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**2** Cancer hereditary percentage in line with global rate: KCCC



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## Zionist military pounds Lebanon

Zionists 'preparing a response' to Iran's attack; Safieddine's contact 'lost'



BEIRUT: A commercial airliner takes off from the nearby Beirut International Airport as smoke rises above buildings in Beirut's southern suburbs following a Zionist airstrike. — KUNA



GAZA: A Palestinian boy looks at shrouded bodies after a Zionist airstrike on Gaza City's Zaytoun neighborhood on October 5, 2024. — AFP

BEIRUT: Hezbollah said Saturday its fighters were confronting Zionist troops in Lebanon's southern border region, where Zionist military said it struck militants from inside a mosque. Rapidly escalating violence in recent days saw intense airstrikes on Hezbollah strongholds across Lebanon as ground troops conducted raids near the border, transforming nearly a year of cross-border exchanges into full-blown war.

In the first reported Zionist airstrike on the northern Tripoli region in the current flare-up, Palestinian militant group Hamas said "Zionist bombardment" of the Beddawi refugee camp killed a commander, Saeed Attallah Ali, as well as his wife and two daughters on Saturday. The escalation, which this week included Iran's second-ever missile attack on Zionist entity, intensifying Hezbollah rocket fire and strikes claimed by Iran allies from as far away as Yemen, comes just days before the first anniversary of October 7 attack.

Continued on Page 6

### Doha beach oil leak contained



Officials and workers inspect the area. — KUNA

KUWAIT: The Environment Public Authority (EPA) affirmed on Saturday that the oil spills at Eastern Doha beach have been controlled in collaboration with the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC). Speaking to KUNA, Abdullah Al-Zaidan, EPA deputy director general for technical affairs, said concerned bodies would continue observing the maritime environment and beaches.

Upon a complaint received on Friday regarding oil pollution at the Eastern Doha beach, the site was inspected on Saturday, he said, elaborating that oil spills spread on the beach were discovered and their sources were 'unknown'. After inspecting the area, he said, the national plan was activated to face maritime oil pollution and coordinate with the committee affiliated with the Ministry of Interior's directorate general of civil defense. All bodies were informed about the plan to deal with oil leaks, he noted, elaborating that concerned bodies will clean up the beach. KNPC is working on fixing and cleaning the area and rehabilitating beaches within 24 hours, he said. In addition, there was coordination with regional organizations to protect the maritime environment, he said. — KUNA

### Ambassador: Kuwait keen on assisting Palestinian people

WASHINGTON: Kuwait Ambassador to the US Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah on Saturday affirmed Kuwait's keenness on dispatching relief aid to the Palestinian people. The ambassador was speaking in a statement to KUNA during her participation in the annual ceremony of the American relief foundation Anera. Kuwait's contributions to the foundation dates

many years back, said the ambassador, indicating that the relief establishment allocates aid for the Palestinian people, the refugees in Lebanon and Jordan.

She emphasized that Kuwait's support for the Palestinians and Lebanese would proceed and increase "under the current hard conditions." For his part, the foundation chair Sean Carrol said in his keynote statement at the annual ceremony that the foundation was seeking to increase the relief allocations for Lebanon. He held the Zionist occupation responsible for hampering delivery of aid in Gaza. Kuwait has contributed to the foundation relief projects for many years to relieve the refugees in the West Bank, people in need in Gaza, Jordan and Lebanon. — KUNA

### Poverty and inflation fuel despair in Tunisia ahead of election

FERNANA: Farmer Chedliya Mzrighi, who is working her field along with other women in northwest Tunisia, has little hope that things will change after the country's election on Sunday. "We have nothing here," said the 47-year-old in the impoverished Fernana area, her back curbed under the scorching sun as she shoveled herbs off the field. "We have no running water, no electricity." Earning a mere 10 dinars (about \$3) a day, she struggles to provide food and other necessities for her three children. As Tunisian president Kais Saied seeks re-election on Sunday, weak economic growth and high inflation are causing hardship for people like her, while reducing the

state's ability to invest.

During Saied's five-year term in office, which has been accompanied by a crackdown on democratic freedoms, Tunisia's annual economic growth has slowed to just 0.4 percent of GDP last year, according to World Bank figures.

"We are very poor, below zero," Chedliya said. "I feel that we are not really Tunisians, otherwise they would have solved our problems." Her home is a bare dwelling with no toilet and unpainted walls exposing weathered red bricks. It was built by her husband, who has left to seek work in Sousse, some 300 kilometers away in the south-east, despite suffering from health problems.

With a maximum of 200 dinars (\$65) a month in a country where the minimum wage is set at 460 dinars, Chedliya wonders how her son and daughters aged between 15 and 21 can do their homework in a house without electricity. The eldest left the village for neighboring Jendouba, where she studies law

Continued on Page 6



FERNANA: Women work in a field in Tunisia's Fernana town. — AFP



Kuwait Ambassador to the US Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah with Sean Carrol. — KUNA

### Emirates bans pagers, walkie-talkies onboard after blasts in Lebanon



BEIRUT: Photo taken in Beirut's southern suburbs shows the remains of exploded pagers. — AFP

DUBAI: Dubai-based airline Emirates has banned pagers and walkie-talkies onboard its planes following sabotage attacks in Lebanon, and extended flight cancellations for Middle East destinations due to regional escalation. "All Passengers travelling on flights to, from or via Dubai are prohibited from transporting pagers and walkie-talkies in checked or cabin baggage," the carrier said, weeks after a wave of exploding communication devices used by the Iran-backed Hezbollah group, which blamed Zionists for the attacks.

In a statement posted on its website, Emirates said that "such items found in passengers' hand luggage or checked baggage will be confiscated by Dubai Police." The blasts last month killed at least 37 people and wounded nearly 3,000 across Lebanon. Emirates, the Middle East's biggest airline, also announced that its Iraq and Iran routes will remain suspended until Tuesday. The cancellations were first announced in the wake of a major Iranian attack on Zionist entity this week that saw missiles flying over Iraq and Iran. — AFP

## Local

## Kuwait's rate of hereditary cancer at 10%

## Early detection of genetic diseases boosted Kuwait's IVF success rate to 78%

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** The hereditary cancer rate in Kuwait is estimated at 10 percent, which aligns with global figures, said General Clinical Genetics and Cancer Diseases Consultant at Kuwait Cancer Control Center Dr Shaker Bahzad.

He added that most cancer cases are not genetically related, explaining that when we talk about genetics, we refer to individuals inheriting certain genes from their parents that increase their susceptibility to specific types of cancer.

"The early identification of these genes allows for early diagnosis, leading to prevention and treatment before cancer actually develops. We monitor cases annually, and if any changes occur, we intervene immediately," he said.

His comments were made during the Clinical Genomics Day Conference, which saw strong participation from doctors across both public and private sectors. The conference focused on various topics related to managing cancer patients after determining their specific cancer type.

"In the past, medications were tailored to the type of cancer, but now we analyze the tumor's genes to more accurately determine which treatments will be most effective." This approach has improved patient response rates. As a result, the practice of administering the same medication to patients with breast

cancer without specifically analyzing the tumor has become something of the past.

Dr Bahzad highlighted that the most common cancers associated with genetics include breast, colon, ovarian, and uterine cancers, along with others like kidney cancer. He also mentioned less common hereditary cancers such as leukemia, lymphoma, and brain tumors. He noted that treatments for all these cancer types are available in Kuwait.

**Preventing genetic diseases**

Head of the genetics examinations at Ghanima Al-Ghanim Center Dr Mohammad Al-Ali said the Genomics Day conference discussed the latest developments in the field of genetic medicine. He pointed out that medical genetics in Kuwait has significantly progressed, moving from diagnostics to providing appropriate treatments to prevent hereditary diseases.

Dr Bahzad explained that pre-marital testing helps identify individuals who carry certain genetic disorders, allowing for preventive measures before these diseases manifest. He said medicine is continuously evolving, and research into stem cells is ongoing.

Pre-implantation embryo screening, for example, has significantly reduced the rate of hereditary diseases in Kuwait, said Dr Al-Ali, and has increased the success rate of in vitro fertilization from 32 percent to 78 percent. Cases of spinal myasthenia gra-



**KUWAIT:** Health care professionals pose for a photo at the Clinical Genomics Day Conference.

vis, a condition characterized by muscle weakness and fatigue, have decreased from six cases per year to just one or two.

He said the achievement is crucial for the country,

given the high costs associated with treating hereditary diseases. Kuwait has successfully advanced its healthcare system, positioning itself among the leading countries in the field of genetic medicine.

## MoH launches drive to educate public about CPR

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Health, represented by the Emergency Medical Services Department, has launched a campaign to raise people's awareness of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and how it's performed. The initiative coincides with October being designated as a month for educating the public about CPR skills and first aid. It will feature a series of events to be held in shopping malls across the country. The campaign, which kicked off Friday at The Avenues mall, will run throughout October and focus on CPR as a lifesaving technique crucial in emergencies when someone's breathing or heartbeat stops. It will include training courses and workshops in schools, universities, workplaces, and shopping centers, aiming to empower as many people as possible to master CPR skills and improve survival chances in cases of sudden cardiac arrest.

Dr Ahmed Al-Shatti, Director of the Emergency Medical Services Department, told KUNA.

Dr Al-Shatti highlighted the vital role of emergency personnel in saving lives during such incidents. He stressed the significance of CPR skills in saving lives, reducing harm, and equipping individuals to act in emergencies, thus supporting the community when urgent situations arise. The campaign also seeks to emphasize the important role of emergency medical responders as the first line of defense in cardiac arrest situations, providing CPR on-site and managing critical cases efficiently and swiftly. The goal is to raise health awareness and enhance community preparedness to respond to emergencies, ultimately reducing injuries and fatalities from everyday incidents. The campaign will also feature an exhibition titled "Learn CPR skills to be safe" which will take place over three days, with sessions in both the morning and evening. Emergency medical technicians from the Sabah and Hawally regions will participate, offering visitors the chance to check their blood pressure and blood sugar levels, as well as receive hands-on training in CPR and the Heimlich maneuver. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Emergency personnel teach participants how to perform CPR during a health ministry event held at The Avenues mall. — KUNA photos

## GCC training course for empowering disabled persons concludes

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait has concluded the first training course of the "Empowering and Building Abilities of Disabled Persons in the Gulf Cooperation Council" project, held under the patronage of the Minister of Social Affairs, Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah. Rihab Boursli, a member of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and chairwoman of the Kuwait Society for the Guardians of the Disabled, highlighted the significance of the course, which was organized by the Arab Organization for the Disabled People (AODP) in partnership with the Arab League and supported by the Arab Gulf Program for Development (AGFUND).

She noted that the discussions would open new horizons and approaches to enhance services and care for people with disabilities in Kuwait. This includes establishing a responsive social system capable of monitoring, documenting, reporting, and engaging with international organizations to advocate for the rights of disabled individuals. Boursli expressed pride in Kuwait being selected as the launchpad for the project's courses, acknowledging

the country's status and leadership in supporting people with disabilities. She also thanked Minister Al-Huwailah, Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs, and "Mother of the Disabled" Sheikha Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah for their support. She commended the contributions of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Public Authority for the Disabled, the National Diwan for Human Rights, various NGOs, and the media for their efforts in ensuring the course's success and advocating for disability issues.

Jahda Abou Khalil, Director of the Arab Organization for the Disabled, remarked that the successful turnout and engagement during the course reflect the maturity and leadership of Kuwaiti society in addressing the needs of disabled individuals.

She explained that this course is part of a broader initiative involving six training sessions across the Gulf to raise awareness about disability issues and align with the sustainable development goals set by the United Nations. It also aims to spotlight the upcoming third World Summit on Disability, scheduled for April 2025 in Jordan. Abou Khalil emphasized the importance of awareness and participation in this global event and the need to gather insights from NGOs and activists regarding agenda topics for the summit. She expressed gratitude to the State of Kuwait and the Kuwait Society for the Guardians of the Disabled for their role in organizing the training course.



**KUWAIT:** Fadel Abdullah, Chief Executive Officer - Kuwait at Borgan Bank, Makram Raad, Country Manager - Kuwait at DHL, and Mohamed Najeeb Al Zanki, General Manager - Corporate Banking at Borgan Bank, are seen during the signing ceremony.

## Borgan Bank 'goes green' in partnership with DHL Express

**KUWAIT:** Borgan Bank announced signing a strategic partnership with DHL, the world's leading logistics company, marking the bank's participation in the DHL Express "GoGreen Plus" initiative, in its latest effort to foster a cleaner environment with reduced carbon emissions. As a participant in the GoGreen Plus initiative, Borgan Bank will reduce its shipment-related carbon emissions by supporting DHL's adoption of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) and choosing the DHL Express greener courier services across its value chain. This agreement comes as part of Borgan Bank's commitment to raising environmental awareness and adopting global Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards in its operations.

"As a responsible corporate citizen and a committed contributor to the fulfillment of Kuwait's Vision 2035 goals, we are delighted to take yet another step toward actively minimizing our carbon footprint by participating in the DHL Express 'GoGreen Plus' initiative," said Fadel Abdullah, Chief Executive Officer for Kuwait at Borgan Bank. "In our pursuit of excellence, we continue to analyze every component of our value chain against the highest global standards, guaranteeing that our success reflects positively on our environment and everyone in our community. We firmly believe that positive change is possible when we all collaborate and opt for sustainability."

"Striving to offer outstanding service is among many merits that DHL shares with Borgan Bank, and today we are delighted to partner in adopting greener alternatives that will have a massive impact on the health of our planet and the communities we serve," said Makram Raad, Country Manager for Kuwait at DHL. "A core aspect of our customers' loyalty is

based on trust and innovative solutions that guarantee premium service fulfillment and maximum positive impact on our social and natural ecosystems. As a champion of environmental awareness in Kuwait, we are honored to have Borgan Bank among the progressive adopters of our 'GoGreen Plus' service, and we look forward to more future collaborations with Borgan that pave the path toward a greener Kuwait."

As a "GoGreen Plus" partner, Borgan Bank, through its steady investment in the initiative, will help DHL Express achieve its goal to have 30 percent of its aviation fuel blended with SAF – a green alternative to traditional jet fuel that reduces lifecycle emissions by up to 70-80 percent – by 2030. In addition to helping reduce Borgan's Scope 3 emissions linked to air cargo by utilizing SAF-infused fuels, DHL Express will also contribute to offsetting the bank's carbon emissions through approved environmental protection programs.

Borgan Bank's commitment to raising awareness about environmental consciousness is deeply rooted in its culture and operations, which shows in the bank's commitment since 2019 to publishing its annual sustainability report, detailing its yearlong ESG efforts. In addition, the bank was recently awarded the prestigious Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) v4.1 O+M: EB (Operations and Maintenance - Existing Buildings) Gold Certification for operations and maintenance at its head office building in Kuwait City, which underscores the bank's commitment to sustainability, operational excellence, and international standards for sustainability.

In recent years, the bank has introduced several eco-friendly banking innovations including biodegradable and virtual cards. It has also expanded and advanced its online banking experience, reducing the need for customers to commute to the physical branches as well as significantly cutting down on paper consumption. These services include SMS and digital onboarding, eKYC (digital know-your-customer protocol), and the option to open numerous bank accounts, such as Kanz and Al Rateb, online in less than a minute.



**KUWAIT:** Participants pose for a group photo.

Activist Joury Al-Azmi from the Training Gate International noted that the course was rich in information and facilitated engaging discussions about disability issues. Al-Azmi added that it provided participants with insights into international protection mechanisms and how to monitor and document adherence to international treaties related to disabled persons' rights. Ibrahim Al-Kandary, Director of the Harek Association for Independent Living for Mobility Disabled, praised the course's topics, especially those related to report writing

and the introduction of international organizations that support disabled individuals. He highlighted the importance of such courses in fostering relationships and partnerships to better understand the challenges faced by disabled individuals. The course featured lectures from experts, including Emad Al-Wartani, who focuses on strengthening the Disability Movement at the International Disability Alliance, and Simone Alonia, Regional Advisor for Women's Participation Affairs at the United Nations, alongside Rihab Boursli. — KUNA

## Local

# Kuwait marks World Teachers' Day

Kuwait's rich history of educators begins with the 'mulla', whose role extended beyond leading prayers

**KUWAIT:** Acting Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr Nader Al-Jallal said on Saturday that Kuwait proudly appreciates teacher's efforts in the educational sector. He emphasized that the attention given to education is a reflection of the generous patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Acting Minister Al-Jallal said in a press statement issued by the Ministry of Education on World Teachers' Day, which falls on October 5, that education is one of the most important pillars on which national renaissance depends. He said that the official annual teachers celebration held by the Ministry of Education embodies His Highness' keenness to follow up on their affairs and support them in all local and international events.

The 2024 celebrations of World Teachers' Day will focus on "valuing teacher voices: towards a new social contract for education," aiming at empowering teachers by providing them with opportunities to express their visions, celebrate their achievements, and address the challenges they encounter. On this occasion, we reflect on Kuwait's rich history of educators, beginning with the "muallim" or "mulla," whose role in the mosque extended beyond leading prayers to include preaching, teaching religion, reading the Quran, and instructing in calligraphy, ensuring both its quality and beauty. Therefore, the mosque is considered the first stage of education in Kuwait. Teaching during this era was often a family profession, with

prominent families in Kuwait, such as the Al-Adasani, Al-Faris, and Al-Qenaei families. Notable female educators included, Muneera Al-Dukhan, Fatima Al-Mesbah, Lulwa Al-Bannai, Maryam Al-Yaqoub, and Hessa Al-Hanif.

Al-Mubarakiya Boys School had three prominent teachers in 1911, including Sheikh Yousef bin Essa Al-Qenaei, who devoted his efforts to establishing schools in Kuwait, Omar Al-Azmiri, who was known for his beautiful voice in reciting the Holy Quran, and Saleh Al-Saleh. At the Ahmadiyah School for Boys, founded in 1921, prominent teachers included Abdulaziz Al-Rashid, Ahmad Al-Khamis, and Haji bin Haji. Meanwhile, significant educators at the Murqab School for Boys in 1949 were Khalid Al-Masoud, Abdulrahman Al-Abduljader, and Abdulatif Al-Othman.

Among the prominent female teachers at the Middle School for Girls in 1937 were Maryam Al-Saleh and Badriah Al-Otaibi. At the Qibla School for Girls in 1950, notable educators included Soud Al-Rifai, Ghanima Al-Ghurbali, and Amal Jafar. Today, the Ministry of Education employs over 105,000 teachers.

