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## UN meets as Mideast seethes

Sheikh Tamim slams 'genocide' • Erdogan blasts 'barbarism' • King Abdullah warns against 'war crime'

### Crown Prince meets world leaders



**NEW YORK:** Representative of HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, met King Abdullah II of Jordan (left) and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni on the



sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly. The leaders discussed key regional and international developments and bilateral relations and ways to enhance cooperation in areas of mutual interest. — KUNA photos (See Page 3)

### Biometrics postponed for some as registration stops at malls on Oct 1

**KUWAIT:** The interior ministry announced Tuesday that Kuwaiti students on scholarships and their companions abroad, as well as patients sent for treatment abroad by the government and their companions, and diplomats and their companions outside the country are temporarily exempt from registering their biometrics as the deadline for Kuwaitis ends on Sept 30, 2024.

These citizens will be exempt until they return to Kuwait, where they can complete their biometric registration either at the airport or at crimi-

nal evidence departments across the country, the ministry explained. Students studying abroad at their expense and patients undergoing treatment abroad at their expense too must submit documents to prove this to Kuwait's embassies to get a similar exemption, the ministry noted.

Earlier, the ministry announced that biometric registration at shopping malls will stop as of Oct 1. However, people can submit their biometrics at designated centers at the personal identity verification departments of the public department for criminal evidence that are open throughout the week from 8:00 am until 10:00 pm. Booking an appointment can be done via the Sahel application, the ministry said in a statement, adding biometric registration can be done at the shopping malls until Sept 30 without an appointment. These malls are 360 Mall, The Avenues, Assima Mall and the ministries complex.



**NEW YORK:** (Clockwise from top left) US President Joe Biden, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Jordanian King Abdullah II and Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani speak during the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly at the United Nations headquarters on Sept 24, 2024. — AFP photos

**UNITED NATIONS:** US President Joe Biden asked world leaders Tuesday to prevent "full-scale war" over Lebanon, as clashes escalated between the Zionist entity and Hezbollah, prompting the UN chief to warn of a situation "on the brink". The UN General Assembly, the high point of the diplomatic calendar, comes as Lebanese authorities said Zionist strikes killed 558 people – 50 of them children.

Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani said the Zionist entity's war in the Gaza Strip was a genocide as he addressed world leaders. "The blatant aggression that befalls the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip today is the most barbaric, heinous

and extensive aggression," he said, calling the conflict "a crime of genocide".

"Full-scale war is not in anyone's interest. Even though the situation has escalated, a diplomatic solution is still possible," Biden said in his farewell address to the global body. "In fact, it remains the only path to lasting security to allow the residents from both countries to return to their homes on the border safely," Biden said.

Biden also pushed again for an elusive ceasefire between the Zionist entity and Hamas, telling the global body it was time to "end this war".

Continued on Page 6

### OPEC: No peak oil demand 'on horizon', phaseout a 'fantasy'

**PARIS:** OPEC said Tuesday that phasing out oil was a "fantasy", as the Saudi-led cartel forecast that demand would keep growing until at least 2050, a key year in the battle against climate change. The oil cartel's prediction runs counter to the assessment of the Paris-based International Energy Agency, which sees demand for fossil fuels peaking this decade as the world turns to renewable energy and electric cars.

In the group's annual World Oil Outlook (WOO), OPEC Secretary General Haitham Al Ghais said oil and gas make up well over half of the energy mix today "and are expected to do the same in 2050". "What the Outlook underscores is that the fantasy of phasing out oil and gas bears no relation to fact," Ghais said in the report's foreword. "A realistic view of demand growth expectations necessitate adequate investments in oil and gas, today, tomorrow, and for many decades into the future," he added. Demand for oil alone is expected to reach 120.1 million barrels per day (bpd) by 2050, up 17.5 percent from 102.2 million bpd in 2023, the report said.

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### Zionists strike Lebanon again, Hezb hits base

**BEIRUT:** The Zionist entity said it launched a new wave of "extensive" strikes Tuesday against Lebanon's Hezbollah, after hundreds were killed the day before when clashes sparked by the nearly year-long Gaza war intensified. Lebanon said Zionist strikes killed at least 558 people on Monday, sending tensions soaring on the deadliest day of violence in the country since its 1975-90 civil war.

Lebanese Health Minister Firass Abiad, who gave Monday's toll of 558 dead, said the "vast majority, if not all,

of those killed in yesterday's attacks were unarmed people in their homes". His office said another six people were killed Tuesday in a strike on south Beirut. The Zionist entity said it "eliminated" Hezbollah's rocket forces commander Ibrahim Kobeissi the strike. A source close to Hezbollah also said Kobeissi had been killed.

