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## \$1.3bn roadworks deals inked

Minister signs 18 contracts • Eco-friendly decorative lampposts installed on Gulf Road



KUWAIT: (Left) Minister of Public Works Noura Al-Mashaan signs a road maintenance contract on Oct 23, 2024. (Right) Eco-friendly lampposts are being installed on Arabian Gulf Road. — KUNA photos

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Biometrics registration reminder

**KUWAIT:** The interior ministry on Wednesday reminded expatriates that the deadline for registering biometric data is Dec 31. It said in a statement that biometric fingerprint services are available daily at forensic evidence centers from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm. It called on expats to book an appointment on the Meta platform or Sahel application.

#### E-reporting for trafficking crimes

**KUWAIT:** The minister of justice, who also chairs the permanent national committee to combat trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling, announced the launch of an electronic reporting service for human trafficking crimes through the public prosecution's website. This initiative aims to protect victims and informants by ensuring the confidentiality of their data and simplifying the reporting process, facilitating legal action against perpetrators.

#### Palestinian seeds join vault

**OSLO:** A "doomsday vault" in the Arctic designed to safeguard the world's plant diversity has received a new deposit of thousands of seed samples, including Palestinian ones amid war and hunger in Gaza, it said on Wednesday. More than 30,000 samples from a record 23 organizations in 21 countries were deposited in the vault in Norway's Svalbard archipelago on Tuesday, the Crop Trust said on Wednesday. Among those deposited were 21 Palestinian species comprised of vegetables, millet and herbs. — AFP

#### Joint military exercises eyed

**TEHRAN:** Iran and Saudi Arabia are planning to conduct joint military exercises in the Red Sea, according to an Iranian report not confirmed by Riyadh. "Saudi Arabia has asked that we organize joint exercises in the Red Sea," the commander of Iran's navy, Admiral Shahram Irani, was quoted as saying by the Iranian news agency ISNA. "Coordination is underway and delegations from both countries will hold the necessary consultations on how to conduct the exercise," he added. — AFP

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait on Wednesday signed 18 contracts worth KD 400 million (\$1.31 billion) with international, Gulf and local companies for comprehensive repairs of the road network in the country. The contracts were signed by Minister of Public Works Noura Al-Mashaan. The deals were the first of their kind, covering all areas of the country, and included contracts with Turkish business Limak, a Qatari company and several from Kuwait, said Khaled Al-Osaimi, acting director general of the Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport.

The ministry said the contracts were cleared by the Central Tenders Committee following extensive studies. Twelve of the contracts are for the ministry of public works, which cover all internal roads in the six governorates, while the remaining six contracts dealing with motorways are for the roads authority. The contracts also cover maintenance of rainwater networks, street lighting

and telecommunication systems, as well as road paving and other related works.

Osaimi said after the signing ceremony that the contracts aim for comprehensive repairs of highways and internal roads in the six governorates and all areas of Kuwait, with a 10-year warranty that now extends to the foundation layer. Previously, the warranty only covered the first and second layers of the road for five years.

Meanwhile, the ministry of electricity, water and renewable energy wrapped up on Wednesday infrastructure works of the Gulf Road lighting project and commenced replacing old models with more energy-efficient lampposts, adorned with designs inspired by Kuwaiti culture and heritage. Ministry official Ayman Al-Omani told KUNA following a press conference that the project, extending from the Sixth

Ring Road intersection to Jamal Abdunnasser Road intersection, aims to cut energy consumption by 50 to 60 percent. The project is valued at KD 2.466 million (\$8.1 million) for a duration of 24 months, beginning from Dec 2023. The new lampposts add flair to the well-known road, as they are embellished with Islamic, geometric and nautical designs, explained Omani. The ministry faced a few obstacles in executing the project, he revealed, but those were overcome in cooperation with the ministry of public works and the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources.

Contract Supervisor Mohammad Al-Sarraf highlighted to KUNA the significance of the project, as the Gulf Road is one of the most vital and touristic roads in the country. Sarraf spoke of a 10-year plan to install new LED lampposts and expand the use of decorative posts throughout the country. — Agencies

## US calls for truce as Zionists choke Gaza, bombard Lebanon

**GAZA/BEIRUT:** US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday "now is the time" to end the Gaza war, and urged the Zionist entity to avoid further escalation with Iran. The Zionist entity is fighting Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon and has vowed to retaliate against Iran for an Oct 1 missile attack.

Hezbollah on Wednesday confirmed the death of Hashem Safieddine, a cleric tipped to succeed the group's leader Hassan Nasrallah, a day after the Zionist army announced his death. "We mourn... the head of the Executive Council of Hezbollah, his eminence the scholar



Hashem Safieddine

Sayyed Hashem Safieddine," the group said in a statement, adding he was killed by "a criminal and aggressive Zionist raid" alongside other Hezbollah fighters.

In southern Lebanon, AFP correspondents re-

ported several Zionist air strikes on the coastal city of Tyre. The attacks sparked a new exodus from the once vibrant city, where AFP TV footage showed plumes of thick black smoke rising after strikes. "The situation is very bad, we're evacuating people," said Mortada Alhanna, who heads Tyre's disaster management unit. "You could say that the entire city of Tyre is being evacuated," said Bilal Kashmar, the unit's media officer.

Blinken's visit to the region is his 11th since the Gaza war erupted and his first since the Zionist-Hezbollah violence escalated to all-out war last month. Previous US efforts to end the war and contain its regional fallout have failed. The Zionist offensive has killed 42,792 people in Gaza, mostly civilians. The health ministry added that more than 100,000 have been wounded, which represents over four percent of Gaza's 2.4 million population.

Continued on Page 6

## BRICS: Putin urges peace, scores win with Xi-Modi meet

**KAZAN, Russia:** World leaders called for peace in the Middle East and Ukraine at the BRICS summit in Russia on Wednesday, as President Vladimir Putin told them he welcomed offers to mediate in the Ukraine conflict. Meanwhile, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi used the summit to showcase ambitions for a more harmonious relationship between the world's two most populous countries after years of animosity.

The meeting between Xi and Modi, who have not held formal talks for five years, was one highlight of a summit which Putin sought to use to show that the West had failed to isolate Russia over the Ukraine war. A final communique listed a number of projects aimed at facilitating trade between BRICS nations — including an alternative payment system to the dollar — but did not include details or timelines.

Just two days after New Delhi announced that it had reached a deal with Beijing to resolve a four-year military stand-off on their disputed Himalayan



KAZAN: Leaders pose for a family photo during the BRICS summit on Oct 23, 2024. — AFP

frontier, Xi told Modi that they should enhance communication and cooperation and effectively manage differences. (See Page 7)

BRICS — an idea thought up inside Goldman Sachs two decades ago to describe the growing economic clout of China and other major emerging markets — is now a group that accounts for 45 percent of the world's population and 35 percent of the

global economy. The BRICS summit clashes with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank annual meetings in Washington.

Former Goldman economist Jim O'Neill, who coined the BRIC term in 2001, told Reuters that he had little optimism for the BRICS club as long as China and India remained so divided.

Continued on Page 6





## Local

# Cabinet reviews GCC-EU Summit, preparations for 45th GCC Summit

## Forum is aimed at shaping joint goals and cementing ties

**KUWAIT:** The Cabinet held its regular weekly session on Tuesday under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Following the session, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sharida Al-Maousherji stated that the ministers lauded Kuwait statement, addressed by the Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, at the first GCC-EU Summit, held in Brussels on Wednesday.

Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah, the Cabinet statement noted, had stated that the summit constituted an extraordinary opportunity to promote bilateral relations, manifest the joint serious and sincere desire to broaden mutual cooperation and press ahead with comprehensive strategic partnerships based on the vision of the leaders of GCC states.

The Representative of His Highness the Amir had expressed hope to make progress in the negotiations for free trade between the GCC and the EU, work out a framework accord for cooperation and find alternative formulas for investing the abundant resources of the Gulf and EU countries, affirming that Kuwait, as chair of the GCC in 2024, aspires for full coordination with the European partners on all issues of common concern. He had also affirmed keenness on aiding Iraq to restore its regional status, urging Baghdad to take tangible steps and tackle the

sticking issues with Kuwait, namely the demarcation of the marine borders beyond Point 162 according to international conventions and law.

He had also demanded that Iraq abide by bilateral agreements regarding the technical and security aspects of the maritime waterway at Khor Abdullah, for these accords boost the concepts of marine conservation, regulating navigation, combating terrorism, illegal trade of arms, narcotics, and humans. He had also affirmed the necessity to pursue the dialogue based on mutual understanding and respect. The Cabinet statement, read by Minister Mousherji, noted that the Representative of His Highness the Amir, at the EU-GCC Summit, called for instant cessation of the airstrikes by Zionist occupation on Gaza, sparing the region and the world further hazards and jitters.

He had renewed Kuwait's principled, unwavering, and historic stand in support of the Palestinian people and their just cause for establishing an independent state to the June 4, 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, acclaiming a decision by a number of European states to recognize the State of Palestine and urging other countries in the European continent to follow suit. Also in the proceedings of the session, the ministers were briefed about the meetings that had been held by the Representative of His Highness the Amir on the summit's margins, namely with the Spanish and Greek premiers and chair of the European Council.

They were also informed about preparations for



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

hosting the 45th GCC Summit due in Kuwait on December 1. In this respect, the ministers welcomed the coming leaders of GCC countries, affirming the significance of the planned event that depicts the deep-rooted and historic relations among the council member countries. They noted that the summit

would be held to manifest the GCC countries' advocacy of the joint destiny, goals, and actions for cementing the march of cooperation and the brotherly bonds for the sake of pushing forward the process of development in all spheres for meeting the aspirations of the GCC leaders and peoples. — KUNA

## Kuwait Television wins 2 ASBU awards for 2024

**TUNIS:** The Arab States Broadcasting Union's (ASBU) standing committee awarded Kuwaiti Television Wednesday with two awards during its annual program competition. An ASBU statement said that Kuwait Television came in second in the two union events, adding that the prizes would be handed out during the 25th ASBU festival, which would be scheduled later. The first event, concerned with the number of television programs and other activities within the same country, saw Iraq Television winning the top spot with Saudi Television coming in third. In the second competition, featuring annual programs and activities, Iraq also came on top, with Qatar Television taking third place. — KUNA

## Kuwait signs MoU, aviation agreements with Suriname, Spain, Uzbekistan, Cuba

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Directorate General of Civil Aviation signed a number of agreements and memoranda of understandings with Spain, Suriname, Uzbekistan, and Cuba on Wednesday. The directorate's President, Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, signed the agreements during meetings with his counterparts from these countries as part of the third day of the Global Air Services Negotiation Conference (ICAN-2024), held in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur.

In a statement to KUNA, Sheikh Humoud Al-Sabah said the directorate is eager to connect Kuwait International Airport to the biggest international and regional network of airports. The agreements will enhance Kuwait's aviation field on a global level, speed up launching operations in Kuwait International Airport's new terminal, and open new travel routes, he noted. The annual meeting, held from 21 to 25 October, is organized by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). The event is an opportunity for aviation decision-makers, service providers, and authorities to communicate and share experience with the aim of developing the global aviation field. — KUNA

## Dubai Judicial Institute, AMR mull boosting ties

**DUBAI:** President of Kuwait's Authority for Medical Responsibility (AMR) Sheikh Dr Salman Khalifa Al-Sabah and Director General of Dubai Judicial Institute Dr Ebtessam Al-Badwawi discussed on Tuesday means of sharing knowledge and expertise in the legal field. The two sides also focused on boosting collaboration in domains related to administrative work, procedures, and issues pertaining to medical malpractice.

Such meetings and visits with brothers aim to exchange experience and bolster cooperation to improve administrative and legal services and implement the best practices and experiments in judicial development and training processes. UAE's news agency (WAM) reported, citing Al-Badwawi. Established in 2020 under the law 70 of 2020, the Authority is an independent governmental entity tasked with the practice of medicine and allied health professions, patient's rights, and healthcare facilities.

The Authority specializes exclusively, through the committees it forms, in providing expert medical opinions in complaints, records, communications, reports, court cases, and lawsuits related to medical errors and professional violations referred or submitted to it against all healthcare professionals, healthcare facilities, whether governmental or private, or the managers of the healthcare facilities. — KUNA



**IDCK delegation takes a group photo.**



**IDCK delegation poses for a picture with brokers Sabeeka Al-Bahr and Jihan Marafi.**



**IDCK delegation tour Souq Al-Mubarkiya.**

## IDCK promotes, supports women empowerment

By **Faten Omar**

**KUWAIT:** To enlighten the experiences of pioneering businesswomen and support the empowerment of Kuwaiti women, the International Diplomatic Club in Kuwait (IDCK) met with Sabeeka Al-Bahr and Jihan Marafi, two certified brokers in the Kuwaiti real estate industry, on Tuesday, at Souq Al-Manakh. Ghada Shawky, wife of the Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt and president of the executive board of the IDCK, along with the IDCK's delegation were honored to have the chance to learn about the Kuwaiti women's journey of growth and achievement as women in a predominantly male field.

Both Marafi and Al-Bahr described the nature of their work and the challenges they encounter in their line of work, especially since it is a male-dominated field. Speaking to the media, Al-Bahr stated that the presence

of Kuwaiti women is strong today and the support for women in the real estate market was evident, adding "We extend our gratitude to all the brokers for their support on this day. Our entry into the Al-Manakh market is just the beginning, and we hope it will be a significant addition to the world of real estate brokerage."

She noted that working with Marafi at Souq Al-Manakh will empower Kuwaiti women economically, noting "As women, we have the capability to enter the real estate market, work together, and support each other hand in hand, proving that women can succeed in any field and pursue any career within the economic sector." For her part, Marafi called on women that nothing should prevent them from participating in any type of business, stating "No field is exclusive to men, and women can excel in real estate brokerage. It's a rewarding profession, and if you have the skills and professionalism, you can succeed, regardless of gender."

"Men have a greater opportunity in their circles and gatherings (diwaniyas), allowing them to reach a wide audience interested in buying, selling, or investing in real estate. On the other hand, women often find themselves needing to seek information from male relatives like a brother, father, uncle, or male broker. Why should that be limited to men? Access to information shouldn't be

restricted," she explained.

She concluded "This message is for every Kuwaiti woman and every woman around the world: real estate brokerage is not exclusive to men. It is a noble and fulfilling profession, and we encourage women to step into this field." The group was comprised of IDCK members, which included female Ambassadors and wives of Ambassadors. They also extended an invitation for prominent Kuwaiti women in the political sphere to join them.

The delegation was additionally honored with the presence of the former minister of Social Affairs Dr Ghadeer Aseri and Alia Al Khaled, former Kuwaiti MP. Following the opening ceremony and the tour in Souq Al-Manakh, the IDCK members had the opportunity to visit Souq Al-Mubarakiya, Kuwait's oldest and most famous market. The ladies, who were accompanied by three guides, had the great opportunity to experience the lively atmosphere that has been flourishing for over 200 years.

The Souq is a true gem of local goods such as handicrafts, vintage goods, spices, textiles, and other commodities. It is also a gastronomy haven, where people enjoy delicious Kuwaiti dishes; and to experience a perfect Kuwaiti day, the members were generously invited for lunch at Souq Al-Mubarakiya.

## Early ADHD diagnosis can shape a child's path, experts say

By **Passant Hisham**

**KUWAIT:** Seeking early diagnoses of ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) for children without hesitation or stigma is important for understanding the underlying causes of their unusual behaviors and providing effective management strategies, according to Amal Al-Sayer, founder and chair of Kuwaiti Association for Learning Differences (KALD). During an ADHD awareness campaign at The Avenues mall on Tuesday, hosted by KALD, Sayer urged parents who may doubt that their children are diagnosed ADHD to "please rely on credible sources and specialists for advice. Don't simply accept guidance from neighbors or settle for information you read in magazine articles."

She also encouraged parents to request personalized plans tailored to their child's unique needs, noting that ADHD can manifest differently in each individual and affect people from childhood into adulthood. Dr Issa Al-Jassem, vice president of the Kuwait Society for Learning Differences, reported that the global prevalence of ADHD ranges from 3 percent to 5 percent. On a local level, he announced that KALD has recently completed a compre-



**Amal Al-Sayer and Dr Issa Al-Jassem pose for a photo.**

hensive survey on the prevalence of ADHD among children in Kuwait, with results expected to be released soon.

The disorder, he stated, is linked to a neurological imbalance in children and can often be observed as early as ages of three to four, with a higher prevalence in boys. In contrast, "girls often manage to control their behavior due to societal pressures surrounding discipline and self-control," he said. Jassem emphasized the importance of early diagnosis, particularly in kindergarten, to ensure that children receive appropriate support before reaching adulthood, thereby reducing the risk of misunderstanding, unfair treatment, or academic failure.

However, he cautioned against misinterpreting hyperactive behaviors as ADHD, highlighting the need for



**KALD booth in Avenues Mall Phase 2.**

official diagnoses from specialized centers, which can differentiate between temporary behaviors influenced by external factors and more permanent disorders. While Dr Jassem acknowledged that hyperactivity may persist even after treatment, he noted that children can learn to refine and better control their behaviors.

In discussing available resources, Sayer highlighted several centers in Kuwait that offer ADHD accurate tests and diagnostic services, including public mental health centers, Al-Manara Center for Mental Health for Children and Adolescents, the Public Authority for Persons with Disabilities, and various private hospital centers. She also announced KALD's plans to open its own diagnostic unit to enhance early detection efforts.



## Local

# Kuwait: Zionists should be held accountable for gruesome crimes in Palestine, Lebanon

## UN Human Rights Chief condemns deadly strike near Beirut hospital



Zeina Al-Dalloum

**NEW YORK:** Kuwait called on the international community on Tuesday to unify efforts to hold Zionist occupation accountable for its gruesome crimes committed in Palestine and Lebanon. Delivering the speech of Kuwait permanent mission to the United Nations before the sixth political committee of legal affairs, Kuwait's diplomatic attaché Zeina Al-Dalloum stressed that Zionist crimes are genocide and crimes against humanity against Palestinian and Lebanese people.

The international community has been silent while the occupation has been committing crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip for more than one year, Al-Dalloum said. The Zionist occupation also launched its brutal aggression on Lebanon, she said, expressing Kuwait's condemnation of Zionist occupation continued ignorance of international legitimacy resolutions, which call for the full withdrawal from Palestinian territories.

The occupation forces violates Lebanon's sovereignty and threaten its security through their brutal attacks that killed several civilians, she added. Al-Dalloum stressed the need of ensuring Palestinians' rights to self-determination, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on June 4, 1967 borders and East Jerusalem as its capital, as a main step for maintaining international peace and security. Kuwait has been promoting justice and combating all forms of injustice, violence and corruption, out of its belief in the rule of law, she stated.

She referred to Kuwait's speech before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding the legal impacts of Zionist occupation policies and



**EL KHIYAM, Lebanon:** Smoke clouds rise following a Zionist airstrike on the village of Khiam in southern Lebanon near the border on October 23, 2024. — AFP

practices on the occupied Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif. Kuwait affirmed that abiding by the rule of law on international and local levels is essential for sustainable development and economic growth, and combating poverty and starvation as well as protecting human rights and freedom, she pointed out.