World Teachers' Day has been observed annually since 1994 to commemorate the signing of the UNESCO and International Labour Organization's recommendation on the status of teachers in 1966. This recommendation sets benchmark indicators related to the rights and responsibilities of teachers, standards for their initial preparation and ongoing training, em-



**KUWAIT:** Teachers proctor during the final exams in this file photo. — KUNA

ployment conditions, and the environment for teaching and learning. Additionally, the UNESCO recommendation regarding the status of teaching staff in

higher education was adopted in 1997 to complement the 1966 recommendation concerning faculty and research positions in higher education. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Sheikha Fadia Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Uzbekistan Ambassador to Kuwait Ayubkhon Yunusov pose for a photo. — KUNA

## Official emphasizes exchanging expertise to support women

**KUWAIT:** Chairwoman of Kuwait Union for Women Association Sheikha Fadia Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah stressed the importance of exchanging expertise and views on various innovative practices to support women and enhance their role to contribute effectively to community development. In a press statement on Saturday, after receiving Uzbekistan Ambassador to Kuwait Ayubkhon Yunusov, Sheikha Fadia Al-Sabah noted the significance of international cooperation to develop women's creative capacities in various fields, learn and exchange experiences on how to increase women's participation in senior leadership positions in various sectors. She noted the union's fruitful cooperation with relevant organizations in Uzbekistan to provide support and assistance between the two parties in protecting women's legitimate rights in accordance with the legislation in force in both countries and strengthening bilateral relations. The well-considered steps taken by the Union towards building a balanced and cohesive society based on respect for women's rights, enhancing their role in building the country's future, and working to empower them in various fields by promoting a culture of participation and equality in rights and duties. — KUNA

## Companies invited to submit telecom network proposals

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects, in collaboration with the Ministry of Communications, has invited qualified companies and alliances to submit proposals (RFP) for the development of fixed telecommunications networks in the country. In a statement to KUNA on Saturday, the authority announced that the qualified participants include Bahrain Telecommunication, IN International Holding Ltd., Tam - SPA and Procivis Corporation.

The authority clarified that the partnership contract will be established between the Ministry of Communications and the project company in accordance with Law 116/2014 regarding public-private partnerships and its executive regulations. The partnership agreement will have a duration of 50 years, including the construction period, and will encompass the necessary sites for developing and operating the network.

The project aims to provide a high-speed network, initially targeting speeds of 10 gigabits per second, and to deploy a fiber optic network that covers at least 90 percent of homes in Kuwait. Additionally, the project seeks to offer improved commercial packages and services to subscribers, aiding Internet service providers in expanding broadband access, reducing operational costs for the ministry, and creating job and training opportunities for citizens in the information and communications technology sector. — KUNA

## Finance minister discusses stronger cooperation with IMF

**DOHA:** Kuwait Finance Minister, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment and Acting Oil Minister Noura Al-Fassam discussed last week with Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Kristalina Georgieva in Doha boosting Kuwait-IMF cooperation. In a press statement, the Ministry of Finance said the meeting was held on the sidelines of the 122nd meeting of the Financial and Economic Cooperation Committee of the GCC countries in Doha. The two sides explored ways to enhance cooperation and take advantage of the fund's expertise to address financial challenges and implement economic reforms in Kuwait, according to a statement.

In a separate statement to KUNA, Al-Fassam said it was imperative to enhance economic cooperation between Gulf states. Other Gulf officials echoed her statement, with Qatar's Finance Minister Ali Al-Kuwari emphasizing that GCC states have proven that they are able to face challenges and achieve accomplishments in financial and economic fields.

GCC Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi said the last period was full of accomplishments and fruitful action in order to boost integration and collaboration among GCC member states. These achievements have positive impacts on Gulf citizens and expats, he said, noting that the GCC financial and economic committee contributes greatly to this progress. Despite global economic slow growth and increased interest, the World Bank expects a 4.7-percent growth in 2025 in the Gulf area. Al-Budaiwi elaborated. In light of economic challenges

## Mammograms key for early cancer detection: Doctor

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Ladies over 40 years old should have a mammogram test annually to ensure the early detection of cancer, said Dr Mai Taha from the Health Ministry Health Promotion Department. She said that hereditary factors, such as a family history of breast cancer among mothers or sisters, account for 13 percent of breast cancer cases, and that being older also increases the risk of developing the disease.

Her comments were made during a seminar held at the Oil Ministry in collaboration with the Petroleum Public Relations and Information Department. Dr Husa Majed Al-Shaheen, a board member of Cancer Aware Nation and head of the Breast Cancer Awareness Initiative, said the seminar is part of a month-long awareness campaign organized by CAN, under the patronage of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Minister Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah.

The seminar was attended by Sheikha Tamadhur

## Forum to explore future of sustainable education in Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** The Saad Charity for Knowledge and Scientific Research is launching an education forum Sunday titled "The Future of Education: Innovation and Technology for Sustainability" at the Kuwait National Library. The event is organized in collaboration with several ministries, institutions, and Kuwait University, along with international participation, to emphasize the importance of collective efforts in building a bright and sustainable educational future for Kuwait.

Sheikha Nabila Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, a board member and treasurer of the charity and president of the forum, stated to KUNA on Saturday that the forum, which is sponsored by Sheikha Fadia Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, aims to outline a general framework for a sustainable educational future that employs safe modern technology to enhance education quality, provide opportunities for innova-



**GCC delegates** are seen during the 122nd meeting of the Financial and Economic Cooperation Committee of the GCC countries held in Doha. — KUNA photos

facing several countries all over the world, GCC states have become a destination of various international companies as they have promising commercial opportunities, he stated.

Minister Al-Fassam also took part in a round-table meeting on the strategy of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In a statement on Friday, the Ministry of Finance said the meeting was chaired by Qatari Finance Minister Ali Al-Kuwari, with the presence of GCC ministers of finance and economy, IMF Director Kristalina Georgieva, central banks governors and representatives of main Arab organizations and development institutes. The meeting discussed the challenges facing the region, particularly concerning security conditions and their impact on oil prices and the economies of the GCC countries.

It also highlighted the future role of the IMF in boosting the international economy and enhancing global economic cooperation and showcased the



**DOHA:** Kuwait Finance Minister Noura Al-Fassam is seen with Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Kristalina Georgieva.

main reforms that the fund must execute in the next five years, to preserve the body's significant role on all levels, the ministry said. Kuwait is hosting the next GCC financial and economic cooperation committee meeting in 2025. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Participants pose for a photo at the seminar.

Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Director of Petroleum Public Relations and Information, who emphasized the importance of educating female employees about breast cancer. Participants included employees from various sectors, including technical affairs (digging and production, discovery and development, environment and safety), legal affairs, and administrative affairs (information systems and general administration).

Dr Taha cautioned against the long-term use of

oral contraceptives, as this can increase the risk of breast cancer. She stressed the significance of regular breast examinations for early detection, which is crucial for effective treatment when tumors are still small. According to her, self-examinations identify 25 percent of cases, while mammograms can detect 90 percent of cases in women over 40. At the end of the lecture, booklets and brochures promoting awareness about breast cancer were distributed.



**Sheikha Nabila Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah**



**Dr Abeer Al-Omairi**

and, and achieve inclusive and equitable education. Sheikha Nabila added that the forum also seeks to raise awareness about the importance of sustainable education and the role of technology in achieving comprehensive and innovative education, supporting the values of Kuwait's development plan, and utilizing modern technology in education.

The forum will also promote equality and equal opportunities for access to inclusive education and to build international cooperation networks based on trust and mutual respect among scholars and pro-

fessionals in sustainable education. It will also raise awareness about ethical practices in sustainable education environments, highlight key standards of social responsibility, and address the challenges and socio-economic and political issues related to sustainable education.

Sheikha Nabila stated that the closing ceremony of the two-day forum will announce the winners of the Sheikha Fadia Al-Saad Scientific Competition.

Dr Abeer Al-Omairi, the scientific coordinator of the forum, told KUNA that the forum will discuss several themes, including the sustainable digital future and its role in enhancing Kuwait's position, the sustainable digital government, and the standards of digital transformation in Kuwait. It will also explore practical steps to achieve sustainable development goals in education. Dr Al-Omairi added that the forum, which brings together experts, innovators, and distinguished individuals in technology and education, will discuss successful partnerships, creating a secure digital future, creative skills for effective sustainable education, challenges in technological investment, and the standards and indicators for evaluating the success of technological investments in sustainable education. — KUNA

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## Kuwait, The Bahamas mark 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations

NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Delegate to the UN Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai commended this weekend the strong bilateral relations between Kuwait and the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. The Kuwaiti diplomat told KUNA on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations between the two friendly countries, that Kuwait was the first Arabian Gulf country to have diplomatic relations with The Bahamas in 1994. Ambassador Al-Bannai, who doubles as non-resident ambassador of Kuwait to the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, added that the bilateral relations between the two countries are built on a solid foundation with a humanitarian framework that serves common interests. He pointed out that both countries are effective members of the Small States Forum (SSF). The forum is a voluntary, informal and non-ideological grouping of countries at the United Nations, founded in 1992 by Singapore. Small states have served as key drafters, negotiators, and thought leaders on a variety of issues at the UN.

Al-Bannai appreciated The Bahamas' role in defending Kuwait's legitimacy in the UN during the Iraqi occupation of the country in 1990-1991. He noted that Kuwait and The Bahamas support each other in elections of the different UN agencies, including the Security Council (UNSC), the Human Rights Council (OHCHR), and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). — KUNA



UN Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai

### Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A commercial aircraft flies in front of the sun over Kuwait City on October 3, 2024. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# GCC culture ministers honor Kuwaiti artists

Gulf cultural strategy committed to Arab-Islamic identity: Qatar representative



DOHA: GCC ministers of culture pose for a picture at the meeting. — KUNA photos

DOHA: GCC ministers of culture honored on Thursday several Gulf artists and cultural figures including two Kuwaitis: Nabil Shuail and Thuraya Al-Baqsam. The recognition took place on the sidelines of the 28th meeting of the GCC Ministers of Culture, attended by Kuwait's Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi. During the honoring ceremony, Khaled Al-Sunaidi, the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic and Development Affairs at the GCC, stated that Doha has always been a hub of creativity and a beacon of culture.

Omani writer Yahya Al-Mondhari, speaking on behalf of the honorees, said that the honoring is an ap-

preciation of the contribution of these prominent cultural figures and it would motivate them to give even more. Mondhari commended Qatar for its successful organization of this cultural event and acknowledged the efforts of the GCC General Secretariat in supporting culture and art in the member states.

The honorees included Ali Al-Fayadh and Mohammed Al-Marzouqi from Qatar, Sheikh Al-Nakhi and Marai Al-Halyan from the UAE, Dalal Al-Shrouqi and Abdullah Al-Khan from Bahrain, Nabila Al-Bassam and Marzouq bin Snaitan from Saudi Arabia, and Yahya bin Al-Mondhari from Oman.

Earlier at the inauguration ceremony of the 28th meeting of the GCC Ministers of Culture, Qatari Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad stressed that cooperation in the cultural field between the GCC countries is crucial for facing cultural challenges in the era of digital revolutions. He emphasized that the 2020-2030 GCC cultural strategy is a testament to the unwavering commitment to the Arab-Islamic identity. Bin Hamad said that the GCC seeks to also preserve Gulf identity while attaching to the principles of mutual respect with other cultures.

The Secretary-General of the GCC, Jassem



Kuwait's Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi

Al-Budaiwi underlined the need to preserve the roots of Arabian Gulf culture by establishing a civilization that is not shaken by challenges. He pointed out that GCC culture ministers achieved many accomplishments and contributed to strengthening the regional and global status of the GCC countries, drawing upon the GCC rich cultural heritage and openness to all civilizations. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Sheikh Mubarak Fahad Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (center right) poses for a photo with officials. — KUNA

## GCC to produce special programs for 45th summit

KUWAIT: Sheikh Mubarak Fahad Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Director General of the GCC Joint Program Production Institution, said the institution will produce special content to celebrate GCC nations during the upcoming "Gulf Weeks" coinciding with the 45th Gulf Summit, set to take place in Kuwait next December.

In a press statement following a meeting with the event planning team, Sheikh Mubarak shared that they discussed proposals and ideas for media and promotional activities planned for the "Gulf Weeks." He explained that the institution aims to produce

media programs and launch initiatives showcasing the achievements of the Gulf states.

This initiative is being carried out in collaboration with the GCC General Secretariat and under the guidance of Secretary-General Jassem Al-Budaiwi. Sheikh Mubarak emphasized that the Gulf Weeks activities are part of the efforts to implement decisions put forward by the leaders of the GCC countries, in line with the Supreme Council's resolution from its 35th session on December 9, 2014, which calls for promoting and highlighting the achievements of the GCC nations.

The GCC Joint Program Production Institution was established to collectively promote the accomplishments of the council and its six member states: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. GCC leaders hold regular summits to review progress at the Gulf level. The GCC was formed in the early 1980s to enhance coordination and cooperation among the countries in the region across various sectors. — KUNA



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Nepalis fear more floods as climate change melts glaciers

## Child 'trampled to death', several killed in Channel crossing attempt

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LONDON: Pro-Palestinian activists and supporters wave flags and hold placards as they pass through central London, during a March for Palestine on October 5, 2024. — AFP

# Thousands march in London in support of Palestinians

## Demonstrators demand ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon

**LONDON:** Thousands of protesters marched through central London on Saturday calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon as the war in the Palestinian territory neared the one-year mark. Pro-Palestinian supporters from across the country began the march from Russell Square to Downing Street demanding an end to the conflict, which has killed nearly 42,000 people in Gaza.

At Saturday's 20th "National March for Palestine" in London, familiar chants — "ceasefire now", "stop bombing hospitals, stop bombing civilians" and "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" — were joined by shouts of "hands off Lebanon".

The rally came ahead of the one-year anniversary of the October 7 attack in Zionist entity by

fighters from Palestinian group Hamas which resulted in the deaths of 1,205 people.

Zionist entity's military offensive has killed at least 41,825 people in Gaza, most of them civilians, according to figures provided by the territory's health ministry and described as reliable by the United Nations. Zackerea Bakir, 28, said he has attended dozens of marches around the UK.

Large numbers continue to turn up because "everyone wants a change", Bakir told AFP. "It's continuing to just get worse and worse, and yet nothing seems to be changing... I think it's tiring that we have to continue to come out," said Bakir, joined at the rally by his mother and brother.

Several protesters carried posters reading "Starmer has blood on his hands". UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer has called for a cease-

fire in Gaza and the release of hostages held by Hamas, as well as suspended some arms licenses to Zionist entity.

However, many at the rally said it was not enough. Sophia Thomson, 27, found the Labour government's stance "hypocritical". According to Thomson, the size of the protests "goes to show the government doesn't speak for the people".

"It's not good enough. It's not good enough," added Bakir, calling for the government to "stop giving a carte blanche of support to the Zionist entity government". London's Metropolitan police put in place a "significant" policing operation ahead of planned protests and memorial events.

While the rally was largely peaceful, two were arrested for assaulting an emergency worker, according to the Met. Three others were arrest-

ed as tensions rose between the main march and a counter protest. While exact numbers at the demonstration were unclear, "it appears to be greater than other recent protests", the Met said on X. Another rally also took place simultaneously in the Irish capital, Dublin. A memorial for the October 7 attack will be held in London on Sunday.

Meanwhile, several hundred people marched through central Cape Town Saturday waving Palestinian flags and chanting anti-Zionist slogans in a pro-Gaza rally to mark the first anniversary of the the Zionist entity-Hamas conflict. With placards accusing the Zionist entity of genocide and racism, the marchers — many of them wearing the keffiyeh scarf that symbolizes the Palestinian struggle against Zionist entity — walked to parliament in a protest organized by the Palestine Soli-

## Sinwar remains committed to Zionists' defeat

**BEIRUT:** Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar is unrepentant about the Oct 7 attacks a year ago, people in contact with him say, despite unleashing a Zionist entity invasion that has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians, laid waste to his Gaza homeland and rained destruction on ally Hezbollah.

For Sinwar, 62, architect of the Hamas cross-border raids that became the deadliest day in Zionist entity's history, armed struggle remains the only way to force the creation of a Palestinian nation, four Palestinian officials and two sources from governments in the Middle East said.

The Oct 7 attacks killed 1,200 people, mainly civilians, and captured 250 hostages, according to Zionist entity tallies, in the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust. Zionist entity responded by launching a massive offensive, killing 41,600 people and displacing 1.9 million, according to Palestinian health authorities and UN figures.

Now the conflict has spread to Lebanon, with Zionist entity heavily degrading Iranian-backed militant group Hezbollah, including killing most of its leadership. Hamas patron Tehran is at risk of being pulled into open war with Zionist entity.

Sinwar has drawn Iran and its entire "Axis of Resistance" — comprising Hezbollah, Yemen's Houthis and Iraqi militias — into conflict with Zionist entity, said Hassan Hassan, an author and researcher on Islamic groups. "We're seeing now the ripple effects of Oct 7. Sinwar's gamble didn't work," Hassan said, suggesting that the Axis of Resistance may never recover. "What Zionist entity did to Hezbollah in two weeks is almost equal to a whole year of degrading Hamas in Gaza. With Hezbollah, three layers of leadership have been eliminated, its military command has been decimated, and its important leader Hassan Nasrallah has been assassinated," added Hassan.

However, Sinwar's grip on the Hamas remains unwavering, despite some signs of dissent among Gazans. He was chosen as the Islamist movement's overall leader after his predecessor Ismail Haniyeh was killed in July by a suspected Zionist entity strike during a visit to Tehran. Zionist



Yahya Sinwar

entity has not confirmed its involvement in the strike.

Operating from the shadows of a network of labyrinthine tunnels under Gaza, two Zionist entity sources said Sinwar and his brother, also a top commander, appear to have so far survived Zionist entity airstrikes, which have reportedly killed his deputy Mohammed Deif and other senior leaders. Sinwar operates in secrecy, moving constantly and using trusted messengers for non-digital communication, according to three Hamas officials and one regional official. He has not been seen in public since Oct 7.

Over months of failed ceasefire

talks, led by Qatar and Egypt that focused on swapping prisoners for hostages, Sinwar was the sole decision-maker, three Hamas sources said. Negotiators would wait for days for responses filtered through a secretive chain of messengers. Hamas and Zionist entity did not respond to requests for comment.

Sinwar's high tolerance for suffering, both for himself and for the Palestinian people, in the name of a cause, was apparent when he helped negotiate the 2011 exchange of 1,027 prisoners, himself included, for one kidnapped Zionist entity soldier held in Gaza. The kidnapping by Hamas had led to a Zionist entity assault on the coastal enclave and thousands of Palestinian deaths.