In the evening, the Zionist military said it was "currently conducting extensive strikes on Hezbollah terror targets in Lebanon". Hezbollah said it targeted a military base in the Zionist entity near Safed twice with salvos of rockets. "In defense of Lebanon and its people", Hezbollah targeted "the Dado base" near Safed – the headquarters of the Zionist military's northern command – with a total of 90 rockets, the Iran-backed group said in two separate

Continued on Page 6



**BEIRUT:** Bystanders and reporters check the destruction in a street under a residential building whose top two floors were hit by a Zionist strike in the Ghoheiri area of the capital's southern suburbs on Sept 24, 2024. — AFP

### Hamas weakened but not crushed a year into Gaza war

**CAIRO:** The Zionist entity's military campaign to eradicate Hamas in retaliation for the Oct 7 attack has weakened it by killing several of its leaders and thousands of fighters, and by reducing swaths of the territory it rules to rubble. But the Palestinian militant group has not been crushed outright, and a year on from its unprecedented attack on the Zionist entity, an end to its hold over Gaza remains elusive.

According to data provided by the Gaza health ministry, the Zionist offensive has killed more than

41,000 people, the majority civilians. In one of the biggest blows to the militant movement since it was founded in 1987 during the Palestinian intifada uprising, Hamas's leader Ismail Haniyeh was assassinated in Iran on July 31.

Both Hamas and its backer Iran accused the Zionist entity of killing Haniyeh, though the Zionist entity has not commented. After Haniyeh's death, Hamas named Yahya Sinwar, whom the Zionist entity accuses of masterminding the Oct7 attack, as its new leader. On the Gaza battlefield, Zionist forces have aggressively pursued both Sinwar and Hamas military chief Mohammed Deif, whom the Zionist entity says it killed in an air strike. Hamas says Deif is still alive.

"Commander Mohammed Deif is still giving orders," a source in Hamas's armed wing, the Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brigades, told AFP on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to speak to media



Ismail Haniyeh Mohammed Deif Yahya Sinwar

on the matter. A senior Hamas official who also asked not to be named described Sinwar, who has not been seen in public since the start of the war, as a "supreme commander" who leads "both the military and political wings" of Hamas.

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## Local



Sheikha Dana Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah delivers her speech at the "Empower Her" seminar.



(From left) Samer Khanachet, Sheikha Dana Al-Sabah, Masoud Hayat and Dr Amani Boureslim are seen at the event.



Dr Amani Bouresli, Non-Executive Board Member at Burgan Bank, delivers her keynote speech at the seminar.

# Burgan Bank hosts 'Empower Her' seminar

Event confirms bank's commitment to championing women's leadership in banking sector



KUWAIT: Burgan Bank team members pose for a group photo after the conclusion of the "Empower Her" seminar.

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank recently hosted the "Empower Her" seminar as part of its dedicated efforts to empower women in leadership positions across society. The event, held at the Four Seasons Hotel under the auspices and sponsorship of Sheikha Dana Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, gathered a distinguished audience of around 200 participants, including prominent figures in the Kuwaiti banking and various sectors, to share valuable market insights and experiences and expand the network of impactful female industry leaders. The "Empower Her" seminar is the latest testament to Burgan's commitment to fostering gender equality and diversity in the workplace and encouraging women's professional advancement as market leaders and decision-makers in the Kuwaiti private sector.

"In a market that is evolving and expanding at a phenomenal speed, our hope for keeping up and leading with innovation lies in diversity and equality," said Naqeeb Amin, General Manager for Human Resources and Development for the Group at Burgan Bank. "As a leader in human capital development and social responsibility, it is among our top priorities to constantly advance our capable talents and pave a smooth path for all outstanding calibers to lead Burgan Bank into a future of sustainable, inclusive growth. Today, we are in the presence of numerous female figures who have left a lasting mark on Kuwait's banking and financial industry and continue to inspire women in our community to believe in their unique potential and pursue their dreams."

"Talent development is a hallmark of Burgan's success as an employer, a business, and a corporate citizen," said Fatma Ahmad, Acting Senior Manager for Learning and Development at Burgan Bank. "As part of our robust human capital investment strategy, we continue to tailor programs and initiatives that address our employees' various needs for growth and development. On our mission to empower female talents, we are proud to hold more spaces for women to share their stories, pass on



Fatma Ahmad



Naqeeb Amin

valuable experiences, and express themselves in a safe and inclusive environment. With the "Empower Her" seminar, we are delighted to add yet another milestone in Burgan's dedicated women empowerment journey which centers on providing female professionals with tools, inspiration, and networking opportunities, as well as equipping them with strategic skills to drive meaningful change."

Among the event's attendees were leaders from Burgan Bank as well as representatives from KIPCO Group, leading Kuwaiti banks, Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies (KIBS), Kuwait Banking Association (KBA), and Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS). The seminar also hosted the prestigious keynote speakers, Dr Amani Bouresli, former Minister of Commerce, Minister of Planning and Development Affairs, and current Independent, Non-Executive Board Member at Burgan Bank; Dr. Louise Lambert, advisor, professor, and researcher in Middle East Journal and Positive Psychology; and Laurence Harvey, diversity champion, inclusion advocate, and unconscious bias expert.