Kuwait's Constitution respects the rule of law and separation among authorities, she said. On empowering women, Al-Dalloum said Kuwait trusts women's position and their key role in making decisions and raising the country's status, internationally, pointing to women's occupation in judicial, executive and legislative authorities. Kuwait has been proceeding with digitization as it launched "Sahel" app to facilitate services. Al-Dalloum emphasized Kuwait's commitment to all laws and international charters that enhance the rule of law, on a basis of

justice and equality.

Meanwhile, UN Human Rights Chief Volker Turk has condemned Zionist airstrike near Rafiq Hariri University Hospital in Beirut's densely populated Jnah neighborhood that reportedly killed at least 18 people including four children and wounded 60 others. In a statement released from Geneva, Turk said "The hospital itself which is one of the main hospitals in Beirut and has received a large number of patients throughout the conflict. It also appears to have been damaged in the strike late on Monday," Turk reiterated his call in the respect of the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law and called on the prompt investigation into that violation. He also called the UN's call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and reminded all parties that the protection of civilians must be the absolute top priority. — KUNA

## Kuwait underlines importance of UN humanitarian role

**NEW YORK:** Kuwait on Tuesday affirmed the importance of the prominent role of the United Nations through multilateral action to help and support afflicted peoples in all ways, which translates collective humanitarian action in its most beautiful form. The Permanent Delegation of Kuwait made the remarks in a speech to the United Nations, which was delivered by Diplomatic Attaché Abdullah Bu Abbas before the Second Committee of the United Nations for Economic and Financial Affairs under the item (Eradicating Poverty and Development Issues).

Bu Abbas said, "Today we are addressing sensitive issues related to eradicating poverty, agricultural development, food security, and nutrition, due to their great importance in the lives of people and their



Abdullah Bu Abbas

sustainability," in light of the tragedies witnessed by the world. Bu Abbas referred to the reports issued by the United Nations regarding the water crisis, which indicate that 40 percent of the world's population today suffers from water scarcity and that up to 700 million people will be at risk of displacement due to severe water scarcity by 2030.

He added that the report warned that 80 percent of sewage is pumped untreated into the envi-

ronment, and water-related disasters represent 90 percent of the most destructive natural disasters since 1990. The diplomatic attaché also referred to the report issued by the International Committee of the Red Cross, which stated that there are about 346 million people in Africa suffering from severe food insecurity, meaning that a quarter of the continent's population does not have enough food.

Bu Abbas stated that about 96 percent of the population of Gaza (2.1 million people) face high levels of severe food insecurity, according to a report issued by the United Nations on the high risks of famine in the State of Palestine. In this context, the diplomatic attaché pointed to the role of the State of Kuwait and its efforts to help affected countries by establishing external mechanisms to help those countries and alleviate their suffering. The diplomatic attaché cited the prominent role of the Kuwait Fund for Economic Development, which provides grants and soft loans without regard to any political or religious considerations to 105 countries around the world, so that the humanitarian concern is the highest and the fixed line on which it proceeds. — KUNA

## Kuwait promotes sustainable peace

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya said Tuesday Kuwait, as an active member of the UN, played a leading role in enhancing the organization's agenda for protecting international peace and security. He hailed the UN Day, observed on October 24, saying this is an occasion for Kuwait to renew its commitment to contributing to the valuable efforts of the UN to serve humanity. Al-Yahya made the comments at a celebration hosted by the UN mission in Kuwait on Tuesday in the presence of Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and a number of senior diplomats and representatives of the UN mission and friendly countries.

The UN Day provides an opportunity for the international community to recommit itself to the principles and objectives of the UN Charter with a view to realizing the common aspirations for peace and security, he said. "The UN constitutes the cornerstone of multilateral action and an unparalleled global organization having a legitimacy and ability to lobby for collective action," Al-Yahya pointed out.

Since joining the UN in 1963, Kuwait has provided all possible support to the UN-sponsored activities, particularly in the humanitarian and developmental areas, in order to ensure prosperity for all nations of the world and alleviate the suffering of disaster-hit people. Kuwait, as a beacon of hope, believing deeply in the significance of collective action, has offered a helping hand to those who need help regardless of any ethnic or religious considerations.

Kuwait rose to the challenge in providing protection to civilians trapped in armed conflict and used protective diplomacy to address the root causes of instability through peaceful dialogue, thus backing the UN agenda for a more secure world, the minister explained. Under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Kuwait reaffirms its commitment to protecting international peace and security, alleviating the suffering of disaster-hit nations, and supporting sustainable development, as Al-Yahya pointed out.

He spoke highly of the UN's contributions to se-



**Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya poses for a group photo with UN representatives in the country. — KUNA photos**



Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya

curity and peace since its foundation in 1945. The UN Day celebration, themed "sustainable peace and security," coincides this year with formidable and unprecedented challenges facing the world, including highly complicated conflicts, which made the UN role in resolving the conflicts and restoring stability more important than ever, he noted. Recalling the historic role of the UN in helping Kuwait restore its sovereignty and liberty in 1991, Al-Yahya said this was one of the most important and most successful examples of the UN role in protecting international peace and security.

On her part, United Nations Resident Coordinator to Kuwait Ghada Hatim El-Tahir said that Kuwait, through commitment to the international conventions, continued to be an essential partner

of the UN in the journey to peace and development. Kuwait and the UN work together for realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promoting sustainable peace and collective action worldwide, she noted.

The UN agencies have genuine partnerships with the government and people of Kuwait in various areas such as economic diversification, empowerment of youth, promotion of health, education, and employment, environment protection, and promotion of human rights and governance, El-Tahir stated. The 2024 global peace index ranked the State of Kuwait first among the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries and 25th on the world level, which signals Kuwait's leading role in peacebuilding, she added. — KUNA

## In my view

## Simple steps for a healthier workplace



By Dr Sajed Al Abdali, MD

**D**o you ever finish your workday with a stiff neck or aching back? You're not alone. As a doctor who has spent years helping workers stay healthy, I've seen how small changes in how we work can make a big difference in how we feel. In my practice, I often meet office workers worried about wrist pain or back problems affecting their careers. The solutions are usually simpler than they expect – often involving basic workspace adjustments and posture improvements. Time after time, these small changes have helped people continue their work pain-free.

What exactly is ergonomics? Simply put, it's the science of making your workspace fit you, rather than forcing your body to fit your workspace. Think of it like a well-fitted shoe – when it's right, you hardly notice it's there. When it's wrong, every step is uncomfortable. Over the years, our work habits have changed dramatically. When I started my career, most concerns came from factory workers and manual laborers. Now, with many of us spending hours at computers, we face different challenges. Our bodies weren't designed to sit at desks all day, staring at screens.

**Here are some simple tips I share with my patients:**

First, think about your posture. Imagine a gentle string pulling you up from the top of your head. Your back should be naturally straight, not slouched. When typing, your elbows should be at about 90 degrees, like holding a book comfortably. Second, remember to move. I tell my patients, "The best posture is your next posture." Set a reminder to stand up and stretch every hour. Even a short walk to get water can help prevent stiffness.

Third, set up your workspace properly. Your computer screen should be at eye level – you shouldn't have to look down at it. A simple stack of books to raise your screen can work perfectly well. These days, I'm seeing new problems from our constant use of phones and tablets. Looking down at your phone for hours can strain your neck – what we doctors now call "text neck". Try holding your phone higher and taking regular breaks.

Working from home has created new challenges. Many people work from their sofas or beds, which can lead to back problems. If you work from home, try to set up a proper workspace, even if it's just a small desk in a corner. The good news is that preventing these problems doesn't have to be expensive. Small changes can make a big difference. In my experience, simple adjustments to chair heights and screen positions often solve many common complaints.

Some warning signs to watch for are persistent neck or back pain; numbness or tingling in your hands; headaches that get worse during the workday; shoulder or wrist pain. If you experience these symptoms regularly, it's worth talking to your doctor or an occupational health specialist.

Looking ahead, new technology is making it easier to work comfortably. We now have chairs that remind you to move, desks that can be used while standing or sitting, and tools that help analyze your posture. But remember – even the most expensive chair won't help if you're not using it correctly. For employers, investing in workplace comfort makes good business sense. Companies that take care of their workers' health often see fewer sick days and better productivity. It's much cheaper to prevent problems than to fix them later.

Whether you work in an office, at home, or somewhere in between, taking care of your posture and workspace setup is crucial. These simple changes can help you stay comfortable and healthy at work, today and for years to come. Remember: your body is designed to move. The best posture is always your next posture. Small changes in how you work can make a big difference in how you feel at the end of each day.





Secretary General of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) Jamal Al-Loughani



Meeting of experts of environment and climate change. — KUNA photos

## OAPEC underlines the need to balance energy and climate fallout

KUWAIT: Secretary General of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) Jamal Al-Loughani said on Wednesday it is essential to ensure balance between energy security and reduction of climate change fallout. Al-Loughani made the statement while addressing a two-day meeting of experts of environment and climate change, held in Kuwait. He added that the member states adopt an all-out and fair approach of relying on all energy sources and tapping all technologies on future energy tracks.

He added that the OAPEC Secretariat was keen on holding such coordinative meetings ahead of the annual meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change with a view to making preparations and crystallizing Arab negotiation stances during the forthcoming round (COP 29) due in Baku, Azerbaijan, mid-November. The OAPEC chief underlined that the significance of this gathering comes out of the fact that the conferees will weigh and analyze topics and matters that require coordination, particularly among committees and taskforces of the Paris Agreement. — KUNA

# KFH promotes digital literacy, offers dedicated transformation programs

## Part of the Bank's participation in the ATD summit Kuwait

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting and developing human talent, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the Association for Talent Development (ATD) Summit Kuwait, organized by ATD over two days at the Jumeirah Hotel. Local and International experts led panel discussions and lectures at the conference, discussing innovative talent development strategies for the digital workplace.

During his participation in the panel discussion titled "Deciphering Digital Transformation: Gaining Benefits, Overcoming Challenges", KFH Group Chief Human Resources and Transformation Officer, Zeyad Abdullah AlOmar, stated that KFH fosters a digital-friendly environment. He added that before implementing the digital environment, KFH, in collaboration with a global company, conducted a comprehensive digital readiness assessment within the Bank. The purpose of this process was to ascertain KFH's current state and assess employee preparedness for digitalization.

"Based on the assessment results, KFH developed a strategic plan, commencing with senior management, to design comprehensive programs for all employees. This required a thorough evaluation of the bank's infrastructure and the formulation of a clear digitalization strategy," AlOmar elaborated, "KFH approached digitalization as a change management process. Digital transformation at KFH has become a fundamental methodology guiding all of its programs."

He pointed out that KFH has taken initiatives to embrace a digital-friendly environment and emerging technologies such as Digital Print System Management. "This aligns seamlessly with our broader digital transformation efforts and provides our employees with valuable data analytics insights. It tracks and reports the quantity of black-and-white as well as color pages printed. It also shows the total cost on a monthly or yearly basis, enhancing employee experience by promoting digital literacy and transparency that contribute to operational efficiency and cost optimization," AlOmar explained.

Speaking about the digital HR operations at the Bank, AlOmar noted that KFH is the first Kuwaiti bank to implement Oracle Fusion HCM Cloud. By leveraging AI-powered data analytics, KFH can enhance efficiency, productivity, and business agility. Meanwhile, he expressed his pride that the HR department at KFH was awarded with the Best Approach to HCM Innovation (Bronze) and Best HR Data Analytics (Bronze) from the



Ziad Al-Omar speaks during the panel discussion.

prominent Brandon Hall Group in recognition of its efforts and unwavering commitment to fostering a digital-friendly workplace.

### Digital literacy

From the outset of its digital transformation strategy, KFH prioritized digital literacy. To achieve this, AlOmar emphasized that KFH invested in leadership training, employed structured methodologies, and fostered a culture of continuous improvement. These efforts significantly enhanced KFH's digital adoption and positioned it for long-term success in the digital era.

He highlighted KFH's efforts in promoting digital literacy, pointing out that KFH continues to identify individual capabilities and offers dedicated "Digital Transformation" programs. These programs provide tailored training for digital tools and connect them to real jobs. Moreover, KFH ensures that the digital transformation concept is integrated into all training programs, fostering its adoption within the organizational culture.

Additionally, AlOmar indicated that KFH has also

made other efforts to promote digital literacy. These include the new branded edition of its Forssah program titled Forssah Tech, enabling fresh graduates to build a career in the Islamic Banking industry through an intensive 6-month bootcamp. Since launched, more than 40 hired employees graduated from this program. KFH has also signed an MoU with Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity, becoming the first bank in Kuwait to conclude an agreement fostering innovation and digital efforts among the youth.

It is worth noting that the ATD summit, which took place on October 14 and 15 in Kuwait, hosted panel discussions and presentations by globally renowned speakers and prominent HR professionals in Kuwait. With more than 30,000 members, the Association for Talent Development (ATD) is the world's largest association dedicated to professionals in the field of talent development. Founded in 1943 as the American Society for Training and Development, in 2014 the organization was rebranded the Association for Talent Development to reflect the broadening scope of the profession.

## KUNA Chief and Tajik ambassador discuss boosting media ties

KUWAIT: Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Dr Fatima Al-Salem and Tajikistan's Ambassador to Kuwait Zubaydullo Zubaydzoda discussed on Tuesday ways to enhance media cooperation. During the meeting at KUNA headquarters, Dr Al-Salem pointed out the vital role of media in boosting bilateral relations and cooperation. For his part, Ambassador Zubaydzoda praised strong bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Kuwait, stressing his country's desire to enhance media cooperation with KUNA; one of the most important media institutions in the region. He added that cooperation would contribute to enhancing mutual understanding and conveying a positive image of the two countries. — KUNA



## Kuwait, Saudi sign health agreement to boost staff skills

RIYADH: Kuwait Institute for Medical Specializations on Tuesday signed an agreement with the Saudi Commission for Health Specialties to enhance training and skills of medical cadres. The deal, signed on the sidelines of the Institute's participation in the Global Health Exhibition, hosted by Riyadh from October 21-24, aims to boost coordination between the two sides and share expertise in health education and training in a manner that contributes to raising the efficiency of medical staff, Kuwait's Health Ministry said in a statement.

It also covers bolstering joint coordination for professional license tests of medicine and dentistry fields to improve health services in both countries, it noted. The agreement was signed by Dr Abdurrahman Al-Mutairi, Undersecretary of Kuwait's Ministry of Health and Acting Secretary General of the Institute, and Aws Al-Shamsan, Secretary General of the Saudi commission, according to the statement.

### Industrial Policy Forum

In another development, the Multilateral Industrial Policy Forum kicked off on Wednesday in Riyadh under the theme "Industrial Policies for a Sustainable Future." In his opening speech, Saudi Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources Bandar Al-Khorayef highlighted the importance of adapting to the rapid global changes and seizing opportunities to enhance global competitiveness. The two-day forum was organized by the Saudi Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources in partnership with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

Al-Khorayef emphasized that no single country can achieve all its goals alone, stressing the need for international cooperation across sectors to share information and data to tackle global challenges. He also underscored the need for significant investments in infrastructure, technology, and education over the next decade and highlighted the importance of debt relief and improved access to resources for developing countries. UNIDO Director General Gerd Muller echoed these sentiments, stressing that the world was facing immense challenges and global crises with industry playing a crucial role in addressing them.

Muller pointed out that the world was witnessing a population growth of 80 million people annually, primarily in developing nations, and emphasized the need for millions of new jobs in these countries by 2050 to accommodate the growing youth population. Muller also addressed the increasing global demand for food and energy, projecting that food demand would rise by 50 percent and energy demand by 70 percent by 2050. He emphasized the urgency of investing in renewable energy, such as green hydrogen, and transitioning to a circular economy to mitigate the effects of climate change.

The forum aims to promote sustainable global industrial policies and foster international cooperation to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Saudi Arabia's 2030 Vision. It features a series of ministerial roundtable discussions with ministers from various countries, alongside experts and decision-makers from both the public and private sectors. Ministers of energy and industry from Saudi Arabia and other countries, including the UAE, Egypt, Singapore, Bahrain, and Morocco, were participating, demonstrating a global commitment to joint efforts in advancing industrial transformation. The event seeks to accelerate industrial development while balancing national and international interests, aligning with the United Nations' development agenda. — KUNA



Kuwait and Saudi Arabia officials ink health agreement on boosting staff skills. — KUNA



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Modi, Xi agree to boost ties

Living pollution-free a 'fundamental right', India's top court says

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## Zionist bombardment impedes Gaza polio vaccination drive

Mass displacement orders, attacks on civilian infrastructure force WHO to call off vaccinations

GENEVA: The World Health Organization said Wednesday that "intense bombardment" and "escalating violence" in northern Gaza had forced it to postpone the final phase of a child polio vaccination drive. The necessary second round of vaccinations has been completed in central and southern Gaza, and was to begin on Wednesday in the north. But the WHO said it had been "compelled to postpone" the bid to give 119,279 children in northern Gaza a second vaccine dose. The Zionist entity launched a major air and ground assault in northern Gaza this month, claiming it was to stop Hamas from regrouping in the area. More than 770 Palestinians have been killed and 1,000 wounded after 19 days of military attacks and siege on Jabalia, in northern Gaza, the territory's government media office says.

The vaccination campaign was called off "due to the escalating violence, intense bombardment, mass displacement orders, and lack of assured humanitarian pauses across most of northern Gaza," the UN health agency said. "The current conditions, including ongoing attacks on civilian infrastructure, continue to jeopardize people's safety and movement in northern Gaza, making it impossible for families to safely bring their children for vaccination," and for health workers to operate, it added.

### Second dose needed

The vaccination drive began after the Gaza Strip confirmed its first case of polio in 25 years. The war has left most medical facilities and Gaza's sewage system in ruins. Typically spread through sewage and contaminated water, poliovirus is highly infectious. It can cause deformities and paralysis, and is potentially fatal, mainly affecting children under the age of five. The WHO says a minimum of two separate doses of oral vaccine are needed to interrupt poliovirus transmission, requiring 90 percent of all children aged under 10 to be vaccinated in a given community.



KHAN YUNIS: A medic administers a polio vaccine to a Palestinian child in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on October 19, 2024. — AFP

As in the initial round of vaccinations last month, the second round was divided into three phases, helped by localized "humanitarian pauses" in the fighting: first in central Gaza, then in the south and finally the north. Each phase was to take up to four days. The WHO warns that immunity levels are lower if the second dose is given more than six weeks after the first. The UN agency said the approved area for

humanitarian pauses in the north had been cut down to Gaza City alone, meaning many children would have missed the second dose. This would "seriously jeopardize efforts to stop the transmission of poliovirus in Gaza", it said.