Half a dozen people who know Sinwar told Reuters his resolve was shaped by an impoverished childhood in Gaza's refugee camps and a brutal 22 years in Zionist entity custody, including a period in Ashkelon, the town his parents called home before fleeing after the 1948 Arab-Zionist entity war.

The question of hostages and prisoner swaps is deeply personal for Sinwar, said all the sources, who requested anonymity to speak freely about sensitive matters. — Reuters

## Halt arm deliveries to Zionists: Macron

**PARIS:** French President Emmanuel Macron on Saturday urged a halt to arms deliveries to Zionist entity, which has been criticized over the conduct of its retaliatory operation in Gaza. "I think that today, the priority is that we return to a political solution, that we stop delivering weapons to fight in Gaza," Macron told broadcaster France Inter.

"France is not delivering any," he added during the interview recorded early this week.

The United States provides about \$3 billion in weapons to Zionist entity each year. In May, the State Department said it did not have enough evidence to block shipments of weapons but that it was "reasonable to assess" that Zionist entity has used arms in ways inconsistent with standards of humanitarian law. In September, Britain said it was suspending some arms exports to Zionist entity, citing a "clear risk" that they could be used in a serious breach of international humanitarian law.

Macron reiterated his concern over the conflict in Gaza that is continuing despite repeated calls for a ceasefire. "I think we are not being heard," he said. "I think it is a mistake, including for the security of Zionist entity," he said, adding that the conflict was leading to "hatred."

Macron also said avoiding an escalation in Lebanon was a "priority." — AFP

## Displaced Gazan mothers struggle to care for newborns

**DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza:** Gazan mother Rana Salah cradles her one-month-old daughter Milana in her arms in a sweltering tent for the displaced, and speaks of the guilt she feels for bringing her child into a world of war and suffering. "If it were up to me, I wouldn't have gotten pregnant or given birth during the war because life is completely different; we've never lived this life before," she said, speaking

at a camp in Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip.

"I gave birth twice before, and life was better and easier for me and the child. Now, I feel like I've wronged both myself and the child because we deserve to live better than this." Milana was born in a hospital tent by caesarean owing to complications with Salah's pregnancy. The family have not been able to return home due to the conflict, moving instead from one tent to another.

Milana is one of around 20,000 babies to have been born in Gaza in the last year, according to UNICEF statistics. The current war, a particularly deadly episode in the decades-old Zionist entity-Palestinian conflict. Zionist entity air and artillery strikes in response have reduced much of the Palestinian enclave to rubble and more than 41,500 Pales-

tinians have been killed in the Zionist entity assault, according to the Gaza health ministry. Most of Gaza's 2.3 million residents have been displaced.

Salah fans Milana with cardboard and says the heat is bad for the baby's skin. "Instead of returning to our house, we keep moving from one tent to another... where diseases are widespread and the water is contaminated." The World Health Organization (WHO) has said postnatal services have decreased significantly in Gaza, so women who have complications have less access to the care they need, as do their babies. Rick Brennan, the WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Regional emergency director, said malnutrition was a threat to newborns, particularly if their mothers were unable to breastfeed, as there was no access to breast milk substitutes. — Reuters



GAZA CITY: A Palestinian woman mourns over the body of a relative after a Zionist strike on Gaza City's Zaytoun neighborhood on October 5, 2024. — AFP

## International

# Child 'trampled to death', several killed in Channel crossing attempt

## Misery and despair as French vessel picks up 14 people on board

LILLE, France: Several people died, including a young child, when an overcrowded boat attempted to cross the Channel to Britain, French authorities said on Saturday. Another would-be asylum seeker was injured and airlifted to hospital after the dinghy issued a call for assistance on Saturday morning. A French tow vessel, the Abeille Normandie, picked up 14 people on board, including the deceased during a rescue mission between 8 and 9 am, officials said.

"Yet again, several migrants lost their lives trying to reach Britain by crossing the Channel," the Pas-de-Calais prefecture in northern France said. "A child was trampled to death," France's hard-line interior minister, Bruno Retailleau, said on X, adding that several other people had died in the "appalling drama".

"The smugglers have the blood of these people on their hands and our government will intensify the fight against these gangs who enrich themselves by organizing these deadly crossings," Retailleau added. French officials said the accident was not a shipwreck and the dead child had been found in the boat, not in the water. Olivier Barbarin, the mayor of the coastal town of Le Portel in northern France, said the child was around four years old. The injured person was airlifted to hospital in Boulogne, northern France. The other passengers continued their journey. French authorities seek to stop people taking to the water but do not intervene once they are afloat except for rescue purposes, citing safety concerns. The Boulogne-sur-Mer public prosecutor's office confirmed the dead child had been "very young" but did not immediately release other

details. Barbarin said the 14 passengers rescued had disembarked at the town's commercial port. Channel crossings to Britain by undocumented asylum seekers have ballooned since 2018 despite repeated warnings about the perilous journey.

The Channel has heavy maritime traffic, icy waters and strong currents. The French and British governments have sought to stop the flow of undocumented migrants, who may pay smugglers thousands of euros per head for the passage to England from France aboard small boats.

France's new right-wing prime minister, Michel Barnier, said on Tuesday the country needed a stricter immigration policy. He vowed to be "ruthless" with people traffickers, who he said "exploit misery and despair" that pushed undocumented asylum seekers to risk trying to cross the Channel and the Mediterranean. The latest tragedy comes after eight migrants died in mid-September when their overcrowded vessel capsized while trying to cross the Channel.

In early September at least 12 people including six minors, mostly from Eritrea, died off the northern French coast when their loaded boat capsized.

The number of migrants arriving in Britain by crossing the Channel in small boats has topped 25,000 since the start of the year. Stopping the small boat arrivals on England's southern coast was a key issue in Britain's general election in July. British Interior Minister Yvette Cooper has said the government aims over the next six months to achieve the highest rate of deportations of failed asylum seekers in five years. — AFP



LES ESSARTS, France: France's Minister of Interior Bruno Retailleau (center) speaks with a gendarme of the canine "cynophile" unit during a French gendarmerie operation on the A83 highway toll in Les Essarts, western France. — AFP

## Ethiopia forces deploy against Amhara rebels

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopian army forces have deployed in large numbers in the past fortnight to Amhara state, scene of a year-long insurgency, a security source told AFP on Saturday.

The Fano, a long-standing "self-defence" militia for the Amhara ethnic group, the second largest in Ethiopia, took up arms against the federal government in April 2023 after it tried to disarm regional forces. The government declared a state of emergency in Amhara, home to some 23 million people, in August 2023. While this expired in June, unrest has continued.

"Over the past two weeks, there have been numerous reinforcements (of the federal army) and many arrests of officials suspected of collusion with the Fano," a security source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told AFP. On Tuesday, rights group Amnesty International said there had been "mass arbitrary detentions" in Amhara, with authorities arriving with a list of hundreds to arrest, including some members of the academic community. "The Ethiopian army and police's ongoing campaign of arbitrary mass detentions in Amhara region is yet more evidence of the government's total disregard for the rule of law," said Amnesty regional director Tigere Chagutah. AFP was unable to independently verify the information, with the authorities severely restricting access to the region.

Federal forces and the Fano are known to have clashed on September 17 in Debark, an Amhara town around 750 km (460 miles) north of the capital Addis Ababa, leaving at least nine dead, mostly civilians. — AFP

## Defiant Trump returns to site of rally shooting

PITTSBURGH: Donald Trump made a defiant return Saturday to the small town in Pennsylvania where an assassin tried to shoot him dead during a rally attended by thousands of supporters. The former president appeared alongside J D Vance, his running mate in the November election, as well as family members of those hurt in the July 13 attack, first responders and tech billionaire Elon Musk.

Trump has repeatedly insisted he wanted to return to the site of the shooting in which one man was killed and two attendees were wounded before the sniper was shot dead. "Butler has become quite a famous place — it's like a monument now," the Republican candidate said at a recent rally in Milwaukee. Trump's campaign said "he took a bullet for democracy" in Butler, and that he would speak behind protective glass on his return.

The former president was six minutes into a campaign speech in a scorching field and turning his head to look at a chart of immigration statistics, when eight shots rang out. Trump winced and grabbed his ear, ducking down behind his podium as Secret Service agents flooded the open-air stage.

Surrounded by bodyguards and with blood trickling across his face, Trump raised his fist and shouted "fight, fight, fight" to the crowd — providing his campaign with a now iconic image. "The first thing I said is, 'How many people are dead?' Because, you know, we had a massive crowd. As far as the eye could see," Trump said recently. In fact, his first words, captured by the stage microphone, were "let me get my shoes," corroborated by witness Erin Autenreith, who was sitting in the first row.

There was shock across the political spectrum



FAYETTEVILLE, US: A supporter of US President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump cheers ahead of a town hall event at the Crown Complex in Fayetteville, North Carolina, on October 4, 2024. — AFP

and President Joe Biden joined a host of world leaders in reaching out to Trump to wish him well. The shooting prompted calls from all sides to lower the temperature of an overheated campaign — but the pause was short, and tensions simmered.

Though his ear was apparently grazed by one of the bullets fired by Thomas Crooks from an AR-15 type rifle, Trump emerged otherwise unscathed. The Secret Service — charged with protecting presidents, candidates and foreign dignitaries — came in for withering criticism for failing to secure the building from where the shots were fired, just a few hundred feet away from the stage.

The attempt on the business mogul's life was the first of a string of dramas that has shaken up the White House race, capped by Biden's shock withdrawal and replacement by Vice President Kamala Harris as the Democratic candidate. Then on September 15 a man was apprehended after being seen at Trump's Florida golf course wielding a rifle and a GoPro camera in what the FBI said was a second assassination attempt. Some Trump followers have alleged wild conspiracy theories and, along with Trump, have argued that Democratic rhetoric about the former president being a threat to US democracy were effectively an incitement to violence. — AFP

## Zionist military pounds Lebanon...

Continued from Page 1

A military official said the army was "preparing a response" to Iran's "unlawful" attack, without elaborating. In downtown Beirut, Ibrahim Nazzal, who is among hundreds of thousands displaced by the violence, said: "We want the war to stop... all our homes are gone." Nearly a year into the war in the Gaza Strip triggered by the unprecedented attack, Zionists have shifted their focus north, aiming to allow tens of thousands of people displaced by Hezbollah rocket fire to return home.

Zionist military launched an intensified wave of strikes on Hezbollah strongholds around Lebanon, killing more than 1,110 people since September 23. On the ground, Hezbollah said its fighters were engaged in clashes with Zionist troops in the border area, later claiming a rocket attack at north, some 45 kilometers from the frontier. The military said its forces had killed 250 Hezbollah fighters in the border area this week, and early Saturday struck a militant "command centre located inside a mosque" in the town of Bint Jbeil.

Zionist recent attacks on Lebanon have killed an Iranian general, a host of Hezbollah commanders and, in the biggest blow to the group in decades, its leader, Hassan Nasrallah. Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, delivering a rare public address on Friday, said that "the resistance in the region will not back down with these martyrdoms". As Zionist entity mulls its response to the Iranian missile attack on Tuesday, US President Joe Biden cautioned against striking Iranian oil facilities, a day after he said Washington was "discussing" such action.

The Iranian attack, which Tehran called revenge for the assassination of Nasrallah and other top figures, killed one person in the occupied West Bank. According to satellite pictures, it also caused some damage to Nevatim air base in southern part of Zionist entity. In Lebanon, bombardment has put at least four hospitals out of service, and on Friday, the first delivery of medical aid organized by the United Nations reached Beirut airport.

The state-run National News Agency said that about a dozen strikes hit the Lebanese capital's southern suburbs overnight, with a fresh raid on Saturday around noon. It also reported more Zionist airstrikes on Lebanon's south and east. In Hezbollah's south Beirut bastion,

an AFP photographer saw some buildings reduced to rubble and fire raging in another. In a nearby neighborhood, 62-year-old cook Abu Abbas told AFP he has kept his small eatery open "every morning". "Even with the strikes that are becoming increasingly heavy each night... I cannot leave home," he said.

Lebanon said an airstrike on Friday cut off the main international road to Syria, which was used by many seeking refuge across the border. Zionist entity said it aimed to prevent the flow of weapons. The United Nations said its peacekeepers "remain in all positions" in south Lebanon despite a Zionist request on Monday to "relocate" as the military's ground incursions began. The UN Interim Force in Lebanon also urged commitment "in actions, not just words" to Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended the 2006 war between Zionists and Hezbollah and stipulated that only the Lebanese army and peacekeepers should be deployed in south Lebanon.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, visiting Damascus on Saturday after a stop in Beirut, said: "The most important issue today is the ceasefire, especially in Lebanon and in Gaza." Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, whose war-torn country has also endured Zionist attacks mostly targeting Iran-backed groups, told Araghchi that the Iranian missile attack was "a strong response" that had "taught the Zionist entity a lesson". Biden said the United States, Zionist entity's top military supplier, was working to "rally the rest of the world" to prevent the fighting from spreading even further.

Zionist military offensive has killed at least 41,825 people in Gaza, the majority of them civilians, according to figures provided by the territory's health ministry and described as reliable by the UN. In the first such order in weeks, the military told Palestinians to evacuate the area around the strategic Netzarim Corridor in central Gaza, warning that troops were preparing to use "great force" against Hamas fighters there. The war has already displaced the vast majority of the territory's 2.4 million people at least once, with Gazans repeatedly warning there was no longer anywhere safe for them.

Meanwhile, a high-level Hezbollah source said on Saturday that contact with Hashem Safieddine, widely touted as potentially the group's next leader, had been lost following a Zionist airstrikes this week. "Contact with Sayyed Safieddine has been lost since the violent strikes on Beirut's southern suburbs" early on Friday, the official told AFP. "We don't know if he was at the targeted site, or who may have been there with him," he added. — AFP

## Poverty and inflation fuel despair in...

Continued from Page 1

but without a computer. "How will she continue her studies?" asked her mother. Saying she survives on her neighbors' help, Chedliya said she recently saw Saied speaking with women farmers on television. She regrets that she has "received no help from the state" despite numerous pleas to local representatives.

"Where's the State?"

Sihem Ghouibi, a 55-year-old widow, said her five sons and daughter, now all older than 18, had not managed to continue their studies beyond high school and left Fernana. Saying she feels abandoned, she asked: "Where is the state? No one comes to help." Fernana, where half of the 52,000 inhabitants live in the countryside, is one of Tunisia's poorest regions and has been affected by the country's fifth consecutive year of drought, which has hit agricultural output.

The poverty rate there stood at nearly 37 percent in 2020, according to the World Bank, which highlighted "weak basic infrastructure, high unemployment and illiteracy rates and a school dropout problem". Women who spoke to AFP said they would vote on Sunday because of the "duty of being Tunisian", hoping that things will get better. But prospects for the country, which has been struggling with crippling national debt, remain bleak. The past five years have seen "the majority of indicators scaling down, with a growth rate that failed to reduce poverty, inequality, and unemployment," economist Aram Belhadji told AFP.

Even if the Tunisian state continues to provide free education and health services, the lingering problem is "purchasing power, which has significantly deteriorated," he added. With inflation running at 7.0 percent, affording food and other commodities has become costly even for the middle classes. "We don't know where our economy is headed," Belhadji added. "We need clear public policy." Citing Saied's government reshuffles, he said political instability had also deterred investment, while corruption and



FERNANA, Tunisia: A farmer plows a field in north-western Tunisia's Fernana town. — AFP

bureaucracy were also weighing on business.

Tunisia's debt currently hovers at around 80 percent of its GDP, compared to 67 percent before Saied took office, with repayment costs reducing the funds available for social and development programs, said Belhadji. In Fernana's cultural centre, its director Boudjemaa Maaroufi decried a lack of government funding, showing a computer room "with very old tools". The centre is hoping for funding from the European Union for a podcast recording studio aimed at attracting more young people - one of many projects dependent on foreign aid from Europe or the United States.

"It's true that there is poverty in Fernana, low-income families unable to finance their children's studies, and a lack of jobs for young graduates," said Ahlem Ghazouani, head of local JCI association which provides leadership and entrepreneurship workshops for young people. "But there are more and more NGOs, university clubs, and youth and cultural centers that are trying to change this reality," she said. Waad Khemiri, a 24-year-old environmental biology graduate, remains hopeful. "We have rich forest resources, including cork oaks, as well as young people with a lot of potential in Fernana," she said. — AFP

## International

# Nepalis fear more floods as climate change melts glaciers

## The Himalayan nation reeling from its worst flooding in decades

**KATHMANDU:** Mingma Rita Sherpa was not home when the muddy torrent roared into his village in Nepal without warning, but when he returned, he did not recognize his once beautiful settlement. It took just moments for freezing floodwaters to engulf Thame in the foothills of Mount Everest, a disaster that climate change scientists say is an ominous sign of things to come in the Himalayan nation. "There is no trace of our house... nothing is left," Sherpa said. "It took everything we owned." Nepal is reeling from its worst flooding in decades after ferocious monsoon rains swelled rivers and inundated entire neighborhoods in the capital Kathmandu, killing at least 236 people.

Last weekend's disaster was the latest of several disastrous floods to hit the country this year.

Thame was submerged in August by a glacial lake that burst high in the mountains above the small village, famous for its mountaineering residents. It was once home to Tenzing Norgay Sherpa, the first person to climb the world's highest mountain Everest, along with New Zealander Edmund Hillary. "We are afraid to return, there are still lakes above," Sherpa said.

"The fertile land is gone. It is hard to see a future there," he added, speaking from the capital Kathmandu, where he has moved. A glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) is the sudden release of water collected in former glacier beds. These lakes are formed by the retreat of glaciers, with the warmer temperatures of human-caused climate change turbocharging the melting of the icy reservoirs. Glacial lakes are often unstable because they are dammed by ice or loose debris.

Thame was a popular stop during the trekking season, perched at an altitude of 3,800 metres (12,470 feet) beneath soaring snow-capped peaks. But in August, during the monsoon rains, the village was largely empty. No one was killed, but the flood destroyed half of the village's 54 homes, a clinic and a hostel. It also wiped out a school started by Hillary.

Sherpa, like many in the village, ran a lodge for foreign trekkers. He also worked as a technician at a hydropower plant, a key source of electricity in the region. That too was damaged.

