volley after just 22 seconds put the Bees in front. Yet, Spurs got the quick response they needed to stave off any revolt from the home fans. Dominic Solanke opened his Tottenham account with a tap in after Mark Flekken parried James Maddison's effort.

Brennan Johnson then hit back at his critics with an accurate low finish. Maddison secured the points five minutes from time with his first goal since March. Villa also needed a turnaround for their fourth win in five games after Matheus Cunha blasted Wolves in front midway through the first half. Ollie Watkins' deflected effort equalized before a rare goal from Ezri Konsa put Villa in front. Jhon Duran then continued his scintillating form as an impact substitute with his fourth goal this season off the bench.

### Chelsea cruise

Chelsea continued their positive start under Enzo Maresca as Jackson's double put a woeful West Ham to the sword at the London Stadium. The Senegal striker now has four goals in five Premier League games this season after two cool finishes beyond Alphonse Areola as West Ham were opened up at will. Jackson turned provider for Cole Palmer to round off the scoring inside the first two minutes of the second half. West Ham have now lost their opening three home league games for the first time in their history to mark an inauspicious start for new manager Julen Lopetegui.

"The points are important, but in this moment the most important thing is the way we progress," Maresca said after the Blues moved up to fourth in the table. Newcastle had the chance to go top but the Magpies' poor performances this season final-

ly caught up with them in a 3-1 defeat at Fulham. Raul Jimenez fired the home side in front before Nick Pope let Emile Smith-Rowe's effort slip through his grasp. Harvey Barnes cut Newcastle's deficit just a minute into the second half. But Bruno Guimaraes' slack pass teed up Reiss Nelson to seal Newcastle's fate in stoppage time.

Ipswich struck deep into added time to snatch a 1-1 draw in the battle of the newly-promoted sides at Southampton. Everton and Leicester are both also still looking for their first win of the season after a 1-1 draw at the King Power. Manchester United traveled to Crystal Palace in the 1630GMT kick-off aiming to avenge their 4-0 humiliation at Selhurst Park back in May. The blockbuster clash of the weekend takes place on Sunday when champions City host Arsenal, who have finished second to Pep Guardiola's men for each of the past two seasons. — AFP

## Kane, Olise run riot as Bayern thrash Bremen

**BREMEN:** Michael Olise had a hand in four goals and Harry Kane scored again as Bayern Munich ran riot to win 5-0 at Werder Bremen in the Bundesliga on Saturday. Olise, who arrived from Crystal Palace in the summer, scored twice and laid on two more in the win, while Kane had a goal to go with his two assists. The big win continued Bayern's stunning week, with a 6-1 win at promoted Holstein Kiel followed by a 9-2 home victory over Dinamo Zagreb in the Champions League.

Kane created Olise's 23rd-minute opener and the goalscorer then turned provider, dribbling down the right and threading a perfect pass for Jamal Musiala to score shortly afterwards. Olise then assisted Kane's 57th-minute goal, the England captain's 10th goal so far for Bayern this season in six games all competitions. Olise scored again and Kane set up Serge Gnabry to make it five against Bremen, whose only win against Bayern dating back to 2008 came this January in Munich. Kane scored

his first Bundesliga goal on debut at Bremen in August last year and now has 41 league strikes, more than any other English player.

Bayern host champions Bayer Leverkusen next Saturday. Fellow top-four rivals Leverkusen, Borussia Dortmund, Stuttgart and RB Leipzig all play on Sunday, but Bayern are guaranteed to finish the weekend in top spot as the only side to have won all four of their opening league matches. Two goals in the opening six minutes put Union Berlin on course for a 2-1 win at home against Hoffenheim. Tom Rothe and Jeong Woo-yeong scored early for the home side but a 67th-minute goal from former Union forward Marius Buelter set things up for a nervy finish in the German capital. Union however dug deep to win their second match of the season and keep their unbeaten record alive.

Freiburg scored three second-half goals to win 3-0 at Heidenheim, with Italy midfielder Vincenzo Grifo getting a double after Ritsu Doan opened the scoring. An 89th-minute goal from Shuto Machino snared a 2-2 draw for Holstein Kiel at Bochum, giving the promoted side their first-ever points in the top division. Kiel took the lead through a Benedikt Pichler goal after 15 minutes but Matus Bero and Lukas Daschner both scored to give Bochum a 2-1 advantage at halftime. Later on Saturday, Eintracht Frankfurt hosted Borussia Mönchengladbach. — AFP



BREMEN: Bayern Munich's English forward #09 Harry Kane (left) kicks the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match between SV Werder Bremen and FC Bayern on September 21, 2024. - AFP

## Kuwait's Al-Salmiya beat Iraq's Al-Karkh

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Al-Salmiya Club recorded a new victory on Saturday at the end of their journey in the group stage of the 39th Arab Handball Championship for League and Cup Champions Clubs - defeating Iraq's Al-Karkh Club 38/29 in the tournament held in Kuwait. Al-Salmiya ended the first half with a superior performance, as they came out with a score of 18/13, before returning in the second half to confirm their superiority in the overall match with a score of 38/29. — KUNA