Since the second round of the campaign began on October 14, some 442,855 children under 10 have been vaccinated in central and southern Gaza, with

coverage at 94 percent. Meanwhile 357,802 children aged two to 10 were given vitamin A supplements. "It is imperative to stop the polio outbreak as soon as possible, before more children are paralyzed and poliovirus spreads further," the UN health agency said. "It is crucial therefore that the vaccination campaign in northern Gaza is facilitated through the implementation of the humanitarian pauses." — AFP

## US has not seen evidence of Hezbollah bunker under hospital

ROME: US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said on Wednesday that he had not seen evidence that there was a Hezbollah bunker filled with cash built under a hospital in Beirut, adding that Washington would continue to work with the Zionist entity to get better insights. The Zionist military said that Hezbollah has stashed hundreds of millions

of dollars in cash and gold in a bunker built under a hospital in Beirut, adding that it would not strike the facility as it keeps up attacks against the group's financial assets. "We have not seen evidence of that at this moment. But, you know, we will continue to collaborate with our (Zionist entity) counterparts to gain better fidelity on exactly what they are looking at," Austin told reporters in Rome. Fadi Alameh, a Lebanese lawmaker with the Shi'ite Amal Movement party and the director of the hospital in question, Al-Sahel, has told Reuters that the Zionist entity was making false and slanderous claims and called on the Lebanese Army to visit and show it had only operating rooms, patients and a morgue. — Reuters

### 'Lock him up'

The race is overshadowed by extraordinary tensions and fears of violence or a refusal by Trump to recognize the results if he loses, as he continues to do over his 2020 loss to Joe Biden. Harris told NBC that her campaign was "of course" ready for a scenario where Trump prematurely claims victory during a vote-counting process that could take days to complete. Biden, who has been an infrequent presence in Harris's campaign, took a shot at Trump Tuesday by re-wording the ex-president's notorious anti-Hillary Clinton chant of "Lock her up".

On a visit to New Hampshire, Biden told a small crowd that "we got to lock" Trump up — adding quickly, "politically lock him up."

With Trump facing multiple pending criminal charges as he competes against Harris to succeed Biden, the White House has been very careful not to weigh in on the Republican's legal problems. The Trump campaign responded that Biden and Harris had a "plan all along ... to politically persecute their opponent."

About 18 million Americans have already voted by mail or in person—representing more than 10 percent of the total in 2020. Some polls appear to be giving the Republican, who at 78 is the oldest nominee from a major party in US history, a slight edge recently—but all within the margin of error. Whatever the result, US voters will make history on November 5: they will either elect the country's first woman president, or they will put the first convicted felon into the White House.

Harris, 60, is also deploying two of her party's most popular emissaries onto the campaign trail: Barack and Michelle Obama. The former president, speaking at a rally in Madison on Tuesday, rolled back the years with fiery attacks on Trump. "Don't boo, vote!" he implored people after his jibes. Later in the day, Rapper Eminem upped the star factor when he introduced Obama at a major Harris campaign event in Detroit, drawing a rapped reply from the ex-president. "I don't usually get nervous, but I was feeling some kinda way following Eminem," Obama said before launching into a recitation of the lyrics to the rapper's hit "Lose Yourself".

At the same time, Trump has increasingly repeated conspiracy theories on the campaign trail, often taking aim at migrants and his political opponents. While speaking to Latino leaders Tuesday in Florida he said: "As president, you have tremendous — it's called extreme power. You have extreme power." "You can, just by the fact, you say, 'Close the border, and the border's closed,'" he added. — AFP

## US 'absolutely' ready to elect first woman president: Harris

WASHINGTON: Kamala Harris said Tuesday that America is "absolutely" ready to elect its first woman president but downplayed her historic bid, saying she simply wants to turn the page for a nation "exhausted" by Donald Trump. With two weeks to Election Day, Harris and Trump are saturating swing states with rallies and taking to the airwaves and podcasts on the hunt for an advantage in a race that polls suggest is effectively tied. Speaking on the national NBC network, Harris responded "absolutely" when asked if America was ready to elect its first woman — but also noted her candidacy was about "turning the page."



MADISON: Former US President Barack Obama (right) smiles next to Democratic vice presidential candidate Tim Walz after speaking during a campaign rally in support of Kamala Harris on October 22, 2024. — AFP

"People are exhausted with Donald Trump and his approach, because it's all about himself," she said. Trump, speaking to supporters in North Carolina, pitched a very different message. "This election is a choice between whether we will have four more years of incompetence, failure and disaster, or whether we'll begin the four greatest years in the history of our country," he said to cheers. He repeatedly called Harris and her running mate Tim Walz stupid during the rally.

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## International

## Tropical storm batters Philippines

14 dead, thousands evacuated as torrential rains submerge villages, unleash volcanic sediment



**POLANGUI:** A coast guard rescue boat evacuates residents to safer grounds in Polangui town, Albay province South of Manila on October 23, 2024. — AFP photos



**GUINOBATAN:** Residents look at a car buried by volcanic ash which cascaded into a village triggered by heavy rains brought about by Tropical Storm Trami at a village in Guinobatan town, Albay province South of Manila on October 23, 2024.

## Conman 'judge' arrested in India for running fake court

**AHMEDABAD, India:** Indian police have arrested an alleged conman accused of spending nearly five years pretending to be a judge and ruling on various disputes in a fake tribunal he set up himself. Morris Samuel Christian promised people in the western state of Gujarat swift rulings on land disputes in exchange for a heavy fee, presiding over cases in an office furnished to look like a genuine court, according to a document issued by a local judge. Christian, who is in his 40s, appeared in actual court on Tuesday on charges of impersonation, cheating, forgery and criminal conspiracy, broadcaster India Today reported.

The alleged fraud came to light when a resident in the state's Ahmedabad city approached a real court regarding a land trade worth a billion dollars. "(Christian) created a fake tribunal ... creating the atmosphere of a court by keeping lawyers present, by behaving like a judge ... and by making it all appear as real court proceedings," Ahmedabad city court Judge J L Chovatiya said in a written order. This is not Christian's first run-in with law enforcement. He was jailed for three months in 2007 for practicing as a lawyer despite the state's bar council saying had no valid law degree. — AFP

**MANILA:** Philippine rescuers waded through chest-deep floodwaters Wednesday to reach residents trapped by Tropical Storm Trami, which has killed 14 people and forced thousands to evacuate as it barrels toward the east coast. Torrential rain has turned streets into rivers, submerged entire villages and buried some vehicles in volcanic sediment set loose by the downpour. At least 32,000 people have fled their homes in the northern Philippines, police said, as the storm edges closer to the Southeast Asian country's main island of Luzon.

In the Bicol region, about 400 kilometers (249 miles) southeast of the capital Manila, "unexpectedly high" flooding was complicating rescue efforts, said police. "We sent police rescue teams but they struggled to enter some areas because the flooding was high and the current was so strong," regional police spokeswoman Luisa Calubaquib told AFP. Eleven people drowned in floodwaters in the Bicol city of Naga, local police chief Erwin Rebellion told AFP.

An elderly woman drowned in Quezon province southeast of the capital, while a toddler was also killed after falling into a flooded canal, police said. Manila's civil defense office reported one person was killed by a falling tree branch. As of 8 pm (1200 GMT), the

storm's center was 150 kilometers east of Luzon's Isabela province with maximum sustained winds rising to 95 kilometers per hour, the national weather agency said. It was expected to smash into the coast of Isabela sometime during the night or early Thursday, slightly weakening as it crosses the island and heads out into the South China Sea, the agency added. More than 500 millimeters (1.64 feet) of rain, or over a month's worth, has already fallen on the region in the past 24 hours.

Photos verified by AFP on Wednesday showed streets submerged by muddy floodwaters in Camarines Sur province's Bato municipality, with only the roofs of houses and convenience stores visible. "It's getting dangerous. We're waiting for rescuers," resident Karen Tabagan told AFP.

## 'Feeling a little helpless'

In Naga, about 40 kilometers from Bato, half of the 600 villages were fully submerged by flooding. At an emergency meeting of government agencies Wednesday morning, President Ferdinand Marcos said that "the worst is yet to come". "I'm feeling a little helpless here because ... all we can do is sit tight, wait, hope and pray that there is not too

much damage, that there are no casualties."

Families driven from their homes in Bicol were being sheltered at about 2,500 various evacuation centers. Volcanic sediment was also unleashed by the rain from the Philippines' famous Mayon volcano, according to Calubaquib, the Bicol police spokeswoman.

Further north in Isabela province, authorities evacuated 216 people from the coast near Divilacan and another 60 from nearby Palanan municipality after the weather service warned of "moderate to significant risk of life-threatening storm surge" or high coastal waves.

"They had to conduct pre-emptive evacuations in response to the storm surge warning ... They had to evacuate some Indigenous people who are living in houses made of light materials," Isabela provincial disaster official Constante Foronda told AFP. Storms and typhoons are common around the region at this time of year. However, a recent study showed that they are increasingly forming closer to coastlines, intensifying more rapidly and lasting longer over land due to climate change. About 20 big storms and typhoons hit the Philippines or its surrounding waters each year, damaging homes and infrastructure and killing dozens of people. — AFP

## Living pollution-free a 'fundamental right', India's top court says

**NEW DELHI:** Living in a pollution-free environment is a fundamental right, India's Supreme Court said on Wednesday as it urged authorities to address deteriorating air quality in the north of the country. India's capital Delhi recorded a "very poor" air quality index of 364 on Wednesday, according to the Central Pollution Control Board, which considers readings below 50 to be good. Swiss group IQAir rated Delhi the world's most polluted city in its live rankings. The city battles toxic air every winter and authorities say much

of the smoke comes from farmers illegally burning paddy stubble to clear their fields in the neighboring breadbasket states of Punjab and Haryana.

The Supreme Court pulled up the governments of both states for taking "selective action" against stubble burning, saying penal provisions were not being properly implemented. "These are not the matters only of implementing the existing laws, these are the matters of blatant violation of fundamental rights ... the governments will have to address ... how they are going to protect the right of citizens to live with dignity," the court said. It directed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's federal government to look into a proposal submitted by Punjab seeking extra funds to provide tractors and diesel to farmers with land holdings of "less than 10 acres".

Delhi is enveloped by a hazy, toxic blanket as temperatures drop each year and cold, heavy air traps vehicle emissions, construction dust, and smoke. The

top court has taken up the matter on several previous occasions but experts say its directives have not been properly implemented on the ground. Recognizing this, the court on Wednesday directed the federal government and the governments of Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and the western state of Rajasthan to submit compliance reports.

Lives of citizens in several parts of South Asia are disrupted by air pollution every winter and a study has found that toxic air can cut life expectancy by more than five years. In Pakistan's most populous province of Punjab, authorities have changed school timings and suspended outdoor activities because of pollution. IQAir rated provincial capital Lahore the world's second most polluted city on Wednesday. "All these steps are being taken to protect children from smog," said Marriyam Aurangzeb, a senior minister in Pakistan's Punjab. — Reuters

## Global business web behind Malaysia's 'houses of horror'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A Malaysian conglomerate under investigation for child abuse and money laundering eluded authorities for years by hiding behind a thriving global Islamic business network, according to police and the company's now-offline website. Horrific allegations of child sexual assault came to light in September when police first rescued more than 400 youngsters from care homes operated by Global Ikhwani Services and Business (GISB).

Malaysian police chief Razarudin Husain said that at least 13 youngsters under 17 suffered sexual abuse in what the media has dubbed as the "houses of horror". The group ran more than 100 care homes in the Muslim-majority Southeast Asian nation where children as young as one year old were housed. "They basically exploit religious belief, and this is not unusual. A lot of cults operate like this ... It's a form of social engineering," Munira Mustafa, executive director of security consultancy Chasseur Group in the capital Kuala Lumpur, told AFP. "It's just them being very adept at leveraging the potential vulnerabilities that exist in



**SELANGOR:** GISB CEO Nasiruddin Mohd Ali (in white) along with his management arrives at the Magistrate Court in Selangor, on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur on October 23, 2024. — AFP

society. It's as simple as that," she added. A total of 625 children have been rescued, while 415 people have been arrested in large-scale police raids that crippled the company's businesses. The firm's chief executive Nasiruddin Ali was charged on Wednesday along with his wife Azura Yusof and 20 senior leaders with being members of an organized crime group. Several other people have been charged with criminal intimidation and child abuse.

Authorities have seized properties and frozen bank ac-

counts related to GISB worth nearly \$4.6 million. They have also opened probes into 23 properties worth \$12.1 million across 10 countries. Police said investigations into money laundering, deviant religious teachings and militant indoctrination were ongoing. GISB initially denied allegations following the raids in Selangor and the nearby state of Negeri Sembilan. Nasiruddin later acknowledged in a Facebook post that "one or two sodomy cases" had taken place at the shelters, while denying that abuse was widespread. Defense lawyer Rosli Kamaruddin said he would ask the attorney general to either review or drop Wednesday's charges.

From its headquarters in a quiet suburb, GISB wove a web of businesses in 20 countries — including Australia, China, France and the United Kingdom, according to its website, which is no longer accessible. The businesses targeted Muslim customers of GISB's network of supermarkets, restaurants and travel agencies. Before the scandal, the company had assets totaling \$75.6 million, the website showed. Founded in 2010, GISB has long been controversial for its links to the now-defunct Al-Arqam sect, facing scrutiny by religious authorities in Malaysia. Al-Arqam, founded by the late Ashaari Muhammad in 1968, was banned by the authorities in 1994 for deviant teachings. In 2011, GISB members set up an "Obedient Wives Club" that called on women to be "whores in bed" to stop their husbands from straying.

Ashaari's daughter, Khaulah — who is also a GISB

member — said the group has eschewed anti-Islamic practices. Malaysia's Home Minister Saifuddin Nasution Ismail told parliament this month that practices "related to the (banned) teachings ... are still being carried out by those we have apprehended and investigated". Children in the welfare homes run by GISB were subjected to severe punishments, such as humiliating exercises, even for minor infractions. "Not 100 but 500 times, if they did not queue properly when waiting for food," Saifuddin said.

Religious Affairs Minister Mohd Na'im Mokhtar said GISB members believe they would be blessed in the afterlife for their faith in Ashaari, who died in 2010. "They practice seeking blessings from Allah through water used to wash the hands, tissues and cloths of leaders as well as the water used to soak their clothes, hair, beard and the blood from the cupping of leaders and former leaders," Na'im said in parliament.

Followers who leave the group are barred from meeting their family members, Na'im said. "Followers are asked to sacrifice and toil in hardships without pay for the benefit of GISB, while the leaders live in luxury, fully supported by the organization." Meanwhile, rescued children were reportedly exposed to videos with militant themes, leaving police to investigate GISB for extremist indoctrination. Singapore-based terrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna told AFP that "if religious extremism is not controlled, it leads to violence and terrorism". — AFP

## US calls for truce as Zionists choke ...

Continued from Page 1

Of at least 20 people reported killed by Zionist military strikes across the enclave on Wednesday, 18 deaths were in northern Gaza, as Zionist forces intensified a siege of northern parts of the Palestinian enclave, surrounding hospitals and refugee shelters, and ordering residents to head south, medics and residents said.

Blinken claimed the Zionist entity had "achieved most of its strategic objectives" in Gaza and now needed to build on those gains. "Now is the time to turn those successes into enduring, strategic success," Blinken said as he left the Zionist entity, after meetings with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other top officials.

Addressing the Zionist entity's pledge to retaliate for Iran's Oct 1 attack, he said: "It's also very important that (the Zionist entity) respond in ways that do not create greater escalation." Blinken later began a visit to Saudi Arabia, which has put on hold talks towards a normalization deal with the Zionist entity until a Palestinian state is created. Blinken renewed his bid to broker diplomatic ties between them, urging the Zionist entity to seize an "incredible opportunity in this region to move in a totally different direction". Next, he is to travel to Qatar and Britain, where he will hold talks on the Gaza and Lebanon wars.

Speaking at a summit in Russia, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian urged members of the BRICS

group of nations to help "end the war" in Gaza and Lebanon. A Hamas official also told AFP that a delegation led by a top official in the movement arrived in Moscow on Wednesday for talks on the Gaza war and efforts to halt it. On aid to Gaza, Blinken said he saw "progress being made, which is good, but more progress needs to be made and, most critically, it needs to be sustained". His remarks come as concerns rise for tens of thousands of civilians trapped by fighting in the hard-to-reach north.

The Zionist entity launched a major air and ground assault in northern Gaza this month, vowing to stop Hamas fighters from regrouping. The only medical facility still partially functioning in the targeted area has "no medicine or medical supplies", warned Hosam Abu Safia, the director of Kamal Adwan Hospital. "People are being killed in the streets, and we can't help them. Bodies are lying on the streets."

The World Health Organization said it was forced to postpone the last phase of a polio vaccination drive in Gaza due to "intense bombardment" and violence in the north. The UN agency for Palestinian refugees said another of its workers had been killed in Gaza, after a strike hit an UNRWA vehicle. An AFP photographer reported a strike in the southern city of Khan Yunis, leaving a mangled aid truck and mourners gathered around two bodies.

The Zionist entity has ramped up its strikes on Hezbollah strongholds and sent in ground forces, in a war that has killed at least 1,552 people since Sept 23, according to an AFP tally of Lebanese health ministry figures. A security source meanwhile said the Zionist army was prepared to keep fighting in both Gaza and Lebanon "for months". — Agencies

## BRICS: Putin urges peace, scores win...

Continued from Page 1

"It seems to me basically to be a symbolic annual gathering where important emerging countries, particularly noisy ones like Russia, but also China, can basically get together and highlight how good it is to be part of something that doesn't involve the US and that global governance isn't good enough," O'Neill told Reuters.

Putin, who dismisses Western claims that he is a war criminal for Russia's actions in Ukraine, hosted more than 20 leaders at the summit in the city of Kazan on the banks of the Volga, including Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who leads NATO member Turkey, and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. Modi told Putin in public that he wanted peace in Ukraine. Xi discussed the war in the Ukraine behind closed doors with the Kremlin chief, as did United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan who has sought to mediate.

The 43-page final communique from the summit ranged from geopolitics and narcotics to artificial intelligence and even the preservation of big cats, but lacked detail on some major issues. It mentioned Ukraine just once. "We note with appreciation relevant proposals of mediation and

good offices, aimed at a peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy," the Kazan declaration said. The toughest language was reserved for the Middle East, calling for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and denounced Zionist "attacks against humanitarian operations, facilities, personnel and distribution points."

On alternative payment systems, there was little detail, though BRICS leaders expressed an interest in developing them and ordered central bankers to report back under the next presidency. "The trend for the BRICS' leading role in the global economy will only strengthen," Putin said, citing population growth, urbanization, capital accumulation, and productivity growth as key factors.

China and India buy about 90 percent of Russia's oil - Moscow's biggest foreign currency earner. Russia is the world's second largest oil exporter. The leaders said they would seek to further develop BRICS' institutional development, but gave little clarity on whether or not BRICS would be expanded.