"Some are trying to rebuild, but the land is not stable," he said. "Parts continue to erode." Thame's residents are scattered, some staying in neighboring villages, others in Kathmandu. Local official Mingma Chiri



**KAVRE, Nepal:** A man wades through the waters in the affected area of monsoon flooding in Roshi village of Nepal's Kavre district. - AFP

Sherpa said the authorities were surveying the area to assess the risks. "Our focus right now is to aid the survivors," he said. "We are working to help the residents rebuild or relocate".

Experts say that the flood in Thame was part of a frightening pattern. Glaciers are receding at an alarming rate. Hundreds of glacial lakes formed from glacial melt have appeared in recent decades.

In 2020, more than 2,000 were mapped across Nepal by experts from the Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), with 21 identified as potentially dangerous. Nepal has drained lakes in the past, and is planning to drain at least four more.

ICIMOD geologist Sudan Bikash Maharjan examined satellite images of the Thame flood, concluding it was a glacial lake outburst. "We need to strengthen our monitoring... so that we can, at least to some extent, predict and prepare," he said. "The risks are

there... so our mountain communities must be made aware so they can be prepared". Scientists warn of a two-stage impact.

Initially, melting glaciers trigger destructive floods. Eventually, the glaciers will dry up, bringing even greater threats. Glaciers in the wider Himalayan and Hindu Kush ranges provide crucial water for around 240 million people in the mountainous regions. Another 1.65 billion people depend on them in the South Asian and Southeast Asian river valleys below.

Former residents of Thame are raising funds, including Kami Rita Sherpa, who climbed Everest for a record 30th time this year. Kami Rita Sherpa said the locale had long been a source of pride as a "village of mountaineers", but times had changed. "The place has no future now", he said. "We are living at risk — not just Thame, other villages downhill also need to be alert." The veteran mountaineer said his beloved mountains were under threat. — AFP

## Huge crowd at South Korea fireworks fest amid safety concern

**SEOUL:** A large fireworks festival in South Korea drawing a massive crowd on Saturday has snarled traffic through its busy capital, prompted police to deploy 2,400 officers and sent the rates of some hotel rooms with a view above 10 million won (\$7,400). The popular annual event has taken on a serious public safety dimension as memory is still fresh of a Halloween night disaster two years ago that killed 159 mostly young people in a crush of crowd packed in a dense entertainment district.

Many of the more than 1 million spectators who were expected to watch the 90-minute show were camping out since midnight to secure a spot with a view of the event scheduled to start at 7.20 pm (10.20 GMT) over the Han River that runs through Seoul. Oh Soo-taek, 64, who said he has been coming to the festival with his wife for three years, found the place already crowded when they got there at 2 pm but said it was exciting to be part of an event bringing so many families and friends together.

"We had that big accident two years ago so it's so good to see the organizers and the police and everyone helping each other and keeping order." Many restaurants and hotel rooms on Yeouido island on the river and on its banks with a view of the fireworks by teams from Japan, South Korea and the United States had been booked days ahead. High-floor suites at one luxury hotel on Yeouido were sold out at more than 10 million won on Saturday, nearly double the normal rate, despite the less than perfect view of the fireworks they offered, a reservation official said. The event is hosted by the Hanwha conglomerate, which has grown from a dynamite maker to a global defence contractor, and its team participates in a fireworks performance as part of the festival. Authorities are taking no chances on security, as spectators poured into an area the size of several city blocks on and near Yeouido, the country's main financial centre and a dense commercial and residential district. Prime Minister Han Duck-soo has directed the police, emergency services and the safety and health ministries to be on full alert with a focus on crowd control and also asked for spectator cooperation to ensure order. — Reuters

in northern New Taipei city, bringing the typhoon's death toll to four, the National Fire Agency said without providing details.

Heavy rains triggered landslides in several districts of New Taipei and flooded streets, temporarily stranding dozens of students at their schools, officials said. The defense ministry said around 250 soldiers were dispatched on Friday to the city and nearby Keelung, which also reported landslides, to help clear roads and drain floodwater.

In Kaohsiung and neighboring Pingtung, about 1,500 soldiers were deployed for a second day to aid in typhoon relief work, according to the defense ministry. Taiwan is accustomed to frequent tropical storms from July to October, but scientists have warned climate change is increasing their intensity, leading to heavy rains, flash floods and strong gusts.

In July, Gaemi became the strongest typhoon to make landfall in Taiwan in eight years, killing at least 10 people, injuring hundreds and triggering widespread flooding in Kaohsiung. — AFP

## Two more found dead in Taiwan after typhoon

**TAIPEI:** Two people who went missing amid the destructive wind and torrential rains of Typhoon Krathon were found dead Saturday in Taiwan, doubling the death toll for the storm that lashed the island this week. Across the island, around 20,000 homes were still without power Saturday, mostly in the worst-hit southern seaport city of Kaohsiung, where the typhoon made landfall.

Krathon dissipated into a tropical depression on Friday after slamming into the island the day before, bringing mudslides, flooding and record-strong gusts. More than 700 people were injured.

On Saturday, two missing people were found dead



**ISLAMABAD:** Policemen fire tear gas shells to disperse supporters of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party during a protest in Islamabad on Oct 5, 2024. — AFP

## Pakistan capital at standstill as Khan supporters protest

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan's capital was locked down on Saturday, swarmed by security forces with mobile Internet cut as supporters of jailed ex-prime minister Imran Khan attempted to seize the streets in protest.

Khan was barred from standing in the February elections that were marred by allegations of rigging, sidelined by dozens of legal cases. But his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party has defied a crackdown to needle the government with regular demonstrations.

PTI activists began driving to Islamabad on Friday from his powerbase in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, but were met with shipping container roadblocks and volleys of tear gas.

On Saturday, small and scattered convoys pressed in on Islamabad in defiance of the government which approved troops for deployment on the streets — citing the need to guarantee security ahead of a Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit



**KAOHSIUNG, Taiwan:** Taiwanese military personnel clear fallen trees in the aftermath of Typhoon Krathon in Kaohsiung on October 4, 2024. — AFP

### News in Brief

#### Migrant van crashes in Croatia

**ZAGREB:** An overloaded van carrying migrants crashed Saturday in central Croatia, killing two people and injuring several others, police said. Officers spotted a "visibly overloaded van" with German numberplates in the small city of Novska and tailed it "without using audible or visual signals", a police statement said. After noticing the police, the driver accelerated and veered off the road. The van overturned, crashing into a house. The driver and a passenger died. — AFP

#### Honduras arrests murderer

**TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras:** Honduran authorities said Friday they had arrested the alleged murderer of an environmental activist whose death drew international condemnation. Juan Lopez, who campaigned against open-pit iron ore mining, was shot dead on September 14 after leaving church in the northeastern town of Tocoa. "We've captured the material author of the death of environmental activist Juan Lopez. An accomplice was also arrested," Security Minister Gustavo Sanchez wrote on social media platform X, without giving their identities. — AFP

#### Bolivian ex-ministers sentenced

**LA PAZ, Bolivia:** A Bolivian court sentenced two former ministers on Friday to eight years in prison for the irregular purchase of tear gas and riot equipment used to quell demonstrations launched by supporters of ex-president Evo Morales in late 2019. Bolivia's first Indigenous president, Morales was extremely popular after taking power in 2006 — until he tried to bypass the constitution and seek a fourth term in office in 2019. He won the vote but the right-wing opposition accused him of electoral fraud, and he was forced to resign amid huge and deadly protests and fled the country. — AFP

#### Mexican cartel violence kills 150

**CULIACÁN, Mexico:** A wave of violence in a Mexican cartel stronghold shaken by gang infighting has left around 150 people dead over the past month, according to the state prosecutor's office. They include five men whose bodies were found with gunshot wounds Thursday night on a main avenue in Culiacán, authorities said. A turf war broke out on September 9 between two factions of the Sinaloa Cartel, one of Mexico's most violent and powerful drug trafficking organizations. Some local police suspected of involvement have been disarmed by the military.

#### 'Serial killer' charged in Canada

**OTTAWA:** A woman described by police as a serial killer was arrested and charged on Friday with three murders this week in Toronto, Niagara Falls and another Canadian city. The grisly attacks spanned three days from Tuesday to Thursday. "She is a serial killer," Niagara Police Chief Bill Fordy told reporters when asked if the label was fitting. Sabrina Kauldhar, 30, was arrested at a suburban Toronto hotel after police linked the killings, determining the suspect's description matched in each case. — AFP

#### Chad sounds flood alarm

**N'DJAMENA, Chad:** Chad's authorities were on alert Friday after heavy rains swelled two major rivers, as the country struggles to recover from deadly floods that have already killed 503 people. The waters of the Chari river had risen by more than eight meters (26 feet) in the last 10 days or so, Prime Minister Allamaye Halina said. N'Djamena, Chad's capital, is located where the Logone and Chari rivers flow into each other, and both rivers had been swollen by the heavy rains, Halina said. — AFP

## Indian FM rules out bilateral talks at SCO summit in Pakistan

**MUMBAI:** India's foreign minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar will not discuss bilateral relations when he visits Pakistan this month, the first such visit in nearly a decade, for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit. "I expect there would be a lot of media interest because of the very nature of the relationship," Jaishankar said in response to a query at an event in New Delhi.

"But I do want to say it will be for a multilateral event. I am not going there to discuss India-Pakistan relations," he added.

On Friday, the Indian foreign ministry confirmed that Jaishankar will visit Pakistan to participate in the summit on Oct 15-16 but did not say if he would meet any Pakistani leaders on the sidelines. Relations between the two countries have gone through periods of thaw from time to time but have been largely frozen since they downgraded diplomatic ties in tit-for-tat moves in 2019. — Reuters

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2024



JINHUA, China: Employees work on an electric vehicle (EV) production line at the Leapmotor factory in Jinhua, China's eastern Zhejiang province. — AFP

# EU states greenlight extra tariffs on EVs from China

## Move despite strong German opposition and fears of a trade war with Beijing

**BRUSSELS:** EU countries gave a definitive green light on Friday to hefty additional tariffs on electric cars made in China, despite strong German opposition and fears it will trigger a trade war with Beijing.

The European Commission — which provisionally approved the step in June after an inquiry found that Beijing's state aid to auto manufacturers was unfair — now has free rein to impose steep tariffs for five years from end October. China has slammed the "protectionist" tariffs and promised retaliation, but talks on addressing the subsidy dispute will continue between the two sides despite Friday's vote.

Ten member states including France, Italy and Poland supported imposing the tariffs of up to 35.3 percent, coming on top of existing duties of 10 percent, several European diplomats told AFP. Only five including Germany and Hungary voted against while 12 abstained including Sweden and Spain. Madrid initially supported tariffs before reversing course to call on Brussels to "reconsider" its decision.

Although the tariffs did not win support from a majority of states, the opposition was not enough to block

them — which would have required at least 15 states representing 65 percent of the bloc's population. That leaves the choice on moving ahead in the hands of the European Commission — in charge of trade policy for the bloc — which said it had "obtained the necessary support for the adoption of tariffs".

After the vote, China's commerce ministry urged EU states to "return to the right track" by resolving trade frictions through dialogue. "China firmly opposes the EU's unfair, non-compliant and unreasonable protectionist practices in this case," it said in a statement shared by state broadcaster CCTV.

The EU duties have pitted France and Germany against each other, with Paris arguing they are necessary to level the playing field for EU carmakers against Chinese counterparts. Germany, renowned for its strong auto industry and its key manufacturers including BMW, Volkswagen and Mercedes heavily invested in China, urged the commission not to go ahead.

The vote's results demonstrate how the EU's biggest trade investigation in years has ruffled feathers, with the bloc's biggest economy vehemently against

the duties. "The EU Commission should not trigger a trade war despite the vote in favor" of the tariffs, German Finance Minister Christian Lindner said. "We need a negotiated solution." Berlin has strong arguments on its side: Beijing has threatened to hit back hard and has already opened probes into European brandy, dairy and pork products imported into China. "We will face all types of retaliation from China, that's for sure," one diplomat said. China tried in vain to stop the duties coming into force through dialogue, but talks have so far failed to produce an agreement that satisfies the EU. Any duties could be lifted later if China addresses the EU's concerns.

French and German automakers are likewise divided over the duties. German auto giant Volkswagen said they "are the wrong approach" while BMW said the vote was "a fatal signal for the European automotive industry". Both manufacturers urged more talks to prevent a trade conflict.

Meanwhile, US-French-Italian auto group Stellantis said it "takes note" of the vote, repeating its commitment to "free and fair competition", echoing similar

cautious comments made by the umbrella group, the European Automobile Manufacturers Association.

The extra duties also apply, at various rates, to vehicles made in China by foreign groups such as Tesla — which faces a tariff of 7.8 percent. Chinese car giant Geely — one of the country's largest sellers of EVs — said Friday's decision was "not constructive and may hinder EU-China economic and trade relations, ultimately harming European companies and consumer interests". Brussels says it aims to protect European carmakers in a critical industry that provides jobs to around 14 million people across the European Union but does not benefit from massive state subsidies like in China. Canada and the United States have in recent months imposed much higher tariffs of 100 percent on Chinese electric car imports. Trade tensions between China and the EU are not limited to electric cars, with Brussels also investigating Chinese subsidies for solar panels and wind turbines. The bloc faces a difficult task as it tries to foster its clean tech industry and invest in the green transition without sparking a painful trade war with China. — AFP



WASHINGTON: US Trade Representative Katherine Tai speaks during an interview at the Office of the US Trade Representative in Washington, DC on October 3, 2024. —AFP

## US trade chief defends stiff tariff hikes

**WASHINGTON:** US Trade Representative Katherine Tai defended stiff tariff hikes against countries like China, arguing that paired with investment, they were a "legitimate and constructive" tool for re-invigorating domestic industries.

Tai's comments to AFP come a week after sharp tariff increases on Chinese electric vehicles, EV batteries and solar cells took effect — with levies down the line on other products also recently finalized. The latest moves targeting \$18 billion in Chinese goods come weeks before November's US presidential election, with both Democrats and Republicans pushing a hard line on China as competition between Washington and Beijing intensifies.

In an interview Thursday looking back on her term, Tai defended the use of tariffs as a means "to counterbalance unfair trade" with China. The latest hikes, she added, aim to help US clean energy investments "take root." "We wanted to make sure that those increased areas are paired with the investments that we're making," Tai said, referring to efforts to build domestic industries like those for EVs, batteries and semiconductors. "Once you've lost an industry, bringing it back from the brink is much, much harder," she said. — AFP

## US hiring soars past expectations in sign of relief

**WASHINGTON:** Hiring in the United States picked up significantly more than expected in September while the jobless rate crept lower, according to government data released Friday, offering relief to policymakers ahead of November's election. The world's biggest economy added 254,000 jobs last month, the Department of Labor said. This was markedly higher than August's 159,000 number, which was revised upwards.

A consensus estimate by Dow Jones had expected growth of 150,000. The unemployment rate dipped from 4.2 percent to 4.1 percent, the report added. President Joe Biden lauded the job creation, adding in a statement that unemployment remains low and wages are growing faster than prices. But he stressed: "We



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

have more to do to lower costs and expand opportunity." The health of the job market has come into focus over recent months as high interest rates bite — but the pick-up in hiring should assuage some concerns that

months of the new government. Reeves and Starmer are mindful of how Britain's bond market was hit in 2022 by the plans for big, unfunded tax cuts of former Prime Minister Liz Truss which forced her to quit. Reeves said the Office for Budget Responsibility, which makes the forecasts that underpin the government's spending and tax plans, and the National Audit Office, a spending watchdog, would scrutinize her plans for public investment which would incentivize private investment too. "We will make sure that investment genuinely boosts growth and we will look at the role of institutions to demonstrate that, including, for instance, the NAO as well as the OBR," she told the FT.

Reeves said she hoped the implications of higher public investment over a longer period than the OBR's five-year forecasting period would be taken into account. The former Bank of England economist confirmed she planned to revise the government's fiscal debt rule to "take account of the benefits of investment, not just the costs," but declined to say how much extra spending those changes would allow.

She also said higher taxes were needed to avoid cuts to already stretched public finances that were implied by the plans of the previous Conservative government. "There won't be a return to austerity," she said. "The idea of this budget is to wipe the slate clean and make an honest assessment of spending pressures and tax as well," Reeves said. "The previous government was relying on a fiction. The budget is an opportunity to bring honesty to the public finances." — Reuters

the Federal Reserve waited too long to slash rates last month, risking a downturn. Economic issues are also among the most important for voters ahead of November's presidential election, as households grapple with higher costs of living after high inflation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Fed had rapidly hiked the benchmark lending rate in 2022 to ease demand and tamp down surging inflation. Price increases have eased in recent times, allowing the central bank to begin rate reductions. As for wages, average hourly earnings in September were up 0.4 percent from a month ago to \$35.36, slightly above expectations. From a year ago, wages have risen by 4.0 percent, the report noted. "The strong September jobs report confirms labor market conditions remain healthy, characterized by slower demand absorption rather than broad-based layoffs," said EY chief economist Gregory Daco. The Fed's half percentage point rate cut in September was "unusually large" according to Dan North, senior economist for Allianz Trade North America. "It's most likely that the Fed cut so much because it felt that it had fallen behind in its mission to balance employment and inflation," he told AFP. — AFP

## Sri Lanka okays controversial foreign debt deal

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka's new government has approved a controversial restructure of \$14.7 billion in foreign commercial credit tentatively agreed by its predecessor, the finance ministry said Saturday.

Former leader Ranil Wickremesinghe announced a deal with international sovereign bondholders and the China Development Bank just two days before he lost presidential elections last month.

The new leftist President Anura Kumara Dissanayake had called for better terms, but after two days of talks with an IMF delegation in Colombo, his government said it would honor his predecessor's deal.

"Sri Lankan authorities confirm their endorsement of... the agreement in principle terms as announced on September 19," the finance ministry said in a statement. The debt restructuring is a key International Monetary Fund demand to rebuild the island's economy, which suffered its worst crisis in 2022 when it shrank by 7.8 percent. In June, the government concluded a deal with its bilateral lenders to restructure its official credit amounting to \$6 billion. — AFP



## Business

# Gulf Bank awarded Best Bank in Marketing and Social Media Services by Global Finance for 2024

Award highlights bank's initiatives in engaging customers through innovative digital channels

- Najla Aleisa: A new global recognition for the bank's significant digital transformation and its ability to enhance the customer experience.
- Gulf Bank's call center has set a record response time for social media messages.
- We are dedicated to delivering exceptional services to our customers while promptly addressing their needs with the highest quality.

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has garnered prestigious awards in 2024, being recognized as the Best Bank in Marketing and Social Media Services by Global Finance magazine. This award highlights the bank's effective initiatives in engaging and communicating with customers through innovative digital channels.

Najla Aleisa, Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) of Gulf Bank, expressed her joy at receiving the award during a recent ceremony held in London. "This recognition highlights the significant digital transformation that Gulf Bank is undergoing across all areas," she remarked. "It showcases our ability to leverage social media to enhance the customer experience."

Gulf Bank is committed to providing exceptional services to its customers, meeting their needs promptly and efficiently through various channels, including branches, the mobile app, and social media channels. Aleisa emphasized the bank's reliance on social media as a key platform for delivering services, marketing products, and engaging with the community. Additionally, Aleisa noted the impressive improvements at Gulf Bank's call center, which has adopted advanced automated response technology. The average response time for customer calls is now under 20 seconds, with the call center managing over 5,000 calls each day.



Najla Aleisa receives the award during a grand ceremony held in London.



Best Digital Banking Award 2024

"Gulf Bank has prioritized social media for several years to align with customer expectations and deliver exceptional services," she added. "We have assembled a highly trained team committed to providing tailored support through text-based communication, efficiently addressing customer needs across multiple platforms."

The bank's call center has set a record response time for social media messages, averaging under three minutes - well below the global average of

around one hour. Aleisa noted that Gulf Bank's continuous efforts to engage with the community have resulted in a substantial increase in followers across its social media channels, reflecting the bank's commitment to transparency and open communication.

"We are committed to introducing new quality initiatives and fostering deeper relationships with our customers through year-round events and meaningful content shared on our social media platforms," Aleisa concluded.

## Wall St Week Ahead

## Investors look to earnings to support record stock prices

NEW YORK: A high-stakes corporate earnings season kicks into gear next week, with bullish investors hoping results will justify increasingly rich valuations in a US stock market near record highs.

The case for strong US economic growth got a boost on Friday, after labor market data came in far above expectations. The S&P 500 is up 20 percent year-to-date and stands near record highs despite recent tumult spurred by rising geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. A key test for the rally will arrive as corporate results begin rolling in next week. Companies need to post healthy profit growth and strong outlooks for next year to sustain valuations that have crept up in recent months: At 21.5 times future 12-month earnings estimates, the S&P 500 is trading near its highest level in three years and is well above its long-term average of 15.7, according to LSEG Datastream.

"One of the few rationales that the bulls can make for these lofty (valuation) multiples is that earnings growth keeps coming in at high levels," said Sameer Samana, senior global market strategist at Wells Fargo Investment Institute. "With prices having run up, you really do need that earnings growth to come in probably at much better than expected levels." S&P 500 earnings are expected to have climbed 4.7 percent in the third quarter from a year earlier, UBS equity strategists said in a report on Wednesday. However, earnings likely grew 8.5 percent when factoring in the historical rate of positive earnings surprises, the UBS strategists said. Such profit beats may be needed to fuel more gains in stocks. Since 2010, the S&P 500's total return has closely tracked the increase in company earnings and dividends, according to Jack Ablin, chief investment officer at Cresset Capital. But the index has run ahead since early 2023, and is now about 18 percent above expected levels, based on current earnings and dividends, Ablin found.

"The market's a little bit over its skis here," Ablin said. "It's certainly anticipating some pretty strong earnings and dividend growth." Data on US consumer prices due next week will give investors another snapshot of the economy. A stronger than expected number, on the heels of Friday's jobs data, could further curtail expectations for how much the Federal Reserve is expected to cut rates in coming months.

Futures tied to the fed funds rate on Friday showed pricing of a 50 basis point cut at the Fed's November meeting falling to 5 percent, from over 30 percent on Thursday, according to CME FedWatch.

Major financial firms highlight next week's earnings reports, with JP Morgan Chase, Wells Fargo and BlackRock due on Oct 11. Bank results offer an important view into the economy, including the state of delinquencies and loan demand, said Bryant VanCronkhite, senior portfolio manager at Allspring Global Investments.

More broadly, VanCronkhite will be looking for signs that the Fed's initial 50-basis point cut - delivered at its monetary policy meeting last month - is already having an effect on the economy through such channels as rising auto sales and other big ticket purchases. Ideally, such activity will be sustained even if expectations for further rate cuts fall further following Friday's strong jobs report.

Following the first rate cut, companies ideally will show leading demand indicators are strengthening, VanCronkhite said. "That would probably give me confidence that we're heading more towards that soft landing," he said. — Reuters

## US dockworkers return to ports after 3-day strike

NEW YORK: Thousands of dockworkers returned to work Friday, the day after a longshoremen's union reached a preliminary deal with shippers, ending a three-day strike weeks before the US presidential election. At the Port of Mobile in the Gulf Coast state of Alabama, terminal operator APM resumed operations at 7 am (1200 GMT), while the Port of Virginia in Norfolk said it will reopen Saturday, according to online postings.

At the giant Port of New York and New Jersey, the second-largest container port in the United States after Los Angeles and Long Beach, the Port Liberty terminal in Bayonne plans to resume work on Monday morning. "I do expect that by this time next week, we will have serviced all of the vessels that were delayed and that cargo will be flowing into the economy," Bethann Rooney, port director of New York and New Jersey, said at a briefing with reporters.

The staggered reopening covers US ports from Maine to Texas following Thursday night's preliminary agreement between the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) and the United States Maritime Alliance (USMX). Workers had walked out Tuesday morning with the expiration of their contract. The parties "reached a tentative agreement on wages and have agreed to extend the Master Contract until January 15, 2025," said a joint statement.

"Effective immediately, all current job actions will cease and all work covered by the Master Contract will resume." The strike was the first involving these ports since 1977.

Talks between the two sides had been dormant for months. But negotiations resumed Monday as the contract's expiration deadline approached. In recent days, Acting Labor Secretary Julie Su and other officials in President Joe Biden's administration urged the parties to hash out differences and called on USMX to boost its offer.

The stoppage involved some 45,000 workers at 36 facilities. The contract pertained only to 14 large ports, including New York/New Jersey, Philadelphia, Boston, Savannah, Miami and Houston. However, additional workers at ILA-represented facilities in the region joined the stoppage.

## Petrobras makes 'huge' gas find in Colombia

BOGOTÁ: Petroleum giant Petrobras announced Thursday the discovery of natural gas deposits in Colombia that could double the South American country's known reserves even as it seeks to transition away from hydrocarbons. The discovery, the largest since the 1990s, comes as Colombia faces pressure on its energy supplies, derived mainly from hydroelectric power, amid a severe drought impacting much of South America.

But it also coincides with a government drive

## UK finance industry calls on govt to axe extra bank taxes

LONDON: Britain's finance industry on Friday called on the new Labour government to phase out additional taxes on banks, warning that lenders in London face a higher total tax burden than in rival cities such as New York and Frankfurt. Bank trade body UK Finance made the call as part of its submission to the government ahead of Labour's first budget statement on Oct. 30.

Banks in Britain, which have seen profits surge thanks to higher interest rates, have intensified



BROOKLYN, US: A car leaves the Red Hook Terminal in Brooklyn on October 4, 2024. — AFP

The talks centered on wages and ILA efforts to prevent job loss due to automation. ILA leaders argued that a big wage hike was merited after dockworkers kept the economy running during the pandemic, boosting shipper profits. "The two sides have agreed to return to the bargaining table to negotiate all other outstanding issues," said the joint statement.

It did not offer terms of the deal, but The Wall Street Journal, citing sources close to the matter, said USMX had proposed a 62 percent salary increase over six years, allowing the deal to be reached.

The strike had loomed as a major potential political problem for Democrats heading into the presidential election. After the agreement, Biden praised both sides for working together to "ensure the availability of critical supplies for Hurricane Helene recovery and rebuilding," the White House said Thursday.

to stop extracting fossil fuels as it transitions to a low-carbon economy. The "huge discovery" of some six trillion cubic feet of natural gas "has the potential to double Colombia's reserves," Petrobras general manager for exploration, Rogerio Soares, said at an oil and gas summit in Cartagena in Colombia's north.

The deposits are comparable in size to those of the Cuchupa oil and gas field that has supplied gas to Colombia for the last 45 years. Brazil's Petrobras has a 44.4 percent stake in a gas exploration consortium in the Colombian Caribbean, with state company Ecopetrol holding the other 55.6 percent.

The announcement came just a day after the government of Colombia's first leftist president, Gustavo Petro, announced plans to seek \$40 billion in investment for its green energy transition plan.

Petro last year halted all new concessions for oil,

lobbying against possible tax hikes, amid concerns finance minister Rachel Reeves may tap the sector to boost public finances, industry sources previously told Reuters. The previous Conservative government trimmed a surcharge on bank corporation tax, but the lobby group wants it scrapped completely. "We strongly welcome the commitment to publish a roadmap for business taxation and believe that it should include a specific roadmap for banks, with a plan to phase out the bank corporation tax surcharge and the bank levy over time," UK Finance said. The lobby group also reiterated a long-held recommendation to abolish a 0.5% stamp duty charge imposed on UK share purchases to encourage more investment into Britain's struggling stock markets.

The Investment Association, a group representing fund managers, said in a separate report

But Biden acknowledged Friday that "there's more to do," referring to automation issues that still need to be ironed out by mid-January. "There's more to resolve," he said. Analysts had cautioned that, with the November 5 presidential election nearing, a lengthy strike could have posed a major headwind to the US economy, leading to shortages of some items and lifting costs at a time when inflation has been moderating.

Oxford Economics said it doesn't plan to update its economic forecast in light of the quick resolution of the strike. "The port strike ended fairly quickly, removing any significant downside risk to the economy this quarter," said the Oxford note. "It will take a little time" to work through any backlogs that developed, it said. "But any lost output that occurred during the strike will be made up through the remainder of this quarter, therefore no change to our forecast for Q4 GDP is needed." — AFP

coal and gas exploration towards Colombia's goal of becoming a net-zero emitter of greenhouse gases by 2050. The president's decision to shift away from fossil fuel extraction has caused controversy in the Latin American nation, where oil and gas account for 52 percent of exports. The opposition and some trade unions have called for a more gradual energy transition, arguing a radical shift could tip the economy into recession. According to figures from Naturgas, an association of production, transportation and distribution companies, Colombia will have a gas deficit equivalent to 7.5 percent of demand by 2025 and 16 percent by 2026.

To make up the shortfall, Colombia increased gas imports by 2,500 percent between 2022 and 2023. Natural gas accounts for 25 to 30 percent of national energy consumption, according to industry figures. — AFP

on Friday that the government should remove the stamp duty. The Labour Party has said it is reviewing the pensions system to look at ways to encourage more investment in the UK. Some analysts say stamp duty would have little impact on boosting demand for shares and that other factors including the decline of defined benefit pension schemes and the limited appeal of listed British companies have been bigger factors in weak demand for UK shares. Among its other recommendations, UK Finance repeated a call for technology, social media and telecoms companies to be compelled to help reimburse victims of fraud. Under new rules coming into effect this month banks and payments firms will be required to reimburse fraud victims by up to 85,000 pounds (\$111,945.00), rather than on a voluntary basis and at varying rates as currently. — Reuters

## Business

# NBK wins 9 prestigious awards from Global Finance magazine

## For second year in a row, NBK named 'Best in Innovation' globally

**KUWAIT:** In a new achievement underscoring its leadership and brand strength, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has won nine prestigious awards from Global Finance magazine. The accolades come in recognition of the bank's remarkable strides in innovation, digital transformation, and providing the best banking solutions catering to customers' needs and coping with the rapid technological advancement in the banking industry.

For the second consecutive year, Global Finance honored NBK's achievements by naming it "Best in Innovation - Global Winner" for 2024, outdoing conventional and Islamic banks. The bank also bagged 2 awards on the Middle East level and 6 awards locally, proving once again its supremacy in innovation and digitization. The awards were announced at the annual awarding ceremony "The World's Best Digital Banks 2024" held by Global Finance in London, and received by Mohamed Al-Othman, CEO - Consumer and Digital Banking Group, and Mohammad Al-Kharafi, COO - Head of Group Operations and Information Technology on behalf of NBK, in the presence of a number of prestigious economists and bankers from around the world.

### Monopolizing locally, leading regionally

Regionally, NBK was named "Best in Innovation - Middle East", and "Best Online Product Offerings - Middle East" Locally, NBK monopolized Global Finance awards, with 6 wins out of the 10 awards presented by the magazine to banks in Kuwait. In addition to "Best in Innovation - Kuwait" and "Best Online Product Offerings - Kuwait", the awards included: "Best Bill Payment and Presentation - Kuwait", "Best Mobile Banking App - Kuwait", "Best in



The Best Bank for Innovation

Lending - Kuwait", and "Best Information Security and Fraud Management -Kuwait" won by "Weyay", NBK's subsidiary digital bank.

These awards are a testament to the efforts made by NBK employees throughout a whole year to deliver a range of digital banking initiatives, services and solutions, which distinguished NBK as a global leader in innovation and digitalization, outdoing ma-



Mohamed Al-Othman and Mohammad Al-Kharafi receive the awards.

- The bank monopolized the awards locally with 6 wins out of the 10 awards presented by the magazine to Kuwaiti banks
- A new achievement reflecting the bank's leadership and brand strength
- NBK invested heavily in its technology infrastructure to foster digital transformation
- The new awards add to the bank's record of global achievements, reflecting its local and regional leadership



ajor global financial institutions.

These accolades from Global Finance are also an incentive for NBK to move forward in providing more innovative banking services by investing in technology, leveraging AI, Big Data and process automation,

capitalizing on NBK's huge technological infrastructure and innovation-friendly work environment.

NBK is keen on enhancing customer banking experience to keep pace with their changing needs. In this context, the NBK Mobile Banking App serves

as a user-friendly daily platform for different customers, encompassing a wide range of services and features that exemplify NBK's understanding of customers' needs and expectations. NBK has also worked on increasing payment solutions using cutting-edge technologies, in addition to introducing a variety of innovative products and cards catering to the needs of customers from different segments, ages, and lifestyles, which contributed to enriching their banking experience.

### Large investments

NBK firmly believes that digital transformation is an ongoing journey that requires more research, development, and keeping up with the latest technology. To this end, the bank made large investments in developing its technological infrastructure to support its goals on this level, which contributed significantly to providing market-leading products and services, and offering customers a banking experience that is the best locally and among the best regionally and globally. NBK has a long record of achievements and international awards that prove its excellence in the digital transformation. This reflects the bank's belief in the pivotal role played by the workforce in digital transformation and fostering continuous innovation.

NBK continues to strengthen its presence in key regional markets by offering digital banking services that cater to the needs of customers regardless of their geographical location, further solidifying its position as a highly trusted brand. Meanwhile, NBK continues to collectively enjoy one of the highest credit ratings among most major banks of the Middle East from the top three international credit rating agencies: Moody's, Fitch and Standard & Poor's. The bank's ratings are supported by its strong capitalization, prudent lending policies, disciplined approach to risk management, as well as its highly experienced and very stable management team. The bank also stands out with broad global geographical footprint, with branches and subsidiaries covering key regional and global financial and business capitals in China, Geneva, London, Paris, New York and Singapore, in addition to its regional presence in Lebanon, Egypt, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and the UAE.

Global Finance, founded in 1987 and headquartered in New York, is one of the most reputable magazines specialized in finance and economics. It has a circulation of 50,000 readers in 193 countries, including senior corporate and financial officers responsible for making investment and strategic decisions at multinational companies and financial institutions.

The magazine conducts various surveys annually about innovation and profitability for banks and financial institutions all over the world, based on which it selects top performers on the regional and international levels.

### List of awards won:

- Best in Innovation - Global Winner
- Best in Innovation - Kuwait
- Best in Innovation - Middle East
- Best Online Product Offerings - Kuwait
- Best Online Product Offerings - Middle East
- Best Bill Payment and Presentation - Kuwait
- Best Mobile Banking App - Kuwait
- Best in Lending - Kuwait
- Best Information Security and Fraud Management -Kuwait (Weyay)



Huge turnout to watch the contestants.



Part of the activities of the qualifiers.

## stc concludes its sponsorship of 2024 World Robot Olympiad

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced that it has concluded its sponsorship of the 2024 World Robot Olympiad (WRO) Kuwait qualifiers hosted by the World Robot Olympiad Association - an independent non-profit organization that promotes robotics in STEM education worldwide. stc's sponsorship of the tournament aligns with the Company's extensive corporate social responsibility framework with the objective of empowering the youth and providing them with platforms to explore their creativity, problem-solving, and technological skills.

As the Excellence Sponsor of the WRO, stc played a contributing role in supporting the youth foster innovation, creativity, and the ability to develop technological skillsets through a globally recognized platform. The event saw enthusiastic participation from young innovators, while families and supporters gathered to cheer on the teams as they worked together to build robots capable of meeting the competition's complex requirements. stc's role as a key sponsor helped provide these young minds with the opportunity to explore advanced technology, develop essential skills, and collaborate on impactful projects.

The WRO Kuwait qualifiers, with the theme this year being "Earth Allies", took place between October 2nd till the 3rd at the Ahmad Al-Jaber Oil & Gas Exhibition in Al-Ahmadi, welcoming teams from across Kuwait to compete for a chance to represent the country in the global finals that will be held in Turkey. The qualifiers consisted of two categories, the first titled "Robomission", where participants in groups of 2-3 were provided with Lego pieces to build and program a robot that solves challenges on a field. The second

category was titled "Future Innovators" and had participants in groups of 2-3 develop a robot project that helps solve real world problems.

The Company's involvement in the WRO is part of its ongoing commitment to cultivate a culture that relies on innovation and technology to solve some of the challenges of tomorrow. In a statement, stc expressed that the introduction of such platforms in the local community aligns with the Company's approach to enabling digital transformation in Kuwait. stc also highlighted that it will continue to collaborate with organizations, whether locally or internationally, to host programs and platforms that promote education, a key pillar under the Company's CSR program.

It is worth noting that the World Robot Olympiad is an international robotics competition that witnesses the participation of over 100 countries held for over 20 years. The competition provides a platform for young innovators to tackle real-world challenges through technology, inspiring them to apply their skills toward building a more sustainable and technologically advanced future.



Honoring the company by the organizing committee for the qualifying rounds.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2024

# Van Gogh's 'Starry Night' inspires Bosnian park



Photograph shows planted lavender bushes across the "Starry Night" park landscape, inspired by Van Gogh's work, near the central Bosnian town of Visoko. — AFP photos

**A** Vincent Van Gogh aficionado in Bosnia has turned a plot of land into a giant, living reproduction of the painter's masterpiece, "Starry Night", composed of thousands of plants. "Vincent Van Gogh belongs to us too. It's our heritage and this is a way of paying tribute to him," Halim Zukic told AFP.