Putin said that more than 30 states had expressed interest in joining the group but that it was important to strike a balance in any expansion. "I will take the BRICS group seriously when I see signs that the two countries that really matter, China and India, actually really trying to agree on things, rather than effectively trying to confront each other all the time," O'Neill said. — Agencies



## International

# Modi, Xi agree to boost ties

## Two leaders hold first formal talks in five years on BRICS summit sidelines

**NEW DELHI/BEIJING:** Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed on Wednesday to boost communication and cooperation between their countries and resolve conflicts to help improve ties that were damaged by a deadly military clash in 2020. The two leaders met on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Russia for their first formal talks in five years, signaling that ties between the Asian giants have begun to recover from the diplomatic rift caused by the clash along their disputed Himalayan frontier.

India and China, two of the world's biggest economies, have maintained strong trade ties despite the military and diplomatic tensions. The rapprochement is expected to boost Chinese investment in India. India said the two leaders have directed their officials to take further steps to stabilize all aspects of bilateral ties. The Xi-Modi meeting in the city of Kazan came two days after New Delhi said it had reached a deal with Beijing to resolve the four-year military stand-off in the Himalayan region of Ladakh, although neither side has shared details of the pact. The two sides should strengthen communication and cooperation, resolve conflicts and differences, and realize each other's development dreams, Chinese state broadcaster CCTV reported Xi as telling Modi.

Modi put forward ideas for improving and developing bilateral relations, to which Xi agreed in principle, CCTV added without elaborating. In response, Modi told Xi that peace, stability, mutual trust and respect were crucial for relations. "We welcome the agreement on the issues that had come up over the last four years," Modi told

Xi in comments aired on India's state broadcaster Doordarshan. "It should be our priority to maintain peace and tranquility on the border. Mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual sensitivity should be the basis of our relationship," Modi said.

### Path to improving ties

Relations between the world's two most populous nations — both nuclear powers — have been strained since a clash between their troops on the largely undemarcated frontier in the western Himalayas left 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers dead in 2020. The neighbors have added tens of thousands of troops and weapons along the icy frontier over the last four years. Modi and Xi had not held formal bilateral talks since then, although both participated in multilateral events. Their last bilateral summit talks were held in October 2019 in the southern Indian town of Mamallapuram.

The two spoke briefly on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Bali in November 2022. They spoke again on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Johannesburg in August 2023 but released different versions of the conversation, suggesting they didn't see eye to eye. Xi skipped the G20 summit hosted by New Delhi the following month, a decision seen as another setback to relations.

Diplomatic efforts gained momentum in recent months after the two countries' foreign ministers met in July and agreed to step up talks to ease the border tensions. India had made improving the wider political and damaged business ties contingent upon finding a solution to the border stand-off. New Delhi had



**KAZAN:** Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrive for a family photo during the BRICS summit in Kazan on October 23, 2024. — AFP

increased the scrutiny of investments coming from China, blocked direct flights between the two countries and had practically barred issuing any visas to Chinese nationals since the Ladakh clashes.

Speaking in Kazan, Indian Foreign Secretary

Vikram Misri said there was hope for better India-China relations. "As we have maintained during the last four years, the restoration of peace and tranquility on the border areas will create space for ... normalization of our bilateral relations." — Reuters

## At BRICS, Turkey seeks to expand strategic reach

**ISTANBUL:** Turkey's overtures towards BRICS may be a first for a NATO member, but experts say the move is economically-driven and aligns with Ankara's desire for "strategic autonomy". President Recep Tayyip Erdogan joins the BRICS summit in the Russian city of Kazan Wednesday at the invitation of his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. He will meet with the leaders of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Turkey said last month it had asked to join the group of emerging market nations. If admitted, it would be the first NATO member in a bloc which sees itself as a counterweight to Western powers. Most of its members are sharply at odds with the West over the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, and in the case of Beijing and Moscow, also its stance on the Ukraine war.

BRICS is an acronym for its five founding members although the alliance added four nations this year, three from the Middle East — including Iran which the West says is supplying Russia with drones to use against Ukraine. But experts said Turkey's bid to join did not mean it will turn its back on the West, nor on Ukraine, whose top diplomat visited on Monday — let alone NATO. "The government is continuing to deepen its ties with countries that are not members of the Western alliance, in line with the strategic autonomy that Turkey is pursuing,"

Sinan Ulgen, a researcher at the Carnegie Europe think tank, told AFP. "But the initiative is also partly economic: it's expected to have a positive impact on bilateral economic relations."

### 'A multipolar asymmetric world'

The BRICS nations represent just under half of the world's population and around a third of global gross domestic product. As a "platform", it does not impose binding economic obligations on members as does the European Union, at whose door Ankara has been knocking since 1999. Erdogan raised a similar point last month. "Those who say (don't join BRICS) are the same people who have kept Turkey waiting at the EU's door for years," he said. "We cannot cut ties with the Turkic and Islamic world just because we are a NATO country: BRICS and ASEAN are structures that offer us opportunities to develop economic cooperation," he said.

Ulgen said it was clear the two issues were connected. "Turkey would not have taken these steps (towards BRICS) if it had been able to pursue integration talks with Europe, or even with (upgrading) the customs union" which has been stalled since 1996. Soli Ozel, an international relations professor at Istanbul's Kadir Has University, said Turkey was responding to an anticipated shift in the global center of gravity. "The Turkish government sees that the unquestioned hegemony of the West cannot continue as it is," he told AFP. "And like many other countries, it is trying to position itself to have more of a say if a new order emerges in an asymmetrically multipolar world."

Ankara wanted to take advantage of the "weakening" of Western influence, he said, "particularly that of the United States, to see whether it can



**KAZAN:** Russia's President Vladimir Putin meets with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Kazan on October 23, 2024. — AFP

create more room for maneuver". But Turkey remained part of "the security-conscious West and its economy certainly remains part of the European economy," he added. For Gokul Sahni, a Singapore-based analyst, Ankara wanted the best of both worlds. "Turkey wants to benefit from being West-adjacent, but — knowing it can't ever become part of the West — it wants to partner closely with the non-Western BRICS" countries, he told AFP. And it was a no-risk gamble because joining BRICS "has no security implications", he said. "Turkey will never leave NATO," said Ozel, but its rapprochement with BRICS reflects "the need for change, the desire to obtain more from emerging regional powers". — AFP

## UK, Germany sign new defense pact as Ukraine tensions rise

**LONDON/BERLIN:** Britain and Germany signed a landmark defense agreement on Wednesday and pledged to co-operate on exercises on NATO's eastern flank as they stressed the need for Europe to be able to defend itself given possible escalation in the war in Ukraine. Europe's two biggest spenders on defense said the pact includes a commitment to develop new weapons that have a greater range and accuracy than current long-range missile systems like Storm Shadow, which Britain has given to Ukraine.

Highlighting their security concerns, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has called on allies to respond to evidence that North Korea is providing Russia with troops to get involved in the war. "I see this as a sign of desperation, as well as a shocking escalation," British Defense Secretary John Healey said at a joint press conference, adding it was highly likely North Korean troops had been deployed into Russia, but less clear if they had been sent to Ukraine yet. German defense minister Boris Pistorius said he was "quite concerned about that development", as it illustrated how international conflicts were increasingly interlinked, making them harder to de-escalate.

### Do more together

Britain's new Labour government is seeking to reset ties with Europe on a range of issues, including defense. Labour had pledged a security deal with Germany within six months of winning power in July, and both ministers said a broader bilateral accord was expected to be agreed in early 2025. Healey said that previous collaborations between the countries on defense had been ad hoc, and that Wednesday's pact represented the first 'fully-fledged' defense co-operation agreement between the countries.

Under the agreement, Germany will occasionally station planes in Scotland to help protect the north Atlantic Ocean, Britain said. The countries will collaborate on armed vehicles and land-based drones, as well as working to equip German Sea King helicopters — which it has given to Ukraine — with modern missile systems. Rheinmetall will also open a new factory that will create 400 jobs and be the first manufacturer of artillery gun barrels in Britain for a decade. Healey said that European allies needed to take on more responsibility for Europe's security, and that Britain's approach was a 'NATO-first' defense strategy. "In a more dangerous world, allies are our strategic strength, and we must do more together," he said.

Pistorius said that France, which has bilateral security deals with both Britain and Germany, was supportive of the new accord. He added that Europe needed to do more regardless of who won next month's US presidential election, and that, while Scandinavian and Baltic allies raised the alarm when Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, much of Europe had been slow to react. "We pushed the snooze button and turned around, while the other countries stayed awake," Pistorius said. "So we lost almost eight years, and we have now to speed up." — Reuters



**LONDON:** Britain's Defense Secretary John Healey (right) shakes hands with Germany's Defense Minister Boris Pistorius inside Trinity House, in London, on October 23, 2024. — AFP



**FORKS:** Hickory Grant, a machinist and a member of the Forks town council, unfurls a Trump flag at his workshop in Forks, Washington on October 15, 2024 in Clallam County. — AFP photos

## Clallam County: The last bellwether in the US election

**FORKS:** If you want to know who's going to win the White House in November, ask the people of Clallam County. The 78,000 folks who live in this strip of mountains, forests and rain-dashed coast in the far northwest of the continental United States haven't been wrong about their presidential pick in almost half a century. "Our county is a bellwether county," explained Rod Fleck, city planner in Forks, a small city in Washington state built on a once-enormous timber industry. "We are the last county that how it votes in November has been an indicator of how the presidential election turns out." Between Ronald Reagan's win in 1980 and Donald Trump's victory in 2016, just 19 of the several thousand counties across the country always picked the winner. But in 2020, 18 of them stuck with Trump, who lost the election. Only Clallam County voted for Joe Biden, keeping its record alive.

### Neither red nor blue

Like many of the other former bellwethers, Clallam's demographic profile doesn't look like that of the US as a whole. It is less diverse — almost 80 percent of the population is white — with a lower proportion of college-educated voters, and a

median household income below the national average. And politically, it's what Hickory Grant, who runs a repair shop in Forks, calls a purple county. "I wouldn't say it's red, I wouldn't say it's blue. So it's got to be somewhere in the middle."

Grant grew up in Kansas and set off for an adventure in Alaska as a young man, but got waylaid in Forks when his truck broke down. Twenty years later, he sits on the five-person city council, a role he says he wouldn't have if he wasn't deeply conservative. "This is a small town. Everybody knows where everybody stands," Grant said. The large "Trump 2024" flag outside his workshop dispels any lingering doubt.

### Economic squeeze

Like many in his community, Grant has felt the effect of the slowing timber industry, squeezed by international competition, a faltering national house-building program and environmental rules. He said he has never really enjoyed politics, but feels it's his civic duty to offer a counterpoint to Washington state's Democratic tendencies. "Being a conservative in a sea of liberals is frustrating sometimes," he said. "It fits me well here in Forks. I would probably not be welcomed as much in Port Angeles."

A plaque by the county courthouse in Port Angeles notes that under a plan conceived by Abraham Lincoln, Clallam's county seat was once intended to be a second US capital — a backup to Washington, DC if the country ever needed to be ruled from the West. The city's 20,000 people lean Democratic, though Trump yard signs are not hard to find.



**SEQUIM:** A flag opposing the reelection of former US president Donald Trump is seen in Clallam County.

### Tourists and retirees

Like Forks — the destination for thousands of visitors keen to see where the "Twilight" books and films were set — Port Angeles is a tourist draw. The city has a ferry connection to Canada and is the gateway to stunning Olympic National Park, where temperate rainforests abut snow-capped mountains. Mark Ozias, Clallam County commissioner, said the decline of timber over the last few decades has seen the area pivot. "The tourism economy is a very important component of what makes the county run," he told AFP.

A long-term demographic shift in the east of the county may be part of what is keeping Clallam in line with America as a whole, said Scott Chichester, who farms 30 acres (12 hectares) near Sequim. "We get a subsample of people from all over the place that end up here," he said. He has seen his hometown grow as retirees — initially from California, but now from all over the United States — moved in, drawn by the area's relative affordability and climate.

The county "has become less stuck in very old ways, with more diversity of opinions and points of view and cultural references over time," Chichester said. For Ozias, the commissioner, that looks likely to translate into a Democratic Party victory. "I'm going to roll the dice and say that I think there's a really good chance that Clallam County is going to continue to be a bellwether county and vote for Kamala Harris," he said. In Forks, Fleck has his fingers crossed for the same. But if not? "I'm hoping that we still have places in rural America where the political differences are whatever they are, and the next day, you help your neighbor," he said. — AFP



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2024

# ZainTECH showcases AI-powered enterprise and sustainability solutions at GITEX 2024

## Multiple significant agreements realized during GITEX to enhance service offerings



CEO Andrew Hanna with the ZainTECH team at GITEX.



Zain booth at GITEX Global 2024.

**DUBAI:** ZainTECH, the integrated digital solutions provider of Zain Group marked a highly successful participation at GITEX Global 2024, where for the second consecutive year, the company showcased how its innovative AI-powered enterprise solutions and digital transformation services are driving sustainability agendas across industries in the MENA region.

GITEX Global is the largest dedicated ICT and technology exhibition and conference in the Middle East, attracting over 100,000 visitors between October 14-18, 2024. The distinctive ZainTECH booth,

"Our growing portfolio of digital transformation services that were showcased during GITEX are helping enterprises achieve efficient and impactful returns from their technology investment. ZainTECH is strategically positioned to leverage AI-powered solutions with our end-to-end services to accelerate growth for enterprises through monetization of data and digital assets in a sustainable manner," Hanna added, "Sustainability is no longer just a nice-to-have aspect of modern enterprise activity; it is essential to the development and longer-term success of organizations."

grating sophisticated mapping and analytics with cutting-edge digital technology.

UL Solutions: A strategic partnership facilitating ZainTECH becoming the first ICT company in the region to be designated as a SPIRE™ Qualified Company by UL Solutions. This achievement positions ZainTECH as a trusted provider and the go-to source of quality, verified smart building digital solutions, utilizing its own SPIRE Qualified Assessors, thereby solidifying its leadership in the smart building sector. SPIRE is the world's first smart building assessment program that offers a holistic evaluation of a building's technology and operational performance.

HTC Vive: This strategic partnership will see ZainTECH offer HTC VIVE's industry leading XR hardware and VIVERSE, the platform for business spatial collaboration across the MEA region. Extended reality and virtual reality (VR) features are being demanded by a growing number of clients, and as networks have adapted to support the higher data streams necessary to provision such features, ZainTECH sees demand for such services only growing.

### AI and digital data driving sustainability

Digital data has never been more valuable than it is in modern times, given advances in artificial intelligence (AI), which are driving significant predictive capabilities that enterprises can utilize to make their operations more efficient and impactful. The fact that ZainTECH has a capability matched to every touchpoint with corporate data – from source to organization and computation, through to cybersecurity, storage and cloud solutions, makes the company perfectly positioned to support organizations with the AI-enhanced digital transformation. All of this ties into paving a sustainable future.

### Technological agreements

ZainTECH entered into a series of significant technology agreements at the show, reflecting the company's commitment to enhancing its sustainability-focused service offerings and driving innovation:

Urbi: A partnership with this developer of a cutting-edge geo-platform that integrates all the necessary data, algorithms, and tools to address challenges in mapping, location data, navigation, and spatial analysis, aimed at merging Urbi's refined geospatial insights with ZainTECH's digital expertise. This collaboration will enhance ZainTECH's ability to tackle complex regional issues by inte-

urbanization, capital accumulation, and productivity growth as key factors.

Russia, the world's biggest wheat exporter, proposed the creation of a BRICS grain exchange which could later be expanded to trade other major commodities such as oil, gas and metals. "BRICS countries are among the world's largest producers of grains, legumes, and oilseeds. In this regard, we proposed opening a BRICS grain exchange," Putin told the leaders.

He added that the exchange "will contribute to the formation of fair and predictable price indicators for products and raw materials, considering its special role in ensuring food security".

"The implementation of this initiative will help protect national markets from negative external interference, speculation, and attempts to create an artificial food shortage," Putin said. Other leaders backed the creation of a common cross-border payments system, which would help BRICS countries trade with

each other, bypassing the dollar-dominated global financial system. Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who took part in the BRICS summit via video conference after a head injury over the weekend, said that it is time for the BRICS nations to create alternative payment methods.

He added that the group's New Development Bank (NDB) was designed as an alternative to what he called failing Bretton Woods institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that he welcomed the steps for financial integration of BRICS countries while China's President Xi Jinping urged BRICS countries to deepen financial and economic cooperation. In his speech, Putin also called for the creation of a BRICS investment platform, which will facilitate mutual investment between BRICS countries and could also be used for investment in other countries in the Global South. — Reuters

protocols after a 737 MAX flown by Alaska Airlines was forced to make an emergency landing in January when a fuselage panel blew out mid-flight.

The near-catastrophe — coming after two fatal 737 MAX crashes in 2018 and 2019 that claimed 346 lives — put Boeing under greater regulatory oversight. The company's latest results were dented by \$3 billion in one-time cost hits to its 777X and 767 programs, as well as the drag from the ongoing strike by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM). About 33,000 IAM workers in the US Pacific Northwest walked off the job on September 13. The union is slated to vote on a new contract that could end the stoppage later Wednesday. — AFP

The results had been telegraphed to the market on October 11, when newly installed Chief Executive Kelly Ortberg announced the company was cutting 10 percent of its workforce. Ortberg, in a message to employees, said a turnaround would require a "fundamental culture change" as well as steps to stabilize finances, improve operations and devise a future vision for the company.

"It will take time to return Boeing to its former legacy, but with the right focus and culture, we can be an iconic company and aerospace leader once again," Ortberg said in a news release. Even before the strike, Boeing had slowed production in its commercial plane division to ensure greater attention to safety pro-

- Under ZainTECH's corporate slogan, 'Think Tomorrow, Today', the eco-friendly stand welcomed hundreds of clients and visitors
- Andrew Hanna: Our growing portfolio of digital transformation services are helping enterprises achieve efficient and impactful returns from technology investment

which welcomed hundreds of clients and inquiring visitors, was built utilizing recycled material and designed for reuse, aligning with the company's commitment to sustainability principles.

A competitive advantage for ZainTECH is the depth and breadth of its operations and solutions, which now span eight markets in the Middle East and Africa, and cover the entire ICT stack including cloud, cybersecurity, big data, IoT, AI, smart cities, modern infrastructure, drones and robotics, enterprise licensing, and emerging technologies all under one roof.

Andrew Hanna, CEO of ZainTECH said,

## BRICS leaders tout joint finance, trade projects

**KAZAN, Russia:** Leaders of the nations in the BRICS grouping, which accounts for 37 percent of global economic output, predicted its influence would grow as they met in Russia on Tuesday, outlining common projects ranging from a grain exchange to a cross-border payments system.

Russia's President Vladimir Putin, who has sought support from BRICS leaders amid his standoff with the West over the war in Ukraine, said that BRICS' average economic growth in 2024/25 would be 3.8 percent, compared to global growth of 3.2-3.3 percent. "The trend for the BRICS' leading role in the global economy will only strengthen," Putin said, citing population growth,

## Boeing reports \$6.2bn loss on labor strike

**NEW YORK:** Boeing reported a whopping \$6.2 billion quarterly loss Wednesday as a nearly six-week labor strike weighed on its commercial plane division and costly problems dragged down its defense and space business. The embattled aviation giant, which has been under scrutiny from regulators following safety problems, reported a one percent decline in revenues to \$17.8 billion.