Behind him, tens of thousands of lavender bushes, grasses and other plants form swirls and spirals across a dozen hectares that - seen from the air - unmistakably resemble the celestial configuration painted by the Dutch post-Impressionist master in 1889.

"It wasn't possible to simply reproduce a flat image on a three-dimensional space," Zukic said.

"Inspired by the painting, we tried to stick to the shapes and proportions, so that it looks like the painting as much as possible." And I think we succeeded."

The 56-year-old entrepreneur first noticed the land 20 years ago when he was returning from a day out picking mushrooms nearby, in the woods surrounding the village of Luznica in central Bosnia. He bought the first plot with the idea of building a hut and creating a small, rounded garden. At the time, he wasn't even thinking about "Starry Night", one of the favorite landscapes in New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).

But the idea just clicked in 2018 when Zukic noticed the tracks left on the lawn by a tractor. "To my eyes, these tracks looked like spirals from "Starry Night" and it was an immediate decision."

## 130,000 lavender plants

The former insurance company owner, who now works in tourism,



Rose bushes at the "Starry Night" park landscape, inspired by Van Gogh's work.

bought more land and started working it, helped daily by up to 20-30 gardeners. He declined to say what it cost to complete his labor of love, which took six years to acquire its final shape. "We planted around 130,000 lavender bushes, tens of thousands of aromatic and medicinal plants, several thousand trees," he said.

"There isn't a single straight line in the park - just like in nature." At the same time, Zukic became interested in Van Gogh, about whom he knew very little at the time. Today, Zukic talks animatedly about the painter, his "love of nature" and the "passion with which he did his work".

In 2023, he travelled to France to visit the places where Van Gogh spent



Halim Zukic, 56, owner and creator of the "Starry Night" park poses in the park.

some of his most prolific years - Arles and Saint-Remy-en-Provence.

The artist painted "Starry Night" in June 1889 while he was in a Saint Remy psychiatric hospital.

A year later, he committed suicide, aged 37.

For the time being, only a handful of visitors have had the chance to appreciate Zukic's park. The plants and trees still need time to flourish so the public will need a few more months of patience, he said. "Having money is not enough. You need time for a park," he said. "I'd say we've created a good foundation. The park will be more beautiful every year." — AFP



Black swans and ducks swim on an artificial lake in "Starry Night" park.



A general view of the "Starry Night" park landscape.



This aerial photograph shows the "Starry Night" park.

## Scientists unlock secret of 'Girl with Pearl Earring'

Johannes Vermeer's "Girl With The Pearl Earring" is one of the world's most popular paintings - and now scientists believe they know why, by measuring how the brain reacts when the work is viewed. The Mauritshuis museum in The Hague, which houses the 17th century masterpiece, commissioned neuroscientists to measure brain output when viewing the portrait and other well-known works. They discovered that the viewer is held captive by a special neurological phenomenon they called "Sustained Attentional Loop", which they believe is unique to the "Girl With The Pearl Earring".

The viewer's eye is automatically drawn first to the girl's own eye, then down to her mouth, then across to the pearl, then back to the eye - and so it continues.

This makes you look at the painting longer than others, explained Martin de Mun-

nik, from research company Neurensics that carried out the study.

"You have to pay attention whether you want to or not. You have to love her whether you want to or not," he said.

By measuring brainwaves, the scientists also discovered the precuneus, the part of the brain governing consciousness and personal identity, was the most stimulated. "It was predictable that the Girl was special. But the 'why' was also a surprise to us," said De Munnik. He said it was the first known study to use EEG and MRI brain scanning machines to measure the neurological response to artwork. "The longer you look at somebody, the more beautiful or more attractive somebody becomes," he noted, which also explains the popularity of the Dutch master's subject.

"Why are you familiar with this painting and not with the other paintings? Because of this special thing she has."

### 'The brain doesn't lie'

The scientists also compared the neurological response when looking at the genuine painting in the museum versus being confronted with a reproduction.

They found the emotional reaction experi-

enced by the viewer was ten times stronger for an original than a poster.

To carry out the tests, scientists attached an eye tracker and cap to track brainwaves on 10 subjects that were shown the real paintings but also reproductions. It shows the importance of seeing original art, said Mauritshuis Director Martine Gosselink.

"It's so important to engage with art, whether it's photography, or dance, or old masters from the 17th century," the director, 55, told AFP in an interview. "It is important, and it really helps to develop your brain... The brain doesn't lie," she added. Vermeer often drew the focus onto one spot in his works, with the surrounding details more blurred, she explained. However, the "Girl With The Pearl Earring" has three such focal points - the eye, mouth, and pearl - and Gosselink said this set the work apart from other Vermeer paintings.

"Here we see somebody really looking at you, whereas all other paintings by Vermeer, you see someone writing or doing some needlework, or a person busy doing something," she said. "But that's the big difference with this girl. She's watching you."

De Munnik, 65, said it would be interest-



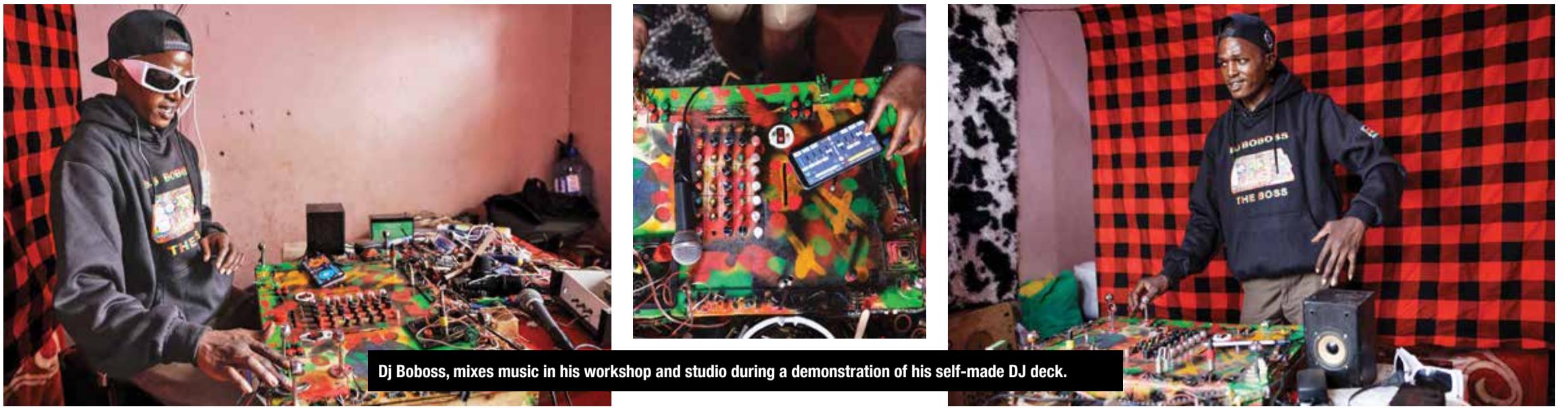
Visitors look at the Johannes Vermeer's painting "Girl with a Pearl Earring" at the Frick Collection in New York, on October 21, 2013. — AFP

ing to carry out similar studies on other famous paintings, such as Da Vinci's Mona Lisa for example.

Mauritshuis director Gosselink alluded to a friendly rivalry between the two great works.

"People sometimes call (The Girl With The Pearl Earring) the Mona Lisa of the North, but I think times are changing, so maybe the Mona Lisa is the Girl of the South," she joked. — AFP

## Lifestyle



DJ Boboss, mixes music in his workshop and studio during a demonstration of his self-made DJ deck.

## Spoon scratching: Kenya's DIY DJ

A spoon, some towel hooks, a piece of kettle and a plastic cap - that's all you'll need to make a mixing deck if you have the technical and musical skills of DJ Boboss. The 27-year-old - real name Paul Mwangi - has been building up a fanbase online and on the streets of Kenya with the one-of-a-kind deck that he put together himself. It has even earned him slots at Uganda's Nyege Nyege festival, the largest in east Africa, and on the world-renowned club website Boiler Room.

But his favorite venue is Nairobi's bustling business district, where he set up on a recent Saturday among the stands of miraa (khat) vendors, the smell of grilled corn and the horns of matatus, the colorful minibuses of the Kenyan capital. In a few minutes, dozens of curious onlookers had gathered, taking out their phones to film the amazing machine that spits out reggae hits.

The mixing desk consists of a spray-painted wooden board on which are screwed towel racks, switches and printed circuits connected in a tangle of cables - all connected to an amp, speaker, and car battery. He scratches



People gather to follow the performance of 27-year-old Paul Mwangi, also known as DJ Boboss, on his self-made DJ deck in downtown Nairobi. — AFP photos

using a slider made from a magnetized spoon between two towel hooks, and his fader is cobbled together from a plastic bottle cap. Fixes are done without breaking the flow - at one point, DJ Boboss whips out a screwdriver, strips a wire with his teeth and repairs a fault while the music keeps playing.

## 'Make my own'

"I've never seen anything like that in the world," smiled David Meshack, who works in a nearby electronics store that sells professional turntables.

"One day, a customer came in with a photo of it. He wanted the same one but I didn't know what it was," he said.

"Today, I see it!" Boboss is an acronym for "Be your own boss" and Mwangi got his start repairing radios.

"My dad bought me a radio. After some time it stopped 'talking' and he said he wouldn't buy another one. I was stressed because I was addicted to music and listening to radio, so I just opened it using a knife," he said.

Soon he was repairing electronic devices in his village near Meru in central Kenya. Then one day he saw a DJ in a bar and was inspired. "I loved how he played music and the way the crowd reacted. I didn't have the money to buy real equipment but I said I could make my own with the available resources."

Mwangi moved to the capital and now makes a living from his DJing and occasionally selling specially-commissioned turntables. His favorite venue is the street, especially in the business district or at Gikomba, the largest second-hand clothing market in the country.

"Street shows is a special feeling, you have a contact with the people. Many people have never seen a DJ mixing live," he said. Among the onlookers, 48-year-old ex-soldier Zachary Mibei said he loved how Mwangi illustrates the



DJ Boboss, performs a set on his self-made DJ deck for members of the public in downtown Nairobi.

situation for young people in Kenya. "He has no training, it's all homemade, he is showing that he has something in him. He is telling us: 'I can do it by myself'," said Mibei.

Boboss admits it is probably time for a more advanced turntable with a few extra functions, but does not plan to part with the one which has made him famous. "We could combine both and see what we can do with them," he smiled. — AFP



California physician Mark Chavez exits federal court in Los Angeles. — AFP

## Doctor who provided Matthew Perry's drugs pleads guilty

One of two doctors charged in connection with the drug overdose death of "Friends" star Matthew Perry pleaded guilty in a US court. Mark Chavez, 54, faces up to 10 years in prison after admitting to conspiring to distribute ketamine in the weeks before the actor was found dead in the pool of his Los Angeles home.

Appearing before US District Judge Sherilyn Peace Garnett in a Los Angeles court, the bespectacled Chavez answered a series of questions before entering his plea of "Guilty, your honor."

Perry's lengthy struggles with substance addiction were well-documented, but his death in October 2023 sent shockwaves through the global legions of "Friends" fans. A criminal investigation was launched soon after an autopsy discovered the actor had high levels of ketamine - an anesthetic - in his system. Two others caught in the dragnet - a live-in assistant and an acquaintance - have already pleaded guilty to their charges.

Another doctor - Salvador Plasencia - allegedly bought ketamine off Chavez and sold it to the desperate star at hugely inflated prices, musing "I wonder how much this moron will pay."

Jasveen Sangha, the alleged "Ketamine Queen" who supplied drugs to high-end clients and celebrities, is charged with selling Perry the dose that killed him. Both Plasencia and Sangha face one count of conspiracy to distribute ketamine, as well as a raft of other charges, which they have denied.

Their trials have been set for March, and both face lengthy prison terms if found guilty. Chavez admitted in his plea agreement to selling ketamine to Plasencia, including doses that he had diverted from his former ketamine clinic. He was released on \$50,000 bail on Wednesday and ordered not to practice medicine. He is expected to be sentenced in April.

Perry played Chandler Bing on the hit TV sitcom from 1994 to 2004 and talked openly of his decades-long battles with addiction. He had been taking ketamine, a controlled drug, as part of supervised therapy. — AFP

## Country star Garth Brooks denies rape accusations

Garth Brooks has denied rape accusations against him as he returned to his Las Vegas concert residency in the wake of a sexual misconduct lawsuit filed against the country star.

In a statement to People magazine, the 62-year-old dismissed the allegations, in which a former employee accuses Brooks of rape and repeated unwanted sexual advances, including exposing himself and groping.

"I have been hassled to no end with threats, lies, and tragic tales of what my future would be if I did not write a cheque for many millions of dollars,"

"that he was unwilling to pay millions is simply not true." "It seems as though Sean Combs and Garth Brooks are using the same public relations team by attacking legitimate victims.

"We are very confident in our case and over time the public will see his true character rather than his highly curated persona." The lawsuit against Brooks is the latest leveled against a music star after more than 100 people filed suit against rapper and music mogul Sean "Diddy" Combs, alleging he subjected them to sexual abuse, on top of the federal racketeering and sex trafficking charges he is already facing.

Wigdor also represents Cassie, the artist who was in a long-term relationship with Combs and whose initial sexual assault lawsuit against him triggered a spate of other allegations against him from others.

The suit against Brooks, which demands unspecified damages, says the accuser was so traumatized by an attack in May 2019 that she later considered suicide. "Brooks appeared in the doorway to the bedroom, completely naked," details the suit of the alleged assault.

"He stood there and flexed his muscles. (She) immediately had a sick feeling in her stomach, knowing she was trapped in the room alone with Brooks, with no one to help."

In an Instagram post centered on his Thursday concert, Brooks wrote that "If there was ever a night that I really needed this, TONIGHT was that night!" alongside an image of The Colosseum at Caesars Palace where he's set to continue a residency through early 2025. Brooks surged to international fame in the 1990s, with hits including "Friends in Low Places" and "The Dance." In 2015, he topped Elvis Presley for the highest number of albums sold by a male artist. — AFP



Garth Brooks attends the 17th Academy Of Country Music Honors at Ryman Auditorium. — AFP

Brooks said, adding his team had filed suit against the woman for extortion and defamation. "It has been like having a loaded gun waved in my face," he said. "I trust the system, I do not fear the truth, and I am not the man they have painted me to be."

The accuser's attorney Douglas Wigdor said in a statement sent to AFP on Friday that Brooks's suggestion



Actor, director and screenwriter Michel Blanc poses with the Best Actor prize he shared with Bob Hoskins for their respective roles in "Tenue de soirée" by Bertrand Blier and "Mona Lisa" by Neil Jordan on May 19, 1986 at the 39th Cannes International Film Festival in Cannes.

## French cinema's beloved 'worried clown' Michel Blanc dies

France on Friday mourned actor, Michel Blanc beloved by generations for bringing a comic quality to even his saddest characters including losers and hypochondriacs. Blanc died early Friday, aged 72, his family told AFP.

"He made us cry with laughter, and moved us to tears," President Emmanuel Macron said of Blanc, calling him "a monument of French cinema." Blanc is most remembered for his breakthrough role in "French Fried Vacation" ("Les Bronzes"), a 1978 comedy about holidaymakers trying to escape their everyday problems and looking for romance at a holiday resort in Ivory Coast.

Blanc's character, Jean-Claude Dusse, is an awkward bachelor and bad harmonica player with an orange belt in karate who hopes to seduce women but can't pull it off. "He was a fabulous actor who made us laugh," Prime Minister Michel Barnier said, adding that news of Blanc's death had made him "very emotional and very sad."

Blanc's trademark bald head and mustache appeared in several other comedies, but he also feared, after French Fried Vacation got two sequels,

that he would be typecast as the lovable deadbeat forever. "It was clear that the Jean-Claude Dusse role suited me," he told Paris Match magazine this year. But, he added, "I got scared very fast that it would stick to me my whole life."

Blanc branched out into serious film roles, theatre, screen-writing and directing, and became one of only a few people to win both an acting award and a screenplay award at the Cannes Film Festival. "He was the sickly French guy that you just can't keep down," said Gilles Jacob, the Cannes Festival's former president, adding he hoped that Blanc's popular successes would not make the public forget his serious work, such as the acclaimed and haunting "Monsieur Hire" (1989).

Blanc, who was sometimes called a "sad clown" in media, said the description missed the mark. "I'm not a sad clown at all, I'm a worried clown" he told French culture magazine Telerama.

"And who isn't worried? What is the human condition? It is not knowing why we are here, and not knowing how we will die," he said. — AFP

## Cuban music legend Omara Portuondo retires aged 93

Cuban music legend Omara Portuondo of the wildly popular Buena Vista Social Club ensemble will retire from singing at the age of 93, her son announced. Portuondo showed "signs of fatigue and disorientation" at a concert Wednesday in Barcelona, and had to be taken off stage, her son and agent Ariel Jimenez Portuondo said in a post on the artist's Facebook page.

"We consider it appropriate to announce the definitive withdrawal of Omara from the stage," with her last appearance in Budapest on Sunday, he wrote. She will not perform but will

make an appearance to "receive the love and applause" of her fans.

Portuondo thanked followers for their concerns for his mother's health, adding she was "well, under the care and supervision of her personal doctor." With her flowing gowns, arched eyebrows and colorful turbans, Omara Portuondo encapsulated the bygone glamor of the Cuban capital Havana, where she started out aged 15 as a dancer in the famous Tropicana cabaret.

She was well into her sixties when she joined a group of older Cuban mu-

sic stars, including singer Ibrahim Ferrer and pianist Ruben Gonzales, who were coaxed out of semi-retirement to make an album. The record they made in just six days with American guitarist Ry Cooder became one of the best-selling world music albums of all time. It also won a Grammy.

In the Facebook note, her son said that due to "her age and health conditions" she had no longer been able to give extensive concerts. But "to deprive her of the possibility of singing, as long as she has spirit, vocal conditions and strength, would be to condemn her

to sadness. The meeting with the public, the applause and the songs keep her alive and in good spirits."

Her physical fitness for performance had been consistently monitored, he added. Known for her velvety voice, Portuondo had embraced a wide variety of Cuban music styles from bolero, filin (feeling), danzon and jazz to son and guaracha. In 2009 she won a Latin Grammy for her album "Gracias" followed by another in 2023, at the age of 93, for the album "Vida." — AFP

Lifestyle



A bronze figurine of Serapis (Roman period, 2nd Century, underwater discovery, 2004).



A large lion protome lamp (Roman period, underwater discovery, 2004).



A man walks past the entrance of the Art and History Museum hosting the exhibition on protection of cultural property in case of conflict entitled "Heritage in Peril" in Geneva.



A mosaic pavement (Byzantine period, 579 AD) collected in 1997 from the site of a vanished Byzantine church in Deir-el-Balah.

# GAZA CULTURAL HERITAGE brought to light in Geneva

Archaeological treasures from the Gaza Strip are going on display in Geneva, with the Swiss city protecting the heritage of a territory devastated by a year of war. Amphoras, statuettes, vases, oil lamps and figurines are among the 44 objects unearthed in Gaza going on show in the "Patrimony in Peril" exhibition at the Museum of Art and History (MAH).

"It's a part of Gaza's soul. Its identity, even," Beatrice Blandin, the exhibition's curator, told AFP. "Heritage is really the history of this strip of land, the history of the people who live there."

The artefacts are from a collection of more than 530 objects that have been stored in crates in a secure warehouse in Geneva since 2007, unable to return to Gaza.

The exhibition, which runs from Saturday until February 9, also includes artefacts from Sudan, Syria and Libya.

It was staged to mark the 70th anniversary of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

The exhibition looks at the responsibility of museums in saving such property from damage, looting and conflict, reminding visitors that deliberately destroying heritage is a war crime.

### Cultural damage in Gaza

"The forces of obscurantism understand that cultural property is what is at stake for civilization, because they have never stopped wanting to destroy this heritage, as in Mosul," said Geneva city councillor Alfonso Gomez - a reference to the northern Iraqi city captured by the Islamic State jihadist



A visitor walks past a lintel in two fragments (Mamluk period, 13th-15th century) discovered in 1995 in the Zeytoun district in Gaza City.

group in 2014. MAH director Marc-Olivier Wahler told AFP: "Unfortunately, in the event of conflict, many aggressors attack cultural heritage because it is obviously erasing the identity of a people, erasing its history."

Thankfully, "there are museums, rules and conventions that protect this heritage". Since the Zionist entity's offensive in Gaza began following the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas, cultural sites in the Palestinian territory have paid a heavy price, says the United Nations' cultural organization.

UNESCO has verified damage to 69 sites: 10 religious sites, 43 buildings of historical and/or artistic interest, two depositories of movable cultural property, six monuments, one museum and

seven archaeological sites.

### Stuck in Swiss warehouse

At a time when Palestinian cultural heritage is "the victim of unprecedented destruction, the patrimonial value of the Gazan objects held in Geneva seems greater than ever", said the MAH. Some of the objects belonged to the Palestinian Authority. The rest belonged to the Palestinian entrepreneur Jawdat Khoudary, but he later gave ownership of them to the PA in 2018.

These artefacts, evoking daily, civil and religious life from the Bronze Age to the Ottoman era, arrived in Geneva in 2006 to be shown at the "Gaza at the Crossroads of Civilizations" exhibition, inaugurated by Palestinian president

Mahmud Abbas.

They had been meant to form the foundation of an archaeological museum to be built in Gaza. Instead, they were stuck in Geneva for 17 years, the conditions for their safe return having never been met.

### Saved by circumstances

"At the time when the objects were due to leave, Hamas took over the Gaza Strip and there were geopolitical tensions between Palestine and (the Zionist entity)," said Blandin.

This "coincidence of circumstances," she said, ultimately saved the artefacts: the rest of Khoudary's private collection, which remained in Gaza, has been "totally destroyed" since October 7 last year. Following a new cooperation agreement signed last September between the Palestinian Authority and Geneva, the Swiss city has committed to looking after the artefacts for as long as necessary.

The MAH also served as a refuge, in 1939 when the Spanish Republicans evacuated by train the greatest treasures from the Museo del Prado in Madrid and several other major collections. And last year, Geneva hosted an exhibition of Ukrainian works of art.

According to the Swiss Museums Association, Switzerland, along with counterparts in other countries, has also been able to help more than 200 museums in Ukraine preserve their collections after Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. — AFP



A mosaic pavement (Byzantine period, 579 AD) collected in 1997 from the site of a vanished Byzantine church in Deir-el-Balah in the Gaza Strip, displayed during an exhibition on the protection of cultural property in case of conflict entitled "Heritage in Peril", at the Art and History Museum in Geneva on October 3, 2024. — AFP photos



The Blue Shield symbol used to signify cultural sites protected by the 1954 Hague Convention for the protection of cultural property in armed conflict during an exhibition on protection of cultural property.



Boxes of artefacts from Gaza Strip originally kept in a secure hangar in Geneva since 2007, during an exhibition on protection of cultural property in case of conflict entitled "Heritage in Peril".

## South Korean cult-horror series 'Hellbound' returns at BIFF

Netflix's Korean cult-horror thriller "Hellbound" returned for its much anticipated second season with a world premiere at Busan International Film Festival, showcasing intense performances from the new cast members, particularly Moon Geun-young.

Created by Yeon Sang-ho, known for zombie flick "Train to Busan", the first season of "Hellbound" achieved critical and commercial success with its portrayal of a world where supernatural beings suddenly appear to tell people of their impending death, followed by monstrous entities that drag the condemned to hell.

Yeon, whose early works included a dark animated film about a Korean cult organization, elevates the dystopian thriller into a more philosophical realm in its second season, while still delivering the spectacle of creatures, violence, and collective religious hysteria.

"I believe that the concept of disaster in the work 'Hellbound' refers more to a mental or ideological catastrophe than to a physical disaster," director Yeon said at a BIFF event late Friday.

The show had to let go of actor Yoo Ah-in, who played a key character in season one, after he was charged with illegal drug use. Yoo was subsequently found guilty.

Kim Sung-cheol takes on the role of the charismatic leader of a cult that arose amid the horrific supernatural deaths that triggered a wave of social media frenzy, delivering a convincing portrayal of this intricate character.

But the most captivating - and gut-wrenching - performance of the second season arguably belongs to Moon Geun-young, a much beloved former teen actress in South Korea, who portrays a young wife gradually transforming into a deranged cult fanatic.

Yeon said he decided to cast Moon after seeing her in a 2021 TV drama where she portrayed a tormented wife who succumbs to alcoholism while caring for her alcoholic husband.

Moon did not attend this year's BIFF, but fellow cast member Kim Hyun-joo said: "Moon Geun-young made a tremendous contribution. I already knew (she was immensely talented), but I was pleasantly surprised and delighted by her performance."

### 'Living in hell'

The series was featured at BIFF in its big-screen theatres, even as the festival faces criticism from cinephiles for selecting a streaming title, "Uprising", also from Netflix, as its opening film this year.

Cineastes blame OTT streaming platforms for some of the challenges encountered by the traditional theatre market and independent filmmakers.

"BIFF has been a key player in showcasing fresh Asian films by young, emerging talents in the region, and this has been their priority," Kay Heeyoung Kim, owner of the film studio K-Dragon, told AFP.

"But the lines between traditional independent cinema and big-budget streaming titles have blurred at this year's festival, which is unfortunate to see."

Yeon, who began his career as an independent animated filmmaker, along with his work "Hellbound," is credited with increasing the global visibility of South Korean content in recent years, alongside works like "Squid Game" and "Pachinko."

His works have explored human struggles, apocalyptic worlds, and religion, and Yeon brings the theme of resurrection to the second season of "Hellbound," as the "sinners" begin to return after their visits to hell.

"I think hell is not just an afterlife destination," said actress Kim about the second season's themes.

"Depending on your choices in life, you can find yourself living in hell while still being alive." — AFP

## Sports

## South Africa crush Ireland

## Stubbs hits maiden ODI century

ABU DHABI: Tristan Stubbs smashed a maiden one-day international century as South Africa routed Ireland by 174 runs to clinch their three-match series with a game to spare on Friday. The 24-year-old Stubbs made an undefeated 112 off 81 balls with eight fours and three sixes as the Proteas piled up 343-4 in their 50 overs. In reply, Ireland were dismissed for 169 with almost 20 overs left as they suffered a second successive heavy defeat after losing by 139 runs in the opener on Wednesday. Stubbs made 79 in that match and was merciless again on Friday, reaching three fig-

ures from 75 deliveries as the Irish attack wilted despite using seven bowlers.

Stubbs shared a 103-run partnership for the third wicket with the recalled Kyle Verreynne and 92 for the fourth wicket with Wiaan Mulder. Verreynne made 67 from 64 balls with Mulder speeding to 43 off 34 deliveries while at the top of the order Ryan Rickelton hit 40 to add to his 91 from the opening fixture. "I thought the first game, myself and 'Ricks' got out back to back. Today I didn't want that to happen," explained Stubbs. "That was the big focus. I thought they bowled quite well.

They made us hit to the big side. We were rotating nicely and that helped us get the runs."

The only cloud for the Proteas was seeing skipper Temba Bavuma forced to retire with an elbow injury sustained as he scrambled to avoid a run out. Opening batsman Bavuma was on 35 when he was forced to call it quits and he stayed off the field when Ireland batted with Rassie van der Dussen taking charge. "I think I aggravated an old injury on my elbow. We will get to know in the next few days. Right now, I am at the mercy of the doctors," said Bavuma.

Ireland's reply got off to the worst possible start with openers Andy Balbirnie (one) and captain Paul Stirling (five) back in the pavilion by the end of the third over with just seven runs on the board. The Proteas made regular inroads before tailenders Craig Young (29 not out) and Graham Hume (21) put on an entertaining last-wicket partnership of 52. South Africa fast bowler Lizaad Williams, who claimed a career-best 4-32 on Wednesday, took 3-36 from five overs. "It was a tough day at the office," said Stirling. The three-game series concludes at the same Abu Dhabi venue on Monday. — AFP

## S Africa, NZ win big in Women's T20 WCup

DUBAI: Captains Laura Wolvaardt and Sophie Devine hit unbeaten half-centuries to lead their teams South Africa and New Zealand to thumping wins in the Women's T20 World Cup on Friday. South Africa hammered the West Indies by 10 wickets with Wolvaardt and Tazmin Brits chasing down their victory target of 119 with 13 balls to spare. Left-arm spinner Nonkululeko Mlaba returned figures of 4-29 to restrict West Indies to 118-6 in Dubai. Later at the same venue, New Zealand's Devine steered her team to 160-4 after she elected to bat first.

Medium-pace bowlers Rosemary Mair and Lea Tahuu shared seven wickets between to bowl out India for 102 in 19 overs - victory by 58 runs - to end New Zealand's 10-match losing streak. "People have been speaking about our recent results, coming out against a world-class side like India, to produce that performance I'm overwhelmed," said player of the match Devine.

"We've been targeting this game for a long time. To come out and lay a marker (is great), but we've got a long way to go in the tournament." New Zealand started strongly with a brisk opening stand of 67 between Suzie Bates, who made 27, and Georgia Plimmer, who hit 34. Controversy erupted when skipper Harmanpreet Kaur ran out Amelia Kerr with a throw from the deep to the wicketkeeper, who whipped the balls off, but the umpire called the batter back due to the ball being 'dead'.

Kaur remained unhappy and had a long discussion with the umpires before grudgingly getting back to the game but the break seemed to have affected Kerr, who was caught out two balls later in the next over. Devine stood firm and took the attack to the opposition with regular boundaries and reached her fifty with a four as New Zealand finished with 37 runs off the last three overs. India were never in the chase after they lost openers Shafali Verma, for two, and Smriti Mandhana, for 12, inside the first five overs - both batters falling to Eden Carson's off-spin. Mair sent back Kaur trapped lbw for 15 to further dent the chase and finally finished off the match with two successive strikes to return figures of 4-19.

In the first match of the day, Wolvaardt, who hit 59, was tested early in her knock by the West Indies bowlers but once she found her rhythm, the right-handed opener reached her 50 in 45 balls. "Not that easy," Wolvaardt said of her performance in the extreme heat of Dubai. "One of the harder knocks I have had physically, especially after fielding first." — AFP

## Djokovic 'shakes rust off' to make third round

SHANGHAI: Novak Djokovic said it took time to "get the rust off" as he fought through two tiebreaks to make his way into the third round of the Shanghai Masters on Saturday. The Serbian beat American Alex Michelsen in a thrilling two-set match that finished 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (11/9). Four-time Shanghai champion Djokovic did not have it quite so easy against 43rd ranked Michelsen. Introduced as the "Greatest Of All Time" as he walked onto the court, he received a rapturous welcome from the packed stadium.

But Michelsen started the first set strongly, breaking Djokovic early and going 1-4 up—to the displeasure of the crowd, fully behind the 37-year-old former world number one. To their delight, the Serbian leveled, and then hit his stride in the tiebreak, winning it 7-3. The reverse happened in the second set when it was 20-year-old Michelsen's turn to catch up to take it to the tiebreak.

Djokovic admitted to being "surprised" by Michelsen. "It took me a little bit of time to get the rust off and to start feeling better on the court," he said. "I was very glad to keep calm when it mattered in both tiebreaks." The crowd, already in a frenzy after Djokovic spoke Mandarin at the end of the match, went wild as he showed off a new trick — a sentence in the Shanghaiese vernacular.

The tournament lost its second top-ten player on Saturday, as Andrey Rublev fell to 19-year-old Czech Jakub Mensik, joining Norwegian Casper Ruud on the notable casualties list. The Russian, a finalist at last year's Shanghai Masters, roared in jubilation after winning a tiebreaker to take the first set. But 65th-ranked Mensik broke Rublev in the first game of the second set, and again in the fifth to draw even. The Czech then came from behind in the third to beat the world number six for the second time this year, with a final score of 6-7 (7/9), 6-4, 6-3. — AFP

## Alcaraz, Sinner breeze into third round of Shanghai Masters

SHANGHAI: Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz showed why they were top in the world at the Shanghai Masters on Saturday, as they raced into the third round with confident straight-sets wins. Sinner dispatched Japan's Taro Daniel 6-1, 6-4, while earlier in the day Alcaraz made short work of China's Shang Juncheng, winning 6-2, 6-2. Sinner has said he is not in a "comfortable" situation thanks to a World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) appeal against a decision by tennis authorities to clear him of wrongdoing after he twice tested positive for a steroid in March. His recent blistering winning streak was broken by Alcaraz in the China Open final on Wednesday.

But there was no tiredness on display from either player on Saturday, with 23-year-old Sinner looking completely unruffled in the first set against the 93rd-ranked Daniel. Daniel fell behind again in the second and despite rallying halfway through to gently test Sinner, the Italian kept his cool, ending the set 6-4. "I had only one practice session yesterday but I felt very comfortable on the court," he said after the match. "Today's performance means a lot to me."

## Muchova beats Sabalenka, faces home hero Zheng

BEIJING: Karolina Muchova ended top seed Aryna Sabalenka's 15-match winning run on Friday to set up a China Open semi-final against Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen. The unseeded Muchova beat the world number two 7-6 (7/5), 2-6, 6-4 in Beijing and said: "Tennis is a roller-coaster." In another topsy-turvy quarter-final, home hero Zheng fought back to defeat Mirra Andreeva 5-7, 6-0, 6-4, with the 17-year-old Russian reduced to tears in the third set.

Last year's US Open champion Coco Gauff plays Spain's former world number two Paula Badosa in the other semi-final. Sabalenka's streak of victories saw her claim titles in Cincinnati and then the US Open for the first time. The Belarusian previously had trouble though with Muchova, the Czech who is now ranked 49 but this time last year was inside the top 10 before injury struck.

US Open semi-finalist Muchova had won the last two meetings between them with both going to a deciding third set. This encounter proved to be just as nervy as Sabalenka went out despite having been up 4-2 in the deciding set and seemingly on course for the semi-finals. "The conditions here are so tough, it can go one way or



BEIJING: Czech Republic's Karolina Muchova hits a return to China's Zheng Qinwen during their women's singles semifinal match at the China Open tennis tournament in Beijing on October 5, 2024. — AFP

the other. There was a couple of great returns from her, she got the momentum and started playing more aggressively," said Sabalenka, who will play at the Wuhan Open next week.

"It was a really high-level match and she played some unbelievable tennis." Three-time major champion Sabalenka had set point on Muchova's serve at 5-4 up in the first set but surrendered the opportunity when she rattled her forehand wide on the Czech's second serve. Muchova double-faulted to give Sabalenka another chance to wrap up the first set but again she failed to take

it. The Czech had two set points in the tiebreak and grabbed the second at the end of a thrilling rally to go a set up.

Sabalenka started the second brightly to break for 2-1 and broke once more on the way to sealing the set with comparative ease. Both struggled on serve in the deciding set before Muchova, who at one point had appeared to be wilting in the face of her opponent's superior power, found another gear to clinch the match in two hours, 46 minutes. This time last year 28-year-old Muchova was ranked ninth in the world having reached the

## Bagnaia wins Japan MotoGP sprint to cut Martin's lead

MOTEGI: Francesco Bagnaia profited from a mistake by rookie Pedro Acosta to win the Japan MotoGP sprint on Saturday and close the gap on overall championship leader Jorge Martin. Spaniard Acosta crashed with four laps to go while leading the field at Motegi, allowing defending world champion Bagnaia to take first ahead of Enea Bastianini and Marc Marquez. Spain's Martin finished fourth and saw his overall lead over Italian Bagnaia in the championship standings cut to 15 points.

"I am very happy because with these conditions, it's not very easy to win and gain points," Bagnaia said after a sprint race that took place under heavy clouds with intermittent spots of rain. "It's the maximum so thanks to my team again and let's keep working like this." Four race weekends remain after Sunday's Grand Prix in Japan. Pramac rider Martin is looking to win his first MotoGP championship after finishing second behind Ducati's Bagnaia last year. Acosta was looking for his maiden sprint win after taking pole for the first time in the morning qualifying. The 20-year-old lost the lead to Bagnaia at the first corner but regained it soon after and was pushing hard for the victory.

Instead, he slipped off his bike and let Bagnaia through, although the Italian still had to fight hard to hold off Bastianini and Marquez in a frantic finish. Bagnaia finished just 0.181sec ahead of Ducati team-mate Bastianini and 0.349 in front of Marquez. "The pace was very good for the sprint race," said Bastianini, who is third in the overall

Sinner will face Argentina's Tomas Martin Etcheverry on Sunday. "It will be a tough one tomorrow, very physical, because me and Tomas know each other quite well now," he said.