## Saudi growth to accelerate in 2025 as oil taps open

**BENGALURU:** Economic growth in Saudi Arabia will accelerate next year thanks to higher oil output after two years of modest performance, according to a Reuters poll of economists, who also forecast robust growth for other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies led by Russia, known as OPEC+, has been curbing oil output since late 2022 but is expected to increase production in December, likely boosting revenues for the six GCC countries. Crude oil prices are expected to remain broadly weak and average \$76.75 per barrel next year, up from around \$74.8 currently, according to a separate Reuters poll. Saudi Arabia, the world's largest exporter of crude oil, is reportedly preparing to abandon its unofficial target of reaching \$100 per barrel. This will allow the kingdom to reverse past production cuts and increase market share, which along with non-oil revenue growth, will help drive faster economic growth.

The Oct 9-22 Reuters poll of 21 economists forecast the Saudi economy would expand 4.4 percent in 2025, the fastest in three years, and up from an expected 1.3 percent this year. The GCC economies were forecast to expand an average 4.1 percent next year, up from the 3.7 percent expected in a July poll and faster than the 1.8 percent growth projected for 2024.

"We expect the effects of lower oil prices and higher production volumes (to largely offset) each other. Since growth is focusing on produced volumes, real GDP

growth will still benefit and accelerate in 2025 relative to 2024," said Ralf Wiegert, head of MENA economics at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

Prominent economies in the region, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar, have been exploring ways to diversify from relying on oil as their main revenue source, with many economists predicting the growth rate in non-oil GDP will be largely in line with oil GDP next year. "However, oil revenues will play a critical role for all of the three economies. Even in the long-term outlook, non-oil revenues will be unable to replace oil revenues," Wiegert said.

The UAE economy is expected to be the fastest growing in the region at 4.9 percent next year, up from 3.7 percent in 2024. Qatar economic growth is projected to accelerate to 2.7 percent in 2025, up from 2.1 percent. "The UAE's economy will be the star performer in terms of economic growth in 2025. If OPEC+ is set to open the taps up, the UAE will stand to gain more as it has had its base oil output quota raised twice without being able to take advantage of that," said James Swanston, economist at Capital Economics. "Qatar and the UAE are further along in their diversification efforts and are better placed in a world approaching peak oil demand. In particular, UAE has a much larger non-oil economy and, exemplified by Dubai, is able to sustain tourism, financial services, and not rely as much on oil."

In the rest of the GCC, growth expectations for Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman for next year are projected at 2.8 percent, 2.5 percent and 2.8 percent, respectively, versus 2.8 percent, -1.3 percent and 1.6 percent in 2024. Inflation, which has remained stable in the region, is poised to stay subdued with median forecasts ranging from 0.8 percent to 3.0 percent for this year and next. — Reuters



## Business

# Burgan Bank launches mentorship program for the senior leadership

## Ro'ya Mentorship Program is part of bank's outstanding human capital development strategy

KUWAIT: In continued efforts to uphold its commitment to human capital development across all employment grades, Burgan Bank announced the launch of the Mentorship Module for Visionary Leaders, the latest addition to Burgan's flagship learning and development program, Ro'ya. The new module is designed specifically to prepare emerging senior leaders on the heels of the Bank receiving the Brandon Hall Group Human Capital Management (HCM) Gold Award of Excellence in the "Learning and Development" category for the "Best Use of Social Collaborative Learning".



Bashar Al-Qattan

The program launch was announced during a special ceremony in the presence of Tony Daher, Group Chief Executive Officer at Burgan Bank, alongside the program mentors from Burgan's top management as well as the seven select mentees undertaking the first edition of

the Ro'ya Mentorship Module. This program is the latest in Burgan Bank's efforts to constantly develop its human capital and build a strong internal talent pipeline for long-term success, as part of its overarching commitment to advancing Kuwait's top professional calibers. "A central factor to our success in retaining the best talents in the market is creating a long-term development plan that suits each employee's aspirations and ambitions, including emerging leaders," said Bashar Al-Qattan, Executive Manager - Learning and Talent Development at Burgan Bank. "Stemming from Burgan's robust human capital development strategy and commitment to employee growth and leadership development, we designed the Mentorship Module to nurture our internal local talents and prepare the next generation of leaders using innovative research-based approaches that have proven to be very impactful."

The Mentorship Module, designed to span six months, was developed with the active involvement of a number of the Bank's top senior leaders who will be directly guiding the seven select mentees throughout the program's duration. In addition to the mentorship learning style, which takes a personalized approach and follows a tailored learning path, the program will incorporate various development tools, such as on-line learning, psychometric assessments and debriefings, individual development plan discussions, group



Tony Daher, Group CEO at Burgan Bank, with the program mentors from Burgan's top management and mentees.

coaching by seasoned industry experts, and one-on-one monthly mentorship sessions. To guarantee the success of the program, an individual development plan (IDP) will be set for each mentee to guide their development and assess their progress.

It serves to note that Burgan's leading human

capital development strategy has earned the Bank numerous accolades, including the Great Place to Work certificate, two consecutive Brandon Hall Group Human Capital Management (HCM) Awards of Excellence, and the GCC Excellence Award in Recruitment and Development of Nationals.

## India to retain investment curbs on border nations

NEW DELHI: India will retain investment curbs on bordering nations, the finance minister said, days after it struck a pact with China on patrols along their disputed Himalayan frontier, with the leaders of both countries expected to meet on Wednesday. The deal paves the way to end a four-year military stand-off and improve political and business ties between the Asian giants, strained since a deadly border clash in 2020 that slowed exchanges of capital, technology and talent.

"I cannot blindly receive foreign direct investment (FDI) because I want money for investment, forgetful or unmindful of where it is coming from," Nirmala Sitharaman told a gathering at the Wharton business school in the United States on Tuesday. The comments, which blunt hopes for a swift easing of trade curbs, came ahead of the expected meeting of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and China's President Xi Jinping, on the sidelines of a summit of BRICS nations in Russia.

"We want business, we want investment, but we also need some safeguards, because India is located in a neighborhood which is very, very sensitive," Sitharaman added.

The place of origin of some investments could spark the concern of authorities, rather than the identities of investors, she said. "So such restrictions will be in place in the national interest."

The dispute between the world's two most populous countries led to stagnation in ties at a time of exploding demand for electric vehicles, semiconductors and artificial intelligence, key growth areas offering opportunities for cooperation. India stepped up vetting and security clearances in 2020 as part of its scrutiny of investments from companies based in neighboring countries, but did not specifically mention any nations. The step, widely seen as aimed at staving off takeovers and investments by Chinese firms, effectively turned away billions of dollars from the likes of carmakers BYD and Great Wall Motor, while red tape ensnared Indian firms with Chinese stakeholders.

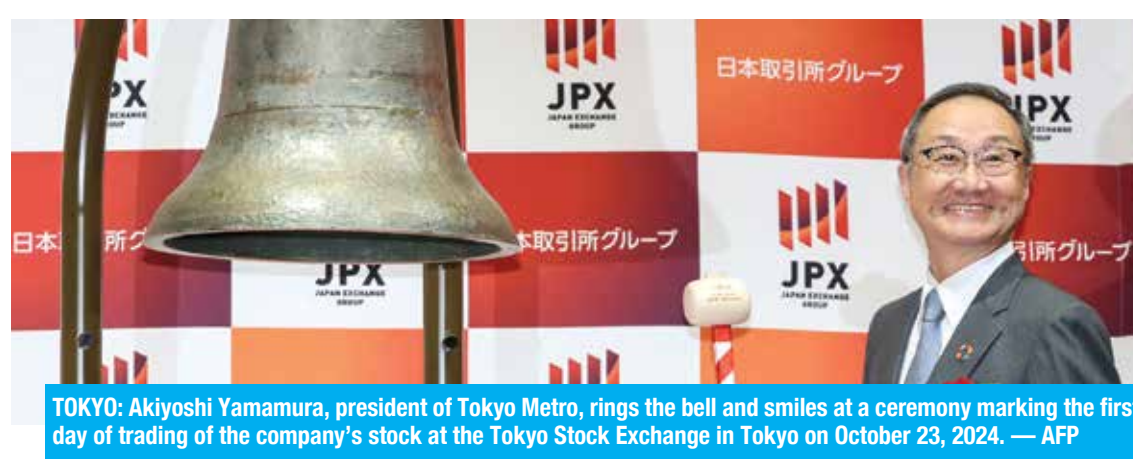
India's commercial ties with neighbors Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan are dwarfed by those with China, its biggest source of good and largest supplier of industrial products last year. Indian imports of goods from China have surged 56 percent since the 2020 clash, nearly doubling New Delhi's trade deficit with Beijing to \$85 billion. — Reuters

## China should use fiscal policy to boost growth: IMF

WASHINGTON: The Chinese government should use its tax-and-spend policies to help boost flagging economic growth, a senior IMF official told AFP ahead of key meetings this week in Washington.

The IMF has raised concern about the levels of global public debt, which it estimates will reach a record \$100 trillion this year, with debt expected to rise in both the United States and China, the world's two largest economies. "China is in the process of a major transition," Vitor Gaspar, head of the IMF's department that advises governments on fiscal affairs, said in an interview from his IMF headquarters office close to the White House. "Fiscal capacity can help China reach a different plateau in terms of its economic ambition, in terms of its economic prosperity," he said ahead of the Monday opening of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank annual meetings open. Gaspar noted China's "very strong fiscal capacity to act."

The IMF estimates that China's economic growth will ease over the coming years, slowing from 5.2 percent in 2023 to 4.8 percent this year, and 4.5 percent in 2025. Countries like China and the United States which have rising levels of public debt while also being "safe-



TOKYO: Akiyoshi Yamamura, president of Tokyo Metro, rings the bell and smiles at a ceremony marking the first day of trading of the company's stock at the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo on October 23, 2024. — AFP

## Tokyo Metro shares rocket on debut

TOKYO: Shares in Tokyo Metro, one of the world's busiest subways, soared almost 50 percent on its debut Wednesday after its government owners raised \$2.3 billion in Japan's biggest initial public offering in six years. Each day around 6.5 million people — more than the London Underground — ride Tokyo Metro's nine lines, part of a vast transport network serving the capital and its sprawling suburbs.

The company's shares closed at 1,739 yen, 45 percent up from their issue price of 1,200 yen. Earlier they were up 47 percent.

The 348.6 billion yen proceeds will redeem reconstruction bonds issued after the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster in northeast Japan that killed 18,000 people.

The listing reduces government ownership, split between the nation and Tokyo city, to around 50 percent. Many Japanese rail operators are already privatized. To attract investors, perks for buying more than 200 shares included tickets to the Tokyo Metro museum and golf range, as well as free tempura toppings at its noodle stands.

Reports said the issue was 15 times oversubscribed among investors. The IPO is Japan's largest since tycoon Masayoshi Son's tech and telecoms conglomerate SoftBank Group raised a national record of \$23.5 billion by listing its mobile unit in 2018. London built the first public underground railway, but in 1927 Tokyo became the first Asian city with a subway.

These days, four other subway lines are run separately by the Tokyo government, alongside East Japan Railway's overground routes such as the circular Yamanote Line, and other private services.

Analysts said the firm's strong profits and stable business — with Tokyo less affected by Japan's de-

ly away from debt distress" should move gradually but decisively to adjust fiscal policy to bring down their debt-to-GDP ratios, Gaspar said.

At the same time, China should also be looking to implement fiscal policies to help drive growth and reverse its expected economic slowdown. "For a continental economy like China, the main driver of growth and development has to be domestic," he said, noting that if this issue was tackled it could help to rebalance the Chinese economy. China should also be looking to tackle "financial misallocations" stemming primarily from the country's struggling real estate sector, and to tackle some of the "vulnerabilities and financial weaknesses" at the sub-national level, he said.

Alongside China, the IMF sees the United States as a key driver of global public debt, and expects its gross general government debt-to-GDP ratio to hit 121 percent this year, and to approach 132 percent by the end of the decade, Gaspar said. This figure does not include the trillion-dollar spending commitments made by both Democratic candidate Kamala Harris and Republican Donald Trump on the campaign trail ahead of the US presidential elections on November 5, Gaspar said.

Like China, "the US benefits from ample room to adjust fiscal policy instruments to bring US debt under control," he said, adding that the tax and spending choices would ultimately have to be made by politicians. "It's very important to have public support — political support — for fiscal adjustment, and that calls for a judicious mix of people and growth focused measures," he said, noting that this should include taxation that is seen to be "fair".

mographic crisis — and high dividend yield attracted investors. In the year to March 2025, it expects to pay 40 yen per share. Tokyo Metro posted a net profit of 46 billion yen for the fiscal year that ended in March 2024, up 67 percent from a year earlier. This year it is aiming to increase this to 52 billion yen.

The firm's spectacular debut raised questions about why the government did not try and secure a higher price at the IPO. But Shiki Sato, strategist of Tokyo Securities, told AFP it is "quite common that the first price goes higher than the initial public offering price, especially in Japan, as the offering price is based on earnings but that does not include investors' expectations".

The share price of Japanese companies that have gone public this year has risen 34 percent on average, Bloomberg News reported, citing Ichiyoshi Securities. The "low volatility" of Tokyo Metro makes its shares a safe prospect for ordinary Japanese investor households, Hideaki Miyajima, a professor in commerce at Waseda University, said before the IPO.

"And for institutional investors, the Japanese market is very favorable given the very low exchange rate" of the yen and recent corporate governance reforms, he added. Tokyo Metro president Akiyoshi Yamamura said: "I believe (the share price rise) is the result of many people thinking highly of us. I would like to express my gratitude. We will continue to try to live up to the expectations of our shareholders." The listing comes ahead of elections in Japan on Sunday with polls suggesting Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's Liberal Democratic Party might fall short of a majority for the first time since 2009. The world's fourth-largest economy has been struggling to gain traction while a falling population means firms in many sectors are having trouble filling vacancies. The International Monetary Fund on Tuesday slashed its 2024 growth forecast for Japan to 0.3 percent but projected it would expand 1.1 percent next year. — AFP

## IMF urges Turkey to avoid repeat of minimum wage hike

WASHINGTON: Turkey should avoid a repeat of its last inflation-fuelling minimum wage hike when the next raise is due on Jan 1 and focus on support measures for the poorest part of the population instead, the IMF's mission chief for the country told Reuters.

Jim Walsh, speaking on the sidelines of the IMF World Bank annual meeting in Washington, also said talk of interest rate cuts was "probably premature", given that sequential inflation was still running well above 2 percent. Ankara is expected to announce in December by how much it will raise the minimum wage at the start of 2025 after delivering a 49 percent hike in January of this year, which pushed inflation sharply higher in the first quarter. "We would hope that doesn't happen this year, because we know from experience in many countries with high inflation that wage-setting like this at a national level is a big anchor for inflation expectations," said Walsh. "There's a trade-off that the authorities have to make and they're quite aware of it." Instead, Ankara should focus on developing social programs that will provide support for low-income households through cash transfers or through better targeting government support to help bolster the income of workers on lower wages, Walsh said.

Market expectations for the January minimum wage hike stand at around 25 percent, according to bankers. Inflation climbed sharply in the wake of the last hike, hitting a peak of 75 percent in May, but has been slowing since and fell to 49.4 percent in September - dipping for the first time in the current cycle below the benchmark interest rate of 50 percent. Turkey's central bank held rates in October and warned a bump in recent inflation data lifted uncertainty, a hawkish signal that could reinforce views that policy easing will not begin until next year. While financial conditions had already tightened, Walsh said the central bank should further strengthen its communication and that more rate hikes may be necessary if the bank really wanted to hit its inflation target of 14 percent by year-end 2025.

"The central bank has often sounded hawkish, and they say that they will keep rates where they are until they see that sequential inflation is on a downward trend," said Walsh. However, markets were still ripe with speculation about when the central bank would begin to lower rates, he said. "When sequential inflation is still running at 2.5 percent a month, talk of cutting is probably premature." The IMF expects inflation to stand at 24 percent by the end of next year - broadly in line with a Reuters poll that predicted inflation would fall to 25 percent by then. — Reuters



US Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen speaks during the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group's annual meetings October 22, 2024, in Washington, DC. — AFP

Gaspar said the IMF agrees with the findings of a report published last month on the European Union's lack of competitiveness conducted by the former Italian premier Mario Draghi, which called for "massive" but targeted investment to fund the 27-member trading bloc's priorities. "An emphasis on growth and competitiveness in Europe is just (and) appropriate," he

said, despite the cost of these measures.

Gaspar also noted the Draghi report's calls to deepen the EU's single market — something the IMF has long supported. "The single market is one of the central cornerstones of European integration, one of the most important collective assets of Europe, and should be used to the fullest extent," he said. — AFP



## Business

# AAIOT signs strategic agreements with Oracle and RIT at GITEX 2024

## Collaborations to foster innovation, develop national talent



Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah, President of AAIOT, with the Oracle team during the signing of the agreement.



Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah signs agreement with RIT.

**KUWAIT:** The Artificial Intelligence of Things Association (AAIOT) has announced the signing of two strategic co-operation agreements with Oracle and the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) during its participation in GITEX 2024 in Dubai. These collaborations aim to accelerate the adoption of AI and IoT technologies across various sectors in Kuwait, in alignment with Kuwait's Vision 2035 for digital transformation, which seeks to position the country as a regional technology hub.

Through this partnership, Oracle will bring its leading expertise in cloud technology, data analytics, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and cyber-

security, strengthening Kuwait's digital infrastructure. At the same time, AAIOT will coordinate efforts with local stakeholders, including government bodies, the private sector, and academic institutions, to ensure the adaptation of these technologies to the specific needs of the Kuwaiti market.

Omar Saleh, Vice President of Oracle for the Gulf region, said: "We are pleased to be part of this collaboration with AAIOT to drive digital transformation in Kuwait using AI and IoT technologies. This partnership demonstrates our commitment to supporting Kuwait's vision to become a regional hub for advanced technology, and we look forward

to sharing our expertise to help achieve these ambitious goals."

### Fostering innovation

Under the Memorandum of Understanding, Oracle and AAIOT will organize a series of joint events and activities, including technical workshops, training programs, research projects, and seminars. These initiatives aim to develop the skills of the local workforce and stimulate innovation in multiple fields such as healthcare, education, and industry. These efforts will contribute to building a tech-savvy society capable of adopting advanced digital solutions for greater efficiency and addressing various challenges.

Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah, President of AAIOT, expressed his confidence that this partnership with Oracle will add significant value to Kuwait's tech sector. He stated: "With Oracle's global expertise and our deep understanding of the local market needs, we are optimistic that this collaboration will pave the way for a tangible and sustainable digital transformation in Kuwait."

### Developing national talent

Alongside the agreement with Oracle, AAIOT has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Rochester Institute of Technology, aiming to empower and train national talent in digital trans-

formation, artificial intelligence, and smart cities. This collaboration seeks to provide specialized educational programs designed to prepare young Kuwaitis to enter the workforce with advanced skills that align with the aspirations of Vision 2035. Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah emphasized that this partnership with RIT strengthens Kuwait's ability to build a specialized national workforce capable of leading future technological advancements. The President of RIT praised this fruitful cooperation, expressing his delight in working closely with AAIOT to achieve shared goals and preparing a generation of innovative specialists across various technological fields.

### News in Brief

#### Lloyds bank profit drops

**LONDON:** British lender Lloyds Banking Group revealed Wednesday a drop in profits as interest rates fall, adding that performance in the first nine months was impacted also by higher costs. Profit after tax dropped 13 percent to £3.4 billion (\$4.4 billion), Lloyds said in a statement. It is the first of Britain's major banks to update on performance in the earnings season, with Barclays, NatWest and HSBC to follow in coming days. As central banks embark on cutting rates with inflation returning to lower levels, lenders are following suit causing them to lose deposits. Lloyds on Wednesday added that net interest income declined 10 percent to £9.1 billion in the nine months to the end of September. — AFP

#### Starbucks results show falling sales

**NEW YORK:** US coffee giant Starbucks on Tuesday released preliminary results showing that sales are continuing to fall, as the new CEO vowed a strategic overhaul to turn the company around. "Our fourth quarter performance makes it clear that we need to fundamentally change our strategy so we can get back to growth and that's exactly what we are doing with our 'Back to Starbucks' plan," CEO Brian Niccol said in a statement. "I believe that our problems are very fixable and that we have significant strengths to build on," he added. — AFP

#### US regulator finalizes air taxi rules

**NEW YORK:** US regulators on Tuesday finalized regulations for "powered lift" vehicles, opening the door for commercial air taxis. The rules apply to aircraft which "have the characteristics of both airplanes and helicopters," the Federal Aviation Administration said in a statement, and come as several companies explore lower-cost, electric-powered air transit. The new regulations were needed because existing rules didn't address these new types of aircraft, which can take off vertically—like helicopters—before flying horizontally similar to an airplane, the FAA said. — AFP

#### WB to offer \$2bn to Argentina

**BUENOS AIRES:** The World Bank is prepared to provide Argentina with more than \$2 billion in new loans destined for social security, education, transport, energy and battling poverty, the multilateral lender's regional vice president said on Tuesday. Carlos Felipe Jaramillo, who heads the World Bank's Latin American and Caribbean division, made the announcement on X as the country's economy minister attends the International Monetary Fund-World Bank summit in Washington. The government of libertarian President Javier Milei is battling one of the world's highest inflation rates with a tough austerity drive that has slowed economic activity and pushed up poverty well past 50 percent. — Reuters

#### BoE plays down inflation drop

**WASHINGTON:** A sharp fall in British consumer price inflation in September was driven by more volatile components, Bank of England rate-setter member Megan Greene said on Tuesday, a day after she said she favored a gradual approach to cutting interest rates. Consumer price inflation fell to a three-year low of 1.7 percent in September from 2.2 percent in August, below forecasts in a Reuters poll of economists. The services component - which the BoE generally views as giving a better sense of long-term inflation pressures - dropped to 4.9 percent from 5.6 percent. — Reuters

## Germany bets on India to reduce reliance on China

**BERLIN:** Chancellor Olaf Scholz leads a high-level delegation to New Delhi this week, betting that greater access to the vast Indian market can reduce Germany's reliance on Beijing even if India does not turn out to be the "new China". From cars to logistics, German companies are largely optimistic about India's growth potential, tapping into a wealth of skilled young workers, a cheaper cost base and economic growth motoring at around 7 percent.

The visit comes at a delicate time for Germany, whose export-oriented economy faces a second year of contraction and worries over a trade dispute between the European Union and China that could rebound on German companies. Stung by its problematic reliance on cheap Russian gas before the Ukraine war in 2022, Germany has pursued a strategy of reducing its exposure to Beijing.

"India, the most populous country in the world, is a key partner of the German economy in the Indo-Pacific and plays a key role in the diversification of the German economy," Economy Minister Robert Habeck said on Wednesday. "We must reduce critical dependencies and strengthen the resilience of German companies and their supply chains to and from Asia."

But China is still the biggest show in town. German direct investments in India were around 25 billion euros (\$27 billion) in 2022, about 20 percent of the volume invested in China, said Volker Treier, head of foreign trade at the German Chamber of Commerce DIHK. He thinks that share could rise to 40 percent by the end of the decade. "China will not disappear, but India will become more important for German companies," said Treier.

"India is the litmus test, so to speak. If de-risking China is to work, India is the key to it, because of the size of the market and the economic dynamism in the country," Scholz, who will take with him most of his cabinet including the foreign and defense ministers, will meet Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday before presiding over the seventh round of Indian-German government consultations.

Habeck will arrive a day earlier to open the biennial

## Habeck mulls plan to spur German growth through investment

**BERLIN:** German Economy Minister Robert Habeck laid out plans to remedy weak growth in Europe's largest economy on Wednesday by starting a fund to stimulate investment and changing course on Germany's budget policy. Creating a climate-neutral modern industrial future requires massive investment, both public and private, which is being held back by Germany's restrictive budgetary policy, Habeck wrote in a 14-page position paper.

"There is too little leeway in the budget to enable private and public investment on a significantly larger scale than today," he wrote. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) this week significantly downgraded its forecasts for Germany. No other major industrialized country is currently weakening as much, Habeck, whose name has been widely floated as the Greens' candidate for chancellor in elections next year, took aim specifically at the country's constitutionally enshrined cap on spending.

The debt brake is a sacred cow of the Free



NEW DELHI: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (left) walks with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi before their meeting at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi on February 25, 2023. — AFP

Asia-Pacific Conference of German Business.

### China + 1

German firms cite bureaucracy, corruption and India's tax system as investment hurdles, according to a study by consultancy KPMG and the German Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHK). They nonetheless see a bright future in India, with 82 percent expecting their revenues to grow in the next five years. Some 59 percent are planning to expand their investments, compared to just 36 percent in 2021.

For example, German logistics giant DHL plans to invest half a billion euros in India by 2026, tapping into a fast-growing e-commerce market. "We see enormous growth potential in the Asia-Pacific region, of which India has a significant share," said division head Oscar de Bok.

Volkswagen, which has been hit by falling sales in China and high production costs at home, is considering new tie-ups in India for joint production. It has two factories already and signed a supply deal with local partner Mahindra in February. "I think

we shouldn't underestimate the potential in India in terms of a market ... and in terms of regulatory uncertainty between the U.S. and China," said the group's finance chief Arno Antlitz in May.

Similarly, Cologne-based engine maker Deutz announced a deal this year with India's TAFE, the world's third-largest tractor maker, for subsidiary TAFE Motors to produce 30,000 Deutz engines under license. "The main arguments for India are political stability and low labor costs," said Jonathan Brown, a managing director at BCG. "So you should have a 'China + 1' strategy in which India plays an important role."

Trade hit a new record in 2023 between Germany and India, which is expected to overtake Germany and Japan to become the world's third-largest economy by the end of the decade. Negotiations for an EU-India free trade deal, years in the making, still have no end in sight. "The hurdles to gaining a foothold in the market are high," said BCG's Brown. "But once you're there, you have great potential. What doesn't work is just selling German products locally." — Reuters



German Minister of Economics and Climate Protection Robert Habeck addresses a press conference on modernization in Berlin on October 23, 2024. — AFP

ers. The SPD's general secretary, Matthias Miersch, welcomed the proposal and said it was crucial now that all parties are working constructively on how to strengthen the German economy.

An industry summit planned for next week, where Scholz will meet industry associations, trade unions and firms, "is the right place for this," he told the Rheinische Post. — Reuters



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2024



A coffin and flowers on display at a coffin manufacturing workshop in downtown Beira. — AFP photos



Amelia Armando Machava inspects a coffin at a coffin manufacturing workshop in downtown Beira.

## IN MOZAMBIQUE'S BEIRA, SHIPPING PALLETS REPURPOSED AS COFFINS



Tools and decorations used at a coffin manufacturing workshop.



A carpenter works in a coffin manufacturing workshop in downtown Beira.



A carpenter decorates a coffin with laces at a coffin manufacturing workshop.

In a dilapidated building in Mozambique's Indian Ocean city of Beira, a dozen young men work away at handcrafting humble coffins from wooden pallets discarded by cargo ships that dock at its huge port. Sawdust floats in the air and the sound of hammering fills the workshop where the only electric equipment — a makeshift saw and a drill — buzz intermittently as the pallets are repurposed with basic carpentry techniques.

The coffins produced in this downtown funeral parlor are cheaper than others on the market, a service for residents buckling under hikes in the cost of living which have made dealing with death more expensive too. An old, rusted sawmill stands unused in the corner, covered in dust and cobwebs, a relic of a time when the economy of the city 700 kilometers (435 miles) northeast of the capital Maputo was more robust.

The building — worn and weathered — dates back to before independence from Portugal in 1975, standing as a testament to the resilience of its owner, 56-year-old Amelia Armando Machava. Machava started the funeral parlor in 1998 with the help of a single municipal carpenter who came in only when she could afford to pay.

"In 1998, I transitioned from baking to fashion design," Amelia said. But there was not much money in tailoring as so many women had turned to their sewing machines to make a living. So, "I saved what I could from sewing, and that's how I began making coffins." Initially, business was slow and Machava made only one or two coffins a week. But as locals grew familiar with her work, demand increased. Today, her team produces dozens of coffins for a city often in need.

A bustling marketplace has emerged in the dimly lit workshop. Women carrying baskets of snacks weave between the busy carpenters, offering quick refreshments. Young boys arrive with bundles of recycled plastic and Styro-

foam that will be shaped into delicate flowers to adorn the finished coffins.

### 'Dignity in death'

Mozambique is one of the poorest countries in the world with around 75 percent of its 33 million people living on less than a dollar a day. Beira, one of

icals (\$3,130) which is unattainable for many. Just a coffin, even the ones Machava's team makes from scrap wood, can cost between around \$90 and \$1,500. In 2021, major cities saw drastic rates hikes that disproportionately affected urban residents, 80 percent of whom live in poverty.

is struggling, I don't charge them. It's about helping the community," she said.

During times of crisis — for example the aftermath of Cyclone Idai in 2019 — she has given away coffins to families who cannot afford them. "We've survived cyclones, disasters, and economic downturns," Machava said, standing



A carpenter works next to a disused saw mill at a coffin manufacturing workshop in downtown Beira.

its largest cities, has seen particularly tough times: Cyclone Idai made landfall here five years ago and went on to claim more than 600 lives, wrecking homes, businesses and crops.

About 90 percent of the city was destroyed, according to some estimates. The cost of an ordinary funeral for most Mozambicans can reach 200,000 met-

It led to cremation costs surging from 500 to 5,000 meticals while the fee to reserve a grave jumped from 1,500 to 4,500 meticals. Even the small identification plates on the wooden crosses at a grave went up, from 100 to 400 meticals. "People don't have money but they need a way to bury their dead," Machava said. "When I know someone

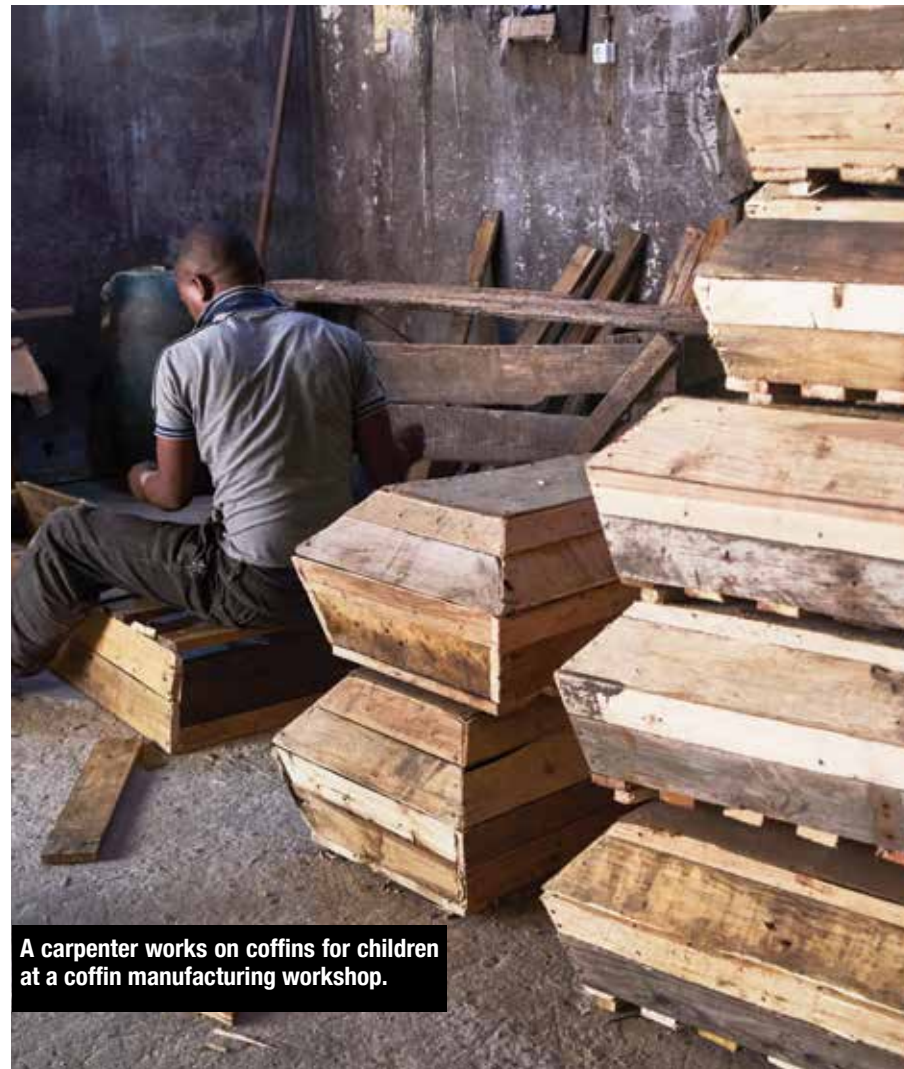
in the dusty light of the workshop. "But we keep going. This is more than just a business. It's how we survive and how we help others cope with loss and send our departed with some dignity that life may not have afforded them." — AFP



A carpenter works on a coffin at a coffin manufacturing workshop in downtown Beira.



Carpenters work at a coffin manufacturing workshop in downtown Beira.



A carpenter works on coffins for children at a coffin manufacturing workshop.



A boy sells bundles of styrofoam to Amelia Armando Machava.



A woman sells snacks to carpenters at a coffin manufacturing workshop.





Ornamental fish are seen in a fish tank before being packed for export.



Angelfish are seen in a fish tank before being packed for export in Inirida, Guainia Department.



Angelfish are seen in bags.



# From Colombia's jungle to the world's fish tanks



Angelfish are seen in a fish tank.

**E**very day, local fishermen visit Ernesto Rojas to sell him small, colorful fish plucked from rivers in the Colombian jungle that end up in aquariums around the world.

The septuagenarian has dedicated half a century to the ornamental fish business in Inirida, the capital of the eastern region of Guainia, which borders Venezuela and Brazil.

It is a thriving trade that critics see as cruel and harmful to nature, though environmentalists also recognize it brings benefits, such as encouraging habitat conservation and offering an alternative to harmful activities like illegal logging and mining.

Rojas keeps fish in ponds covered by nets to protect them from predatory birds before they are flown to Bogota for export to the United States, Asia and Europe.

He buys the Altum Angelfish (*Pterophyllum altum*) -- which is only found in the region and is prized by collectors for its long fins and striking vertical stripes -- for the equivalent of \$2 each.

Once in the United States, they can sell for \$70 or even more. "So much beauty packed into such a small body," Rojas said as he examined his next

shipment containing hundreds of angelfish. Around him fish swam in circles in plastic bags. His assistants enriched the water inside with oxygen from a cylinder in preparation for the flight of just over an hour to the capital.

### Sustainability concerns

In the local Indigenous language, Guainia means "Land of many waters."

According to the National Aquaculture and Fisheries Authority, the region is home to 60 percent of the 521 species authorized for sale in Colombia, where the world's biggest biodiversity conference got underway this week.

Around 526 tons of fish were exported in 2023, generating revenues of about six million dollars, the regulator said. Inirida is cut off from Colombia's national road network and accessible only by plane or a long boat ride.

Its isolation makes revenues from ornamental fish a key pillar of the economy, Oscar Javier Parra, director of the local environmental authority, told AFP.

While South America's booming aquarium trade brings much-needed income for thousands of people, sustainability is an issue, according to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).



Ornamental fish are seen in a fish tank before being packed.



A silver dollar (*Metynnis argenteus*) is seen in a fish tank before being packed.



An Angelfish is seen in a fish tank before being packed.



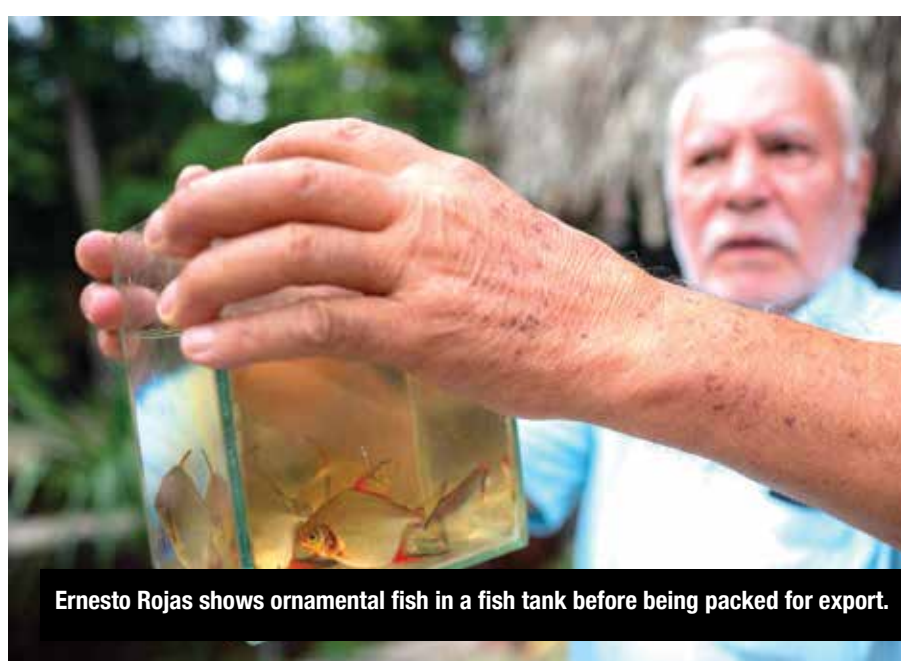
Pictus catfish (*Pimelodus pictus*) are seen in a fish tank.



Ornamental fish are seen in a fish tank before being packed.