## 'Really proud'

Earlier, arch-rival Alcaraz also looked comfortable throughout, breaking in the first game. Teenager Shang became only the second Chinese player to win an ATP Tour singles title at the Chengdu Open last month, but he was unable to make much headway against the world number two. Despite their enthusiasm for Shang, the crowd couldn't resist Alcaraz's charm. At the Spaniard's encouragement, they broke into loud cheers when he won a particularly exciting rally in which he hit a tricky backhands shot to keep the point alive.

"I've been playing really good tennis lately so I want to just keep going and keep feeling it, keep feeling this good," 21-year-old Alcaraz said after the match. "I just had one practice then was straight into this match, so to be able to show this level in the first match, I'm just really proud," he added. Alcaraz will next face another Chinese player, wildcard Wu Yibing, who beat 25th seed Nicolas Jarry in the second round.

## Rublev loses

The tournament lost its second top-ten player on Saturday, as Andrey Rublev fell to 19-year-old



SHANGHAI: Spain's Carlos Alcaraz serves to China's Shang Juncheng during their men's singles match at the Shanghai Masters tennis tournament in Shanghai on October 5, 2024. — AFP

Czech Jakub Mensik, joining Norwegian Casper Ruud on the notable casualties list. The Russian, a finalist at last year's Shanghai Masters, roared in jubilation after winning a tiebreaker to take the first set. But 65th-ranked Mensik broke Rublev in the first game of the second set, and again in the fifth to draw even. The Czech then came from behind in the third to beat the world number six for the second time this year, with a final score of 6-7 (7/9), 6-4, 6-3. — AFP

French Open final and semi-finals at Flushing Meadows. But her 2023 season ended after the US Open because of wrist surgery and she did not play for nearly 10 months until returning this summer.

## Andreeva in tears

In front of an expectant packed house at the 15,000-capacity Diamond Court, Andreeva silenced the home crowd and fought off a comeback from Zheng to win the first set. The second set was all Zheng, the world number seven who is playing her first tournament back home in China since winning Paris gold. The occasion seemed to get to the teenage Russian, who had tears in her eyes as she served at the start of the deciding set. At 3-2 up the 22nd-ranked Russian had a medical timeout and was tearful again as she had strapping applied to her left wrist.

She recovered her poise for 4-2 but Zheng rattled off three games in a row and served for the match, sealing the triumph on first match point when Andreeva's return drifted beyond the baseline. After reaching her first semi-final in the Chinese capital, the 21-year-old Zheng said she had played only "20-30 percent of my level." "I told myself: I am not going to win today by my tennis. I am going to win by my mentality." She was not aware of the emotions of her opponent, but said: "I cry a thousand times every time when I had a chance (and did not take it)." "But I don't usually cry during the match. I cry after the match." — AFP



MOTEGI: Ducati Lenovo Team rider Francesco Bagnaia of Italy rides his motorcycle during the MotoGP class practice session of MotoGP Japanese Grand Prix at the Mobility Resort Motegi in Motegi, Tochigi prefecture on October 4, 2024. — AFP

championship standings and shaved Martin's lead over him to 72 points. "At the end, I was really close to Pecco (Bagnaia) but I lost time in the last two or three laps." Martin started from 11th place on the grid but a tremendous start saw him move up to fifth on the first lap.

Marquez finished third after suffering a disappointment in qualifying when he set a new course record, only to see it wiped off for exceeding track

limits. Six-time world champion Marquez said he was able to put it behind him and "focus on the sprint race". "I knew that I had the pace," said Marquez. "In the last lap, I was pushing and catching them. It was a good fight with Enea." Spain's Maverick Vinales, who started third on the grid, finished ninth after a disastrous first lap. South Africa's Brad Binder, who went fastest in Friday's practice, did not finish. — AFP

Sports

# Napoli overpower Como to hold Serie A top spot

## Lukaku stars, scores three times in five league appearances

MILAN: Romelu Lukaku starred again for Napoli by scoring once and setting up two more goals in Friday's 3-1 win over Como which ensured top spot in Serie A for at least another week. Belgium striker Lukaku laid on Scott McTominay for his first goal in Italy's top flight after just 25 seconds, before netting from the spot seven minutes after half-time and rolling in David Neres as Napoli extended their league lead to four points. Closest rivals Juventus can pull back to within a point of Napoli with a home win over Cagliari on Sunday.

Lukaku has settled in immediately in Naples under Antonio Conte, scoring three times in five league appearances in which he has also made four assists for

a team which looks ready to challenge for the league title. "We're getting there. It's going to take time because I got here late. It's all thanks to my teammates, the coaching staff and fans that we're doing so well," said Lukaku to Sky. Napoli didn't have it all their own way at the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona as they were pushed hard by promoted Como.

Cesc Fabregas' team were deservedly level at the break thanks to a stunning long-range strike from Gabriel Strefezza, which came shortly after Nico Paz thumped a shot off the woodwork. And the match was firmly in the balance until Neres rolled home his second Napoli goal in the 86th minute after being brilliantly slipped through by Lukaku. Lukaku looks

lighter on his feet than he has at any point since winning Serie A with Inter Milan in 2021 and he also supplied a neat pass from which Scotland's McTominay lashed in his second Napoli goal after also netting against Palermo in the Italian Cup last month.

McTominay has been excellent since signing for Napoli from Manchester United in the summer, adding a new dimension to the midfield for southern Italy's biggest club. "It was great to get off to a good start. It was a great ball. Obviously for me it's nice to get a goal and then we lost a little bit of control in the first half and then we tweaked a through things at half-time and it made a difference," said McTominay to Sky. Napoli are unbeaten since being humiliat-

ed at Verona - who beat Venezia 2-1 in Friday's late match - on the opening day of the season.

And under Conte Napoli look much more like the team which swept to their third Scudetto in 2023 than the disastrous outfit which last season failed to even qualify for European football as reigning champions. "We just want to take it game by game. We want to play football and hopefully win as many games as we can," added McTominay. "The boys have been great with helping me bed in. Game by game, no-one's looking any further past the next game." Como, backed by Indonesian tobacco giants Djarum, sit 10th on eight points after an encouraging start to their first Serie A season in 21 years. — AFP

## Marseille frustrated by last-placed Angers

MARSEILLE: Marseille continued to stutter on Friday as they could only draw 1-1 at home against Ligue 1 tailenders Angers. After opening their first season under Roberto De Zerbi with four wins and a draw in the league, Marseille lost at Strasbourg last week and dropped points to winless Anger on Friday in a glum Velodrome Stadium where two stands were closed by order of the league. "I accepted the compliments after the good results, now we have to accept the criticism," said De Zerbi after the game.

Marseille even briefly played with a man advantage after Lilian Raolisoa was sent off in the 26th minute. But Neal Maupay picked up two yellow cards in the next three minutes and Marseille were down to ten men by the half hour. Former UEFA president and France captain Michel Platini recently suggested that to make modern football more attractive, games should be 10-a-side. Friday's hour-long experiment provided little evidence to support his case.

Marseille struggled to create clear-cut chances while Angers stalled for time. Englishmen Jonathan Rowe finally broke through for Marseille after 51 minutes. But again the momentum lasted barely three minutes as Farid El Melali converted a 54th minute free kick. "We have to be aware that we're trying to build a great Marseille and that it doesn't



MARSEILLE: Marseille's English forward #17 Jonathan Rowe (right) shoots to score his team's first goal during the French L1 football match between Olympique de Marseille (OM) and SCO Angers at Stade Velodrome in Marseille. — AFP

happen all of a sudden," said De Zerbi. "You have to go through games like Strasbourg and tonight." He said Mason Greenwood, Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg

and Luis Henrique did not "play their best games." "But we could have won and should have won," said the Italian. — AFP

## Boston beat Denver in NBA exhibition season opener

ABU DHABI: Veteran guard Russell Westbrook made his debut for the Denver Nuggets as they opened the National Basketball Association pre-season by losing to Boston in Abu Dhabi on Friday but was in awe of one his new team-mates. Nikola Jokic "sits in a category of his own", Westbrook, a 16-year NBA veteran, said after the game.

Playing the first of two preseason games against the Boston Celtics in the UAE capital, the Nuggets, the 2023 NBA champions, squandered a 14-point lead and lost 107-103 to the team that took the crown at the end of last season. Westbrook, a 35-year-old former league MVP and nine-time All-Star, joined the Nuggets in July after spending last season with the Los Angeles Clippers. He shared some minutes with centre Jokic in the first half before the Nuggets rested their starters.

"He's so unique in the sense of he's so unselfish," said Westbrook of the three-time MVP. "He loves to be able to make the game easy for his teammates and he's done that and won a championship and multiple MVPs and he's still the same person since I've been around. I'm grateful to be on his team and learn from him as well." Jokic had 14 points, eight rebounds, two assists, and a 71.4 field goal percentage in under 17



ABU DHABI: Russell Westbrook #4 of the Denver Nuggets drives to the basket during the game against the Boston Celtics on October 4, 2024. — AFP

minutes of play. He is coming off a hectic summer during which he helped Serbia to a bronze medal at the Olympic Games. He said on Friday that his participation in an international tournament might be a good omen for the Nuggets.

"Last time, I remember, when I played for the national team, we won the championship, so maybe that's saying something, maybe not, who knows. Most players say that summer tournaments, like the

Olympics, kind of help you stay in shape or to get better maybe," said Jokic. "I definitely had a really good time and I think I improved playing for the national team." The Celtics began with three Olympic gold medalists Jaylen Brown, Jayson Tatum and Derrick White alongside Luke Kornet and Jrue Holiday but it was their second unit that cut their deficit. Guard Payton Prichard scored 21 points, including six 3-pointers from 12 attempts. — AFP

## Ainslie leads Britain to first America's Cup final in 60 years

BARCELONA: Britain, skippered by sailing great Ben Ainslie, will compete in the America's Cup for the first time since 1964 after edging Italy 7-4 in a thrilling Louis Vuitton Cup qualifying event on Friday in Barcelona. Ineos Britannia won the first of two races in Spain on Friday to seal the best-of-13 series against the Italian Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli team. "It

is a massive day for our team and I can't say how proud I am of everyone," said Ainslie, 47, a four-time Olympic champion. "We started this team 10 years ago, Britain wasn't in the America's Cup, it took a lot of people to come in and support the team financially, of course Jim (Ratcliffe) and his team at Ineos."

The victory means Britain will face double-defending champions New Zealand in the 37th America's Cup final from October 12 to 21 off Barcelona. Britain have never won the America's Cup in its current form. They won the inaugural regatta in 1851 when the Royal Yacht Squadron triumphed in a fleet race around the Isle of Wight. Heading into Friday with a 6-4 lead, Ineos Britannia needed to win just one of the two scheduled races. Britain built on a fast

start to open up a 150-metre lead after the first leg of eight. The Italians briefly came back alongside Ineos halfway through the race, but the British boat took off again to win with a 300 metro lead.

### 'Faultless race'

It was success at the third attempt for Ainslie's crew and ends a wait stretching back six decades. In 1964, a team led by Peter Scott overcame a second British yacht, Kurrewa, to attain challenger status, but lost 4-0 to America's dominant New York Yacht Club. One of the greatest sailors in history with five medals in as many Olympics from 1996 to 2012 - one silver and then four gold — Ainslie had never before won the Louis Vuitton Cup as a helmsman. He has

won the famous silver ever as a tactician with Oracle Team USA in 2013, but had failed twice during the Louis-Vuitton Cup as main navigator.

"There is a lot of pressure, these huge organizations have made a lot of investment of time and money, and you want to make it right, to make it count. I am just so delighted for the whole team," said Ainslie. British billionaire Ratcliffe, who has a stake in Manchester United, joined the crew celebrations in Barcelona. "They sailed a faultless race today," Ineos chairman Ratcliffe told BBC Sport. "This is right up there really. It's not followed by the mass public, but I think in the UK now it'll pick up momentum, and it should do because it's the oldest international trophy in the world and the only one we haven't won." — 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
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300

### Change of Name

I, **Hussain Shabbir Hussain**, holder of Indian Passport No. N0422293 having permanent address of Aabedin Colony, Opposite Saifiyah School Play Ground, Sagwara (Rajasthan) PinCode 314025, I hereby declare that my name will be read as (given name) Hussain, (father name): Shabbir, (surname): Shayer.  
(# 6151 03/10/2024)



LONDON: Crystal Palace's Japanese midfielder #18 Daichi Kamada (left) vies with Liverpool's Hungarian midfielder #08 Dominik Szoboszlai (center) during the English Premier League football match between Crystal Palace and Liverpool on October 5, 2024. - AFP

## Liverpool remain top of EPL

Arsenal win, Manchester City beat Fulham 3-2

**MANCHESTER:** Liverpool beat Crystal Palace 1-0 to remain top of the Premier League as Arsenal and Manchester City came from behind to win on Saturday. City were 3-2 victors over Fulham to stay one point behind Liverpool, alongside Arsenal who saw off Southampton 3-1. Arne Slot has now won nine of his first 10 games since succeeding Jurgen Klopp as Liverpool manager, but was frustrated that the visitors invited a late onslaught from the winless Eagles. Jota prodded the Reds into the lead from Cody Gakpo's cross on nine minutes.

The Portuguese international was then guilty of missing two big chances to extend Liverpool's advantage. Palace failed to make them pay, but victory came at a cost for Slot as goalkeeper Alisson Becker limped off with a hamstring injury. "If you score the second you break them mentally," said Slot. "All the fans kept believing in a result because it was only 1-0, even though in my opinion we were the dominant team."

Fresh from a dominant win over Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League, Arsenal were expected to sweep aside winless Southampton. But the Saints shocked the Emirates 10 minutes into the second half when Cameron Archer fired in his first Premier League goal since a summer move from Aston Villa. The lead only lasted three minutes before Kai Havertz scored for the seventh consecutive home game. Gabriel Martinelli was introduced after an hour and took just eight minutes to make his mark with a finish on the volley from Bukayo Saka's cross. Having set up Arsenal's first two goals, Saka pounced on a loose ball to score the third himself.

### Fulham's outrageous opener

Rodri's season-long absence due to a serious knee injury is expected to be a major blow to City's chances of retaining the title for a fifth consecutive season. But it was the Spaniard's deputy Mateo Kovacic who scored twice to turn the game around for the champions at the Etihad. The visitors had not lost since the opening night of the season at Manchester United and led thanks to Andreas Pereira's finish from an outrageous backheel assist by Raul Jimenez.



LONDON: Arsenal's English midfielder #07 Bukayo Saka (center) runs past Southampton's English defender #02 Kyle Walker-Peters during the English Premier League football match between Arsenal and Southampton on October 5, 2024. - AFP

Kovacic's deflected effort quickly brought City level before a cleaner strike less than two minutes into the second half made it 2-1. Jeremy Doku then smashed into the top corner from outside the box to give City a two-goal cushion, which they needed. Rodrigo Muniz gave Fulham hope on 88 minutes, but City held out for a 17th consecutive win against the Cottagers. West Ham eased the pressure on new boss Julen Lopetegui by ending a run of three home defeats to start the new season.

Michail Antonio, Mohammed Kudus, Jarrod Bow-

en and Lucas Paqueta struck for the Hammers in a 4-1 win over Ipswich, who are still waiting for their first Premier League win 22 years. There were six goals before half-time as Brentford beat Wolves 5-3 to leave the visitors still rooted to the foot of the table. Leicester secured their first league win of the season as Facundo Buonanotte's strike beat Bournemouth 1-0. Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag faces a huge match if he is to remain in charge when the Red Devils visit Aston Villa in the pick of Sunday's action. — AFP

## Under-fire Ten Hag 'together' with Man United hierarchy

**LONDON:** Erik ten Hag is adamant he still has the backing of Manchester United's hierarchy as the under-fire boss prepares for a crucial Premier League clash at Aston Villa. Just three months after signing a contract extension, Ten Hag is fighting to save his job following a troubled start to the season. Sunday's dismal 3-0 home defeat against Tottenham was compounded by a 3-3 draw at Porto in the Europa League on Thursday, with United needing Harry Maguire's goal in time added on to rescue a point after blowing a two-goal lead.

United are languishing in 13th place in the Premier League with only two wins from six games, just months after an eighth-place finish that ranked as the club's worst since 1990. Ten Hag's side did win the FA Cup last season after landing the League Cup a year earlier. But, in the current climate around the Dutchman, a loss to Villa would be a major blow to his hopes of avoiding the sack in his third season at Old Trafford.

Asked if he felt there was patience within the United fanbase and hierarchy, Ten Hag said: "I'm not thinking about such issues because that is not a topic. 'We are in there together, the ownership, the leadership team, the staff. I appointed a new staff, we bought again new young players and we have to integrate them.' 'Like we just talked about Manuel Ugarte, the six position was absolutely one of the topics we want to sign for the season but he needs time to integrate.' 'And I know in top football you don't get time, they have to perform immediately, but it's not always realistic.' — AFP



LEVERKUSEN: Holstein Kiel's German goalkeeper #01 Timon Weiner comes to claim the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match between Bayer 04 Leverkusen and Holstein Kiel on October 5, 2024. - AFP

## Leverkusen suffer another setback

**BERLIN:** Bayer Leverkusen on Saturday suffered another early setback in their Bundesliga title defense as they let slip a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 with Holstein Kiel. Xabi Alonso's side now have 11 points from six matches, giving Bayern Munich the chance to extend their advantage at the top when they travel to Eintracht Frankfurt on Sunday. Victor Boniface put Leverkusen ahead at the BayArena after just four minutes with a left-footed shot from a tight angle.

Exequiel Palacios' break forward had created the opener and the Argentinian was also involved in Leverkusen's second goal four minutes later, passing to Jonas Hofmann on the edge of the area who coolly slotted home. Kiel pulled back a goal in

first-half stoppage time, underlining the defensive frailties that have plagued Leverkusen this season, as Max Geschwill forced the ball into the net with his left shoulder. The goal was allowed to stand after a VAR check. Leverkusen failed to hold onto their advantage in the second half and Jann-Fiete Arp pulled Kiel level from the penalty spot in the 69th minute and Leverkusen's efforts to find a winning goal proved fruitless.

In the capital, Union Berlin were 2-0 up against Borussia Dortmund at half-time thanks to a penalty from Kevin Vogt and a goal from 23-year-old Belgian forward Yorbe Vertessen. Norwegian international Julian Ryerson put Dortmund back in contention with a 62nd-minute strike but it was not enough as Dortmund crashed to a 2-1 defeat. In other games, Wolfsburg gained a valuable three points in a 3-1 win away to Bochum to lift themselves out of the relegation zone. Werder Bremen lost 1-0 at home to Freiburg, while Augsburg beat Borussia Moenchengladbach 2-1 in a mid-table clash on Friday. - AFP