Ornamental fish are seen in a bag before being packed.



Ernesto Rojas shows ornamental fish in a fish tank before being packed for export.



A *Geophagus* ornamental fish is seen before being packed.



Lifestyle



Angelfish are seen in a fish tank.



A Panda Uaru (Uaru fernandezyepezi) is seen in a fish tank.



Ornamental fish are seen in a fish tank.



An employee checks ornamental fish in bags before being packed for export in Inirida.

"For ornamental fish, the sheer volume of exports is raising concerns that the trade might not be sustainable for fish populations. And history shows that over-exploitation is a likely scenario," it warned. But "under the right circumstances, sustainable ornamental fisheries can improve forest conservation and alleviate poverty of local communities," the WWF said.

To try to protect fish populations, authorities ban fishing in Guania for seven weeks a year, usually between early April and June. For some species such as the angelfish, the ban begins several weeks earlier.

"It's a regulated business with very good practices," Parra said. The state also ensures that species considered

vulnerable, such as the piranha and the enormous and colorful peacock bass, are not fished from the dark, mineral-rich waters of the Inirida River and its tributaries.

"Seeing an animal lose its freedom for someone's enjoyment and pleasure" is an affront to animal rights activists, Parra admitted. However, fishing using small nets is a low-impact source of income in a region where rampant illegal gold mining means huge quantities of mercury are dumped into rivers every year, he said. Banning ornamental fisheries "would be worse" for the environment, Parra said. —AFP



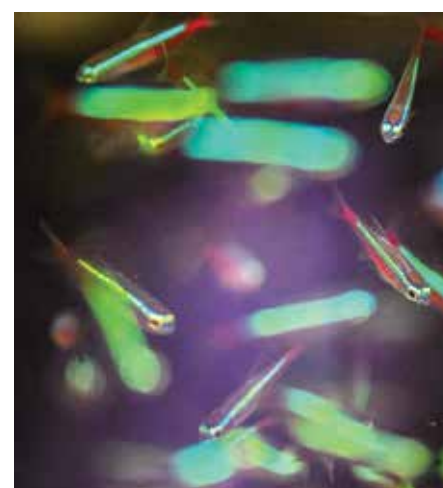
An employee carries ornamental fish in bags before being packed for export in Inirida.



Ernesto Rojas packs ornamental fish for export in Inirida.



An employee catches ornamental fish in a pond before being packed.



Cardinal tetra (Paracheirodon axelrodi) are seen in a fish tank before being packed for export in Bogota.—AFP photos

## Roman Polanski 1970s sexual assault lawsuit dismissed: Lawyer

French-Polish director Roman Polanski, who fled the United States decades ago after admitting to the statutory rape of a 13-year-old, will no longer face trial over an alleged assault of another minor after reaching a settlement, his lawyer said Tuesday.



This combination of file pictures shows French-Polish director and former president of the Jury, Roman Polanski and British actress Charlotte Lewis.—AFP

The latest case against the director of "The Pianist," which concerned an alleged sexual attack in 1973, had been due in civil court in Los Angeles next August, but has now been withdrawn, Polanski's US attorney told AFP. The case was "settled in the summer to the parties' mutual satisfaction and has now been formally dismissed," Alexander Rufus-Isaacs said in an email.

The suit, filed last year, claimed Polanski took a then-teenager -- named anonymously in filings as Jane Doe -- to dinner at a restaurant in Los Angeles in 1973. He allegedly gave her tequila, and when she began to feel dizzy,

drove her to his home, where he forced himself on her.

"She told him: 'please don't do this,'" the plaintiff's lawyer, Gloria Allred, told reporters in March. "She alleges that he ignored her pleas. She also alleges that defendant Polanski removed plaintiff's clothes and he proceeded to sexually assault her, causing her tremendous physical, emotional pain and suffering."

The civil suit, which sought unspecified damages, was filed in June 2023, just before the expiration of a California law that allowed for an extended window for claims against the alleged perpetrators of sexual crimes. Court papers filed in California in July said a "conditional" accord had been reached.

Allred said in an email late Tuesday that "a settlement of claims was agreed to by the parties to their mutual satisfaction". Oscar-winner Polanski, now 91, is a divisive figure, with some in the movie world hailing his creative genius, while others insist he was always a sexual predator. Polanski admitted to the statutory rape of 13-year-old Samantha Geimer in a plea bargain in 1977 to avoid a trial on more serious charges. But he fled to France the following year, after serving 42 days in jail, when it appeared a judge was reconsidering his release.

Geimer has subsequently defended Polanski, and was photographed with him last year. A French court in May acquitted Polanski of defaming British actor Charlotte Lewis after she accused him of raping her when she was a teenager. The director has always denied wrongdoing. —AFP



Cosplayers dressed as Tintin and Captain Haddock pose during San Diego Comic-Con International in San Diego, California, on July 21, 2023. —AFP

A collection of rare Tintin comic albums is up for auction in Paris on Wednesday, many signed by cartoonist Herge, who wrote "Tintin is just another version of me" on one fly-leaf. Among the 75 graphic novels is a one-of-a-kind copy of "Tintin in America", first published in 1932, which has an estimated value of 200,000 euros (\$217,000). Herge dedicated the book in 1933 to the chaplain of his Brussels scout troop, Charles Helsen, who became a friend and mentor.

"To Mr Abbot Helsen, in memory

## ABBA's Bjorn among 11,000 artists issuing AI warning

Thousands of artists including ABBA singer Bjorn Ulvaeus, Hollywood actress Julianne Moore and Nobel laureate Kazuo Ishiguro have signed a statement warning about the unlicensed use of artificial intelligence.

Some 11,500 stars of music, literature, screen and stage had put their names to the statement by Tuesday, as fears mount over tech companies using existing creative works to train up AI models without permission from their original creators. "The unlicensed use of creative works for training generative AI is a major, unjust threat to the livelihoods of the people behind those works, and must not be permitted," says the brief statement.

In Hollywood, studios have been experimenting with AI in recent years, from bringing deceased movie stars back using realistic "digital replicas," to using computer-generated background figures to reduce the number of actors needed for battle scenes. Similar fears have gripped other creative industries.

The statement was organized by British composer and former AI executive Ed Newton-Rex, the Guardian reported. Newton-Rex told the newspaper that generative AI companies including his former employer Stability AI were using



Kazuo Ishiguro attends the 95th Annual Oscars Nominees Luncheon at The Beverly Hilton on February 13, 2023 in Beverly Hills, California.



Bjorn Ulvaeus, a member of Swedish disco group ABBA attends the opening of "Mamma Mia! The party", a new restaurant in Stockholm where people can eat while watching a show based on ABBA's songs on January 20, 2016 in Stockholm.



Julianne Moore attends the "The Room Next Door" premiere during the 62nd New York Film Festival at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center on October 04, 2024 in New York City.—AFP photos

copyrighted content to train their models without paying the original creators.

"When AI companies call this 'training data,' they dehumanize it. What we're talking about is people's work -- their writing, their art, their music," he said. Last year, authors including John Grisham, Jodi Picoult and George RR Martin sued OpenAI for "systematic theft on a mass scale."

Hollywood stars including Pedro Pascal, Jane Fonda and Mark Hamill last month backed a sweeping AI safety bill in

California that was ultimately vetoed by Governor Gavin Newsom. Other artists have chosen to collaborate with AI.

Facebook owner Meta last week announced that Hollywood actor Casey Affleck and horror studio Blumhouse were partnering to test its AI movie generating software by making a series of short films. Among other famous signatories to Monday's statement were Radiohead singer Thom Yorke, author James Patterson and actor Kevin Bacon. —AFP



Swedish music band ABBA's wax figures are displayed at the ABBA museum in Stockholm, Sweden on November 5, 2021.

## Rare Tintin albums go under the hammer in Paris

of the good years spent under his supervision, discovering Adventure... Tintin is just another version of me, who would have continued on that path, all the way," he wrote. Helsen's copy of "Tintin in America" appears to have been a one-off printing. "We believe Herge requested a copy be specially printed" for his friend, said Daniel Perez, the auction house expert covering the sale.

The sale of 75 graphic novels at the Tajan auction house will break up a collection built over generations by the

family of Felipe Ortiz-Patino, whose Bolivian great-grandfather started the mania. Perez said he put together the lots for sale from the collection after Ortiz-Patino "switched interests for various reasons". Many of the books on offer are in near-new or very good condition, displaying the original colors of their cover illustrations.

One first-edition copy of 1931's "Tintin in the Congo" -- of which only a few thousand were printed -- is estimated at 100,000 euros. Herge signed the book "Tintin" while his fiancée, Ger-

maine, signed as "Milou" -- the French name for the intrepid reporter's faithful terrier known as "Snowy" in English translations. An unsigned but very rare pop-up version of "Red Rackham's Treasure" is also on sale with an estimate of 60,000 euros. In November, Tajan plans to offer one of Herge's original 1941 illustrations for "The Shooting Star", another Tintin adventure, estimated at up to 500,000 euros. —AFP



# Confident N Zealand ready for India spin challenge

## Pant fit for second Test as Gill gives India selection 'headache'

**PUNE:** Skipper Tom Latham said Wednesday that New Zealand had been buoyed by their historic Test victory in India but must now adapt fast to a likely turning track in Pune. New Zealand won the opener on a seaming pitch in Bengaluru for their first Test triumph in India since 1988 but face a different challenge in the second match starting Thursday.

"Whatever we are presented with, for us, it's about trying to adapt as quick as we can," said Latham, whose men are trying to seal New Zealand's first ever series win in India. "If it is going to be a wicket that turns a bit more, we have obviously got four spinners in our line-up, so fingers crossed that will play into their hands."

Ajaz Patel leads New Zealand's spin attack. He became only the third bowler in Test history to claim all 10 wickets in an innings at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium in 2021. In the first Test at Bengaluru, New Zealand bowled out India for 46 and went on to win the match by eight wickets.

The victory has injected the Black Caps with confidence, Latham said. "That's probably the most important thing, that we can come over here, we can compete and we can do well," he said. But he cautioned: "Both teams start on zero."

New Zealand will be without Kane Williamson for a second straight match with the star batsman recovering from a groin injury back home. Their batting has stood up with Will Young (33 and 48 not out) and Rachin Ravindra (134 and 39 not out) performing well in the first Test. Latham said missing Williamson was "disappointing", but that it gave an opportunity to other batsmen.

Meanwhile, India's Rishabh Pant will be fit to keep wicket in the second Test against New Zealand after an injury scare, confirmed coach Gautam Gambhir on Wednesday. But the return of Shubman Gill has left India with a selection dilemma on the eve of the match in Pune as they look to square the series.

Pant hit 99 at Bengaluru in his first Test appearance since a near-fatal car crash in December 2022 as India lost to New Zealand by eight wickets. While keeping, Pant hurt the same knee that was operated on after the crash that sidelined him for more than a year, and did not field for large parts of the match.

"He will keep wickets in the game tomorrow," Gambhir told a news conference Wednesday. Batsman Gill missed the first Test with a neck issue and his replacement, Sarfaraz Khan, hit 150 in India's second innings putting on 177 with Pant.

With Gill returning, India have to decide whether to drop senior batsman KL Rahul, who scored a duck and 12 in Bengaluru, or centurion Sarfaraz. "Picking an eleven in any Test match in India is a headache, because of the amount of talent that we have," Gambhir said.

"It's a good challenge in picking the team. It means Indian cricket has a strong foundation and is at a good level." The former opener Rahul dropped down to the middle-order last year but his form has been patchy.

He last scored a century in South Africa in December's Boxing Day Test and has only two fifties since, drawing criticism from pundits and fans in the cricket-obsessed nation. Gambhir countered that he selected players based on their form, not public



**PUNE:** New Zealand's Will Young (C) bats in the nets as Rachin Ravindra (L) watches during a practice session ahead of their second Test cricket match against India at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune. — AFP

opinion, and backed Rahul.

"You don't pick players on social media, or for that matter even what the experts are saying," Gambhir said. "I feel he is batting really well." He noted that Rahul had a "decent knock" in scoring 68 at Kanpur against Bangladesh last month and

"has the capability of scoring big runs".

New Zealand registered their first victory in a Test in India for 36 years at Bengaluru after the hosts were bundled out for 46 in their first innings. India are expected to name their side at the toss on Thursday morning. — AFP

## S Korean Olympic shooter keeps cool over newfound fame

**SEOUL:** When Kim Ye-ji first tried shooting at age 12 she could not lift the gun. Now, she is the world's most Internet-famous Olympic shooter, thanks to her steel nerves — and Elon Musk. Kim, 32, won silver in the women's 10m air pistol at this summer's Paris Olympics and captured the internet's attention with her nonchalant cool. But she told AFP that she fell into her sport by accident.

When her middle school teacher asked for volunteers to try shooting, Kim did not raise her hand but was selected anyway. Despite being too small to hoist the pistol, she was hooked. "I thought it looked cool," Kim, dressed in an oversized black suit and heels after a commercial photoshoot, told AFP at a shooting range in Seoul. Her visit to the venue prompted gasps of excitement from other young Koreans at the firing line.

Her parents strongly opposed her taking up shooting, but "for three days, I didn't eat and just cried, begging to be allowed," Kim said. Eventually, they relented. "I didn't have a clear goal when it came to my studies. But with shooting... I knew I had to be the best," she said.

She has dedicated her life to shooting ever since. In Paris, she said she had a "single goal — winning a medal." She was not using social media at the time, viewing it as "toxic" and a distraction from training, so she was initially unaware when videos of her shooting started going viral.

At a photo session with other medalists in Paris, where journalists told her she had "a lot of Brazilian fans" and asked her to greet them in Portuguese, she started to realize something had happened. "I didn't think of myself as special, and I still don't," she told AFP. "There are many other medalists with lots of fans, and I just see myself as one of them."



**SEOUL:** This picture taken on October 22, 2024 shows South Korean shooter Kim Ye-ji preparing to shoot during an interview with AFP at a shooting range in Seoul. — AFP

### Internet sensation

The video that launched Kim to stardom shows her in an all-black uniform, a backwards baseball cap and wire-rimmed shooting glasses while taking aim and firing. After breaking the world record she barely reacts, glancing at her score calmly as the crowd applauds. The clip, which was actually taken from a competition in May 2024, triggered an internet frenzy, with people hailing her "main character" energy, and Elon Musk calling for her to be cast in an action movie, "no acting required".

Videos of her Olympic performance quickly went viral, but the preternatural calm which captivated the Internet's attention is simply how she shoots, she said. "I wasn't initially good at concentrating," she said, but she was advised to keep her gaze ultra-focused at the firing line.

She found this "helped me concentrate, and to calm my nerves". She said she is a "naturally restless person", but when she shoots "my arm is not just my arm anymore; it's all part of the gun". "When holding the gun, everything must be perfectly fixed in place. Nothing should move — wrist, hand, or any other part. I think of it all as part of the gun." — AFP



**DHAKA:** Bangladesh's Mehidy Hasan Miraz (L) plays a shot during the third day of the first Test cricket match between Bangladesh and South Africa at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka on October 23, 2024. — AFP

## Mehidy, Jaker keep Bangladesh alive against South Africa

**MIRPUR:** Half-centuries by Mehidy Hasan Miraz and Jaker Ali helped Bangladesh into an 81-run lead over South Africa before bad light brought an early finish to day three of the first Test on Wednesday.

The hosts were 283-7 in Mirpur when the umpires called stumps about an hour before the scheduled finish, with Mehidy on 87 and Nayeem Hasan on 16. Bangladesh spin bowling coach Mushtaq Ahmed said he believed his side could still snatch its first ever Test win against the visitors.

"We have to bat as long as we can, score consistently, and get whatever lead we can," he said. "When we can start believing, we can come back and we fight," he added. "When you don't give up, the opposition also respects you."

South Africa only bowled five overs in the last session and fewer than 58 overs were played through the day after a rain interruption cut the second session short. Mehidy and debutant Jaker added 138 runs for the seventh wicket to save Bangladesh from an innings defeat after they resumed at 101-3, chasing down South Africa's 202-run first-innings lead.

## Stokes forecasts spin battle in series decider

**RAWALPINDI:** England captain Ben Stokes believes the series-deciding third Test against Pakistan starting Thursday will boil down to a spin battle on a Rawalpindi pitch likely to favor slow bowlers. England piled up 823-7 to thrash Pakistan by an innings on a lifeless Multan pitch in the first Test, before the hosts bounced back with a 152-run win on a recycled and turning Multan track.

For the deciding match, Pakistan have kept the same combination of three frontline spinners in Sajid Khan, Noman Ali and Zahid Mahmood, with just one fast bowler in Aamer Jamal. Pakistan have used industrial fans and heaters to dry the Rawalpindi pitch, hoping to replicate their spin-led success in Multan which ended a drought of home wins stretching back to 2021.

Stokes said his three spinners in Jack Leach, Shoaib Bashir and the recalled Rehan Ahmed were equal to the challenge. "I'll be backing the three spinners that we've picked," Stokes told reporters after a training session on the eve of the third and final Test.

"We don't know exactly how the wicket will play, but we've taken as much information from it as we can. We think the longer the game goes, the more spin will come into play."

Jaker was eventually trapped lbw by left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj for 58. "Obviously Bangladesh has done really well today. Conditions got a little bit better, if I'm honest, with a slightly used ball," Maharaj said.

"But I think we're still ahead," he added. "Bangladesh have a lead and we've got three wickets more to go. We can restrict them as much as possible, but I still feel we'll be in the bouncing seat. In the morning, South African pace bowler Kagiso Rabada took advantage of overcast conditions to take two wickets in three balls during the fifth over.

Mahmudul Hasan Joy departed after making 40 when his attempted drive found a thick edge to first slip, where David Bedingham took the catch. Rabada's fourth wicket of the innings came two balls later as he sent Mushfiqur Rahim's middle stump cart-wheeling out of the ground with a full delivery that nipped back. The right-hander made 33.

Wicketkeeper Litton Das followed for just seven as he edged a sharply turning delivery from Maharaj to wicketkeeper Kyle Verreynne and the dismissal was confirmed as caught on review, after an initial shout for lbw.

South Africa scored 308 in their first innings, powered by Verreynne's second Test century, in reply to Bangladesh's 106 all out on the first day. Bangladesh have never won a Test against South Africa. The second and final match of the series begins on October 29 in Chattogram. — AFP



**RAWALPINDI:** England's captain Ben Stokes (R) attends a practice session on the eve of their third and final Test cricket match against Pakistan at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi on October 23, 2024. — AFP

Pakistan head coach Jason Gillespie, the former Australia fast bowler, also expects the near-bald pitch "to favor the slower bowlers". The toss could be crucial, with both teams looking to bat first and maximize the impact of their spinners on a deteriorating pitch.

Pakistan have performed poorly in all formats in

the past year, losing 2-0 in a home Test series to Bangladesh and crashing out of the ODI and Twenty20 World Cups in the first rounds. A series victory over England would mark a stark change in fortunes.

"Over the last few years Pakistan's Test cricket hasn't been where we'd like it to be, so any win is a positive," he said. — AFP

## Warner offers to come out of retirement for India Test series

**SYDNEY:** Test opening great David Warner has told Australian selectors he is available to come out of retirement and play in the home series against India. The 37-year-old batsman said he was "dead serious" about the offer to return for the five-match Border Gavaskar Trophy series starting in Perth on November 22.

Steve Smith wants to go back to number four in the batting order, leaving the selectors in search of an opening partner for Usman Khawaja. The left-handed Warner, who retired following the third Test against Pakistan in Sydney in January, has told Australia coach Andrew McDonald he can step back in.

McDonald though appears lukewarm on the idea. "I'm always available, just got to pick up the phone," Warner told News Corp on Tuesday, saying he would be a more robust option than candidates who have just begun a new season of the domestic Sheffield Shield competition.

"I'm always dead serious. Let's be honest, the guys have played one red-ball game since their last Test matches in February, so I've almost had the same preparation. Honestly, if they really needed myself for this series, I'm more than happy to play the next Shield game and go out there and play."

Warner said McDonald's response to him didn't suggest a recall was imminent. "His answer back to me was, 'you retired'," Warner said. "I don't think he wants to give me the pleasure of him saying: Can you come back?" Warner, who scored 8,786 runs in 112 Tests, has most recently been involved in limited-overs franchise competitions in Canada and the Cayman Islands. Cameron Bancroft, Marcus Harris and Matthew Renshaw are all considered candidates to partner Khawaja against India. — AFP



Sports

# Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali to participate in NBK Run 2024

## NBK investing in community development by organizing meaningful events

KUWAIT: Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah will participate in the NBK Run, scheduled to take place on December 14th, which is considered the largest sporting event in Kuwait of its kind in Kuwait given the massive participation and extensive media coverage.

During a visit by a team from NBK to the Capital Governorate headquarters to present the NBK Run race kit to Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali, the Capital Governor expressed his appreciation of NBK's leading social responsibility contributions, and its constant dedication for 30 years, by organizing the NBK Run, to cultivate positive values promoting a healthy and sporting lifestyle being a prerequisite for building a healthy community.

The governor praised NBK's efforts in fostering national directions towards sustainable development in health and sports, in line with Kuwait Vision 2035, pointing out that NBK stands as a role model for delivering social responsibility and supporting sustainable development in all fields.

Al-Ali pointed out that NBK's commitment to organize this race every year underscores deep historical ties with the Kuwaiti community, as the first and oldest homegrown bank in Kuwait, which was founded by a group of Kuwaiti merchants more than 70 years ago, and has now evolved to be Kuwait's leading financial institution in and among the largest banks in the region.

On their part, NBK team stated that The NBK Run 2024 will be different from previous versions, as there will be greater collaboration from strategic partners who will provide valuable prizes for the winners, participants as well as spectators.

They also added that the new version of the NBK Run will witness a qualitative leap by adding the special needs category in 3 groups: "Wheelchairs, Blind and Prosthetics users". This aims to mainstream those individuals to become active players in the future.

Commenting on this, Abdul-Mohsen Al-Rushaid, AGMI, Head of Digital Communications at National Bank of Kuwait, said, "We always aim to strengthen our position as Kuwait's most socially responsible bank. NBK Run is an integral part of our growing contributions to advance sustainability in line with Kuwait's economic plans and vision for the future."

"We have long-standing solid relationships with major organizations and companies across all sectors, as we always strive to join efforts to serve the community and spread awareness about the importance of sports and its role in promoting public health," he added.

"NBK seeks to magnify its social impact and always prioritizes investing in community development by supporting and sponsoring meaningful events and initiatives," he noted.

NBK has already opened early registration for the 2024 NBK Run starting from September 18th until all slots are filled.

The race will start at 8:30 a.m. on December 14th, featuring two distances, both beginning and ending at Kuwait Towers. The 10 km route will proceed towards Souq Sharq, then turn and follow the Gulf Road, reaching 200 meters before the intersection with Green Island, before returning to Kuwait Towers.

The second distance of the race is 5 km, starts and ends at Kuwait Towers and heading towards Souq Sharq. Competitors will then turn and continue running until they reach the intersection at Kuwait Army Club.



NBK Run race kit being presented to Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali.

The race will honor the top three winners in both the men's and women's 10 km categories with cash prizes of KD 1,000, KD 700, and KD 500, respectively. The top three winners in the men's and women's 5 km categories will receive KD 500, KD 400,

and KD 300, respectively.

It is worth mentioning that NBK organizes a variety of social events and initiatives every year, demonstrating its prominent role and its consistent approach to community development. These initiatives include a wide range of social, humanitarian, charitable, educational, sporting and environmental events that aim to serve the community and contribute to its development.

## Shiffrin eyes 100 World Cup wins as Hirscher returns

PARIS: As if Mikaela Shiffrin hadn't already etched her name in the annals of World Cup alpine skiing, the American kickstarts the new season eyeing yet another landmark, looking to become the first person to chalk up 100 victories on the circuit.

The 29-year-old closed an injury-hit 2024 on 97 World Cup wins, having already surpassed the previous overall record of 86 held by Swedish great Ingemar Stenmark. "It's like I'm not finished with what I want to give and want to get from the sport," Shiffrin said in an interview with Eurosport last week.

"If I'm in good shape, and if it does happen, I do see it as a really big opportunity to bolster all the stories that are happening in ski racing right now. There's so much to be excited about, and so many stories in the sport, even beyond my own."

Another legend of the slopes, Marcel Hirscher will mark his return to the snow, five years after his retirement. The Austrian retired in 2019 with 67 World Cup wins, having claimed Olympic gold in slalom and combined at the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Games, and with seven world titles to his name. His collection of eight consecutive overall World Cup crystal globes from 2012 to 2019 re-

mentate the rest of the season due to an unspecified health problem. Born in Etchohuaquila, Sonora, Mexico as the youngest of 12 children, Valenzuela made his Major League debut at age 19 with the Dodgers in September 1980, throwing 17.2 innings without allowing an earned run for the remainder of the season.

In 1981, beginning with a 2-0 opening day shut-out of the Houston Astros in an emergency start, he went on an unprecedented career-opening run, with complete games in his first eight career starts and a 0.50 ERA launching the wave of popularity that surrounded him.

He was the first and only player MLB history to win Rookie of the Year and the Cy Young Award as top pitcher in the same season. He led the National League in strikeouts, shutouts, complete games, innings pitched and starts as the Dodgers captured the 1981 World Series.

"What Fernandomania did for the Dodgers was build generation after generation of Mexican-American fans," John Thorn, MLB's official historian told MLB.com in 2021. "The Mexican-American community has always been large in Los Angeles, but it was not attached to the Dodgers when they were imported from Brooklyn. He made everybody feel bigger and welcome. They went to the stadium to see him," he added.

A charismatic figure, Valenzuela's warm-ups were accompanied by the tune of Abba's hit 'Fernando' and his face adorned cereal boxes. After he departed the Dodgers following the 1990 season, Valenzuela went on to pitch for the California Angels, Baltimore Orioles, Philadelphia Phillies, San Diego Padres and St. Louis Cardinals.

He retired from the game after the 1997 season but six years later returned to the Dodgers as a broadcaster. Even in his 40s he made appearances in the Mexican winter league. In 2015 he became a naturalized American citizen. He was part of the coaching staff of the Mexican team in several editions of the World Baseball Classic and his number 34 jersey was officially retired last year.

His death comes ahead of Friday's opening game of the first World Series between the Dodgers and the Yankees since the 1981 triumph. "We will honor Fernando's memory during the 2024 World Series at Dodger Stadium. On behalf of Major League Baseball, I extend my deepest condolences to Fernando's family, the Dodgers, his friends across the game, and all the loyal baseball fans of Mexico," said Manfred. — AFP



Mikaela Shiffrin

Swiss delight in Saalbach, the Austrian resort that will host the 2025 world championships in February.

Shiffrin's main rival in the technical events, Petra Vlhova, will be missing from Soelden, the Slovak admitting she doesn't know when she'll be back on the pistes after knee surgery. "I want to return at full strength," Vlhova said.

"It's been a tough journey, but my knee is in good condition now. I don't have pain or limitations, but I need to feel 100 percent on the skis. I won't compete just to finish. I need to regain my strength fully. I'm determined to return to my top form, even though I don't know how long it will take." — AFP

## 'Winning is tough' ahead of Japan title defense: Morikawa

INZAI: Two-time major champion Collin Morikawa said Wednesday that "winning is tough" as he looks for his first victory of the year at the US PGA Tour's Zozo Championship in Japan this week. The American romped to last year's title at Narashino Country Club near Tokyo by six shots to end a two-year title drought.

He has not lifted a trophy since and described his 2024 season, which has included two runner-up finishes, as "solid" rather than spectacular. Morikawa was part of the United States team that beat the Internationals at the Presidents Cup in Montreal last month and is hoping to keep that form going this week in Japan.

"It's a place I look forward to every year. Knowing that I won last year, lot of good memories," said the 27-year-old, who has Japanese heritage. "It was my first win in two years. Look, winning's tough. No matter what it is, winning is tough. You have to learn how to win." — AFP

## Dodgers baseball icon Fernando dies at 63

LOS ANGELES: Former Los Angeles Dodgers star Fernando Valenzuela, one of the sport's most beloved figures, died on Tuesday at the age of 63, the Major League Baseball club said in a statement. The Mexican pitcher played 17 seasons in MLB for six clubs but was best remembered for his time with the Dodgers, particularly for his role in the 1981 team who beat the New York Yankees in the World Series.

His performances in that season and the excitement it caused became known as 'Fernandomania' and attracted a large Mexican fan-base to the Los Angeles team. "On behalf of the Dodger organization, we profoundly mourn the passing of Fernando," Dodgers president and CEO Stan Kasten said.

"He is one of the most influential Dodgers ever and belongs on the Mount Rushmore of franchise heroes," he added. Remembered for his 'wind-up' pitching style, he had been part of the team's Spanish language commentary team until recently and his passing led to a tribute from MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred.

"Fernando Valenzuela was one of the most impactful players of his generation. His 1981 season ranks among the most decorated pitching years of all-time," Manfred said in a statement. No cause of death was given, but the Dodgers announced earlier this month that Valenzuela would not com-



LOS ANGELES: Former Los Angeles Dodgers broadcaster Vin Scully talks with former Los Angeles Dodgers player Fernando Valenzuela prior to the ceremonial first pitch before game two of the 2017 World Series between the Houston Astros and the Los Angeles Dodgers. — AFP

# Classifieds

### Clinics & Hospitals

#### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	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
Mirgab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

### Change of Name

I, **Jenin** Varghese Kattakara, father of Adora Suzann, holder of Indian Passport No: W7988821, do hereby change the name of my minor daughter to ADORA SUZANN JENIN for all purposes. I also undertake to effect the change in all her public documents. (#6182 24/10/2024)

M7792645, do hereby change my name to Subhas (given name) Yadav (as surname) for all purposes. I, will henceforth be known in the name as Subhas Yadav and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents, vide affidavit dated 29.08.2024 before notary Wilson H. Rodrigues, Udupi. (#6183 24/10/2024)

I, **ZAHERUDDIN SHAIK**, holder of Indian Passport No. U0461168 having permanent address 4 73 B Usmanagar, Rajampet, Ysr District, Pin: 516115, Andhra Pradesh, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: ZAHEERUDDIN (given name) and SHAIK (surname). (#6181 22/10/2024)

I, **Subhas**, holder of Passport No.



## Vinicius hat-trick saves Real Madrid in Champions League, Villa go top

PSG pay for missed chances again in PSV Champions League draw



MADRID: Real Madrid's French forward #09 Kylian Mbappe eyes the ball during the UEFA Champions League, league phase day 3 football match between Real Madrid CF and Borussia Dortmund at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid. — AFP

**PARIS:** Real Madrid came from behind to beat Borussia Dortmund 5-2 in the Champions League on Tuesday with Vinicius Junior scoring a hat-trick, as Aston Villa maintained their 100 percent record to go top of the table.

Vinicius struck three times in the second half as Madrid bounced back from two goals down to inflict further anguish on Dortmund — in the repeat of last season's final which Real won 2-0. First-half goals in quick succession by Donyell Malen and Jamie Gittens had given Dortmund a two-goal lead at half-time.

"Things were very quiet when we got to the dressing room 2-0 down at half-time," Vinicius, 24, told Movistar. "But we listened to the boss (coach Carlo Ancelotti) and agreed one simple thing: if we can score first then we'll fight back and win once again."

The 15-times champions duly struck back early in the second period via Antonio Rudiger and Vinicius, before Lucas Vazquez sent Real ahead and the Brazilian netted two more inside the final 10 minutes. After the surprise defeat at Lille last time out, Madrid's hunt for a record-extending 16th Champions League crown is back on track as they move to

ninth in the standings, on six points.

Malen swept the Germans into the lead on the half-hour following a deft pass from Serhou Guirassy that split open the defence. Madrid defender Eder Militao was then left beating the turf in frustration four minutes later when Gittens flew in at the back post to double Dortmund's lead.

Rudiger halved the deficit with a powerful header from a Kylian Mbappe cross on 60 minutes. Vinicius equalised two minutes later by tucking away a stray ball, the goal being awarded by VAR after Mbappe was shown to have been on-side in the build-up.

A rare Dortmund foray forward resulted in a fine Thibaut Courtois save, with the holders then racing straight down the other end and Vazquez lashing home on 83 minutes. Vinicius then completed his hat-trick in the 86th and 93rd minutes, his second coming after a lung-busting sprint down the line from inside his own half.

Arsenal emerged 1-0 winners at home to Ukraine's Shakhtar Donetsk thanks to an own-goal from the visitors' goalkeeper. Dmytro Riznyk

could only grasp at thin air after Gabriel Martinelli had cut in from the left and smacked the ball against the near post before it rebounded back off the goalie and over the line. Leandro Trossard missed a penalty near the end, but Arsenal had already done enough to secure their second win of the tournament.

### Table-topping Villa

Fellow Premier League side Aston Villa are enjoying an excellent return to European football's top table after 41 years as they won their third match in three Champions League outings this term with a 2-0 victory against Bologna.

"We are playing seriously, we are playing focussed, responsible and the team is progressing and mature in everything," manager Unai Emery told TNT Sports. John McGinn opened the scoring at Villa Park 10 minutes after the interval and Jhon Duran wrapped up the points in the 64th minute, sending Emery's side to the top of the league phase table on nine points with zero goals conceded.

Stuttgart sank Juventus 1-0 in Turin, thanks to a

stoppage-time winner by El Bilal Toure. The Italians were reduced to 10 men when Danilo picked up a second yellow while conceding a penalty in the 84th minute.

Mattia Perin looked to have saved his side when he stopped the resulting spot-kick from Enzo Millot, but Toure slammed home in the 92nd minute for Stuttgart. PSV Eindhoven surprised Paris Saint-Germain with a Noa Lang goal against the run of play in the first period, before Achraf Hakimi hit back on 55 minutes to ensure the points were shared.

AC Milan beat 10-men Club Brugge at the San Siro with Christian Pulisic and a Tijjani Reijnders brace giving the Italians a 3-1 victory. Monaco won 5-1 at home to Red Star Belgrade, while Sporting Lisbon beat Sturm Graz 2-0 in Austria.

Last season's Spanish league surprise-packages Girona picked up their first points in the competition with a 2-0 win at home to Slovan Bratislava. On Wednesday, five-time winners Barcelona host six-time champions Bayern Munich and Liverpool visit RB Leipzig. — AFP

## LeBron, Bronny James make NBA history with father-son appearance

**LOS ANGELES:** LeBron and Bronny James made NBA history on Tuesday, becoming the first father and son to play alongside each other in a regular season fixture as the Los Angeles Lakers defeated the Minnesota Timberwolves 110-103.

The duo, who played together briefly in a pre-season game earlier this month, took to the court late in the second quarter at the Crypto.com Arena with the Lakers leading 51-35. An enormous roar went up from the home crowd as the James duo approached the scorers table to check into the game after the Lakers had surged into a double-digit lead.

As James and his son prepared to enter the court, James Sr. could be heard telling Bronny: "You ready? You see the intensity, right? Just play carefree though." In a perfectly scripted moment that was pure Hollywood, the James' double-act was watched at courtside by Ken Griffey Sr. and Ken Griffey Jr, who made baseball history playing for the Seattle Mariners as father and son in 1990-1991.

"That moment — us checking in together — is something I'll never forget, no matter how old I get, how my memory may fade as I get older or whatever. I will never forget that moment," said LeBron, who had started Tuesday by celebrating the 10th birthday of his daughter Zhuri Nova.

"Everything was just great today, everything — from the moment I woke up," he added. "Obviously

this is the first time in this beautiful history of the NBA that a father and son have been on the same floor, let alone on the same team. It was pretty cool."

Bronny's debut for the Lakers was subdued. The 20-year-old spent 2min 41sec on court, taking two unsuccessful shots from the field before being replaced. He expressed gratitude for the supportive "energy" shown by Lakers fans.

"I try not to focus on everything that's going on around me. I was trying to focus on trying not to mess up. But I totally did feel the energy," Bronny said. Lakers officials had been coy before Tuesday's season-opener about where and when LeBron and Bronny would play their first regular season fixture together. However NBA superstar LeBron, who turns 40 in December, admitted in pre-game remarks that he could scarcely contain his excitement at the prospect of realising his long-cherished dream of sharing a court with his son.

"Just to run out the tunnel knowing that he'll be in uniform, run out the tunnel with him, see him warm up, and be out there with the rest of my teammates," he told reporters during a morning shoot-around on Tuesday. Anticipation about the James double-act has dominated the Lakers' preparations for the new season since Bronny was selected by the franchise with the 55th pick in the draft in June.

### 'It's been a treat'

Bronny is expected to spend most of his rookie season in the developmental G-League rather than the Lakers senior squad. LeBron however said Tuesday that he had relished being able to accompany his son on his first steps into professional basketball.

"It's been a treat and just in preseason, the practices, just every day," the older James said. "The



LOS ANGELES: Los Angeles Lakers' US small forward #23 LeBron James (C) blocks Minnesota Timberwolves' Canadian shooting guard #09 Nickeil Alexander-Walker (R) as Los Angeles Lakers' Nigerian-US point guard #07 Gabe Vincent runs past them during the NBA game season opener between the Los Angeles Lakers and the Minnesota Timberwolves at Crypto Arena in Los Angeles. — AFP

plane rides, the bus rides of being with him and showing him the ropes, along with his teammates and coaches. Just what this professional life is all about and how to prepare every day... super-duper cool."

Bronny's ascent to the ranks of the NBA has been made all the more remarkable given that just over a year ago he suffered a cardiac arrest during a workout with his University of Southern Cali-

fornia college team-mates. James Sr. said his son's swift recovery from that life-threatening episode had convinced him that he would one day play in the NBA. "To see him play in a college Division I game the same year he had heart surgery... I knew that at that moment that there really was going to be nothing to stop him from anything that he wants to do," LeBron said. — AFP