The speakers discussed the impact of female empowerment in the workplace, the importance of sponsorship and providing support, and solutions to help women overcome the challenges they face in



Lujain Al-Saleh, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer at United Real Estate Company (left), moderates a panel discussion.

their careers. They also addressed the biased perceptions that women often encounter and discussed strategies for transforming these biases into collective synergy. Other topics included the role of male allyship in supporting women's growth and success, which is considered a critical factor in creating a more inclusive and equitable environment.

In addition, the seminar hosted two panel discussions on female leadership strategies, managing organizational transformation, and advancing women in leadership roles, which was represented by inspiring female leaders like Sara Akbar, Kuwaiti chemical petroleum engineer, women's rights advocate, and co-founder and former CEO of Kuwait Energy; Dr Mona Al-Khawari, Director of the Child Protection Office at the Ministry of Health and Founder and Executive Director of Kuwait National Program for Child Protection, and Dr Suad Al-Faqan, Olympic Champion and Kuwait

University Professor of Science and Biology.

The "Empower Her" seminar follows the great success of the "Empower Her" summer internship program for talented undergraduates. The internship program hosted 18 young women who had the opportunity to learn from Burgan's leading female figures and gain first-hand practical experience across the Bank's various departments. Other successful women empowerment initiatives include Burgan's "Lean In Circle," a women empowerment program that explores and addresses all challenges faced by women in the workplace, diminishing any obstacles that slow down their professional or personal growth. These women empowerment initiatives fall under the "Empower Her" umbrella, which is built on three key pillars: the Lean In Circle, the Female Summer Internship Program, and the Empower Her Seminar, all designed to foster women's leadership and development.



Sheikha Dana Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, KIPCO Group CEO, and Tony Daher, Group CEO at Burgan Bank, pose for a photo alongside team members from various Burgan Bank subsidiaries.

# Crown Prince receives world leaders, officials in New York

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled discusses issues related to investment, climate, diplomacy



HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Ruth Porat, President and Chief Investment Officer of Alphabet and its subsidiary Google, LLC.



NEW YORK: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with President of the World Bank Ajay Banga on the sidelines of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly at Kuwait's permanent mission headquarters in New York. — KUNA photos



HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Maldives President Dr Mohammad Muizzu.

NEW YORK: Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, received Tuesday several world leaders as well as representatives from the business and tech worlds. The meetings took place on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly at Kuwait's permanent mission headquarters in New York.

The leaders, which the Crown Prince met with separately, included Maldives President Dr Mohammad Muizzu, Chairman of the Presidential Council in Yemen Rashed Al-Alimi, Mauritanian President and the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Mohammad Ould Ghazouani and Somalian Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre.

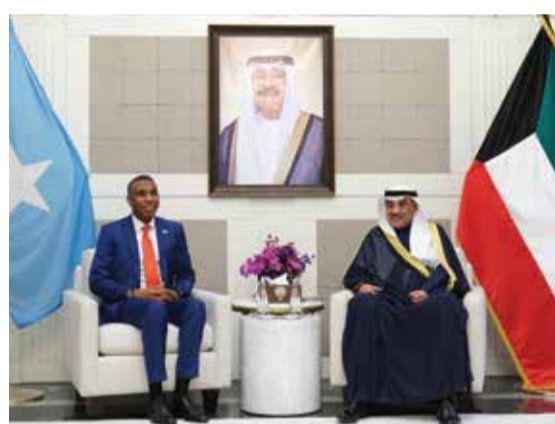
His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed greetings from His Highness the Amir to the leaders. He also discussed topics of mutual interest with each leader, according to KUNA, and reviewed ways to bolster bilateral relations regionally as well as internationally. HH the Crown Prince also received United States Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry. At the meeting, they discussed a variety of issues pertaining to climate change and exchanged views on the latest international developments as well as exploring areas for cooperation.

The meetings were attended by Kuwait Foreign Minister Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya, Director General of Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Foreign Affairs Undersecretary at the Crown Prince Divan Mazen Al-Issa and Kuwait Permanent Representative to the UN Tareq Al-Banai.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also met with the President of the World Bank Ajay Banga. The meeting discussed various economic and investment issues. The two sides also exchanged views on how to expand cooperation. HH the Crown Prince affirmed the importance of bolstering cooperation between Kuwait and the World Bank, especially in the fields of developing consultancy services and programs to train Kuwaitis at the global institution to hone national cadres' skills and expertise. Executive Director at the World Bank Group (WBG) Abdulaziz Al-Mulla was at the meeting.



His Highness the Crown Prince is seen with Mauritanian President and the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Mohammad Ould Ghazouani.



His Highness the Crown Prince is seen with Somalian Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre.



HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled is seen with Chairman of the Presidential Council in Yemen Rashed Al-Alimi.



HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah meets with United States Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry.

His Highness the Crown Prince also received Ruth Porat, President and Chief Investment Officer of Alphabet and its subsidiary Google, LLC where Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled expressed desire to increase the presence of global companies in the country and benefit from their expertise. The discussion covered several economic and investment topics, including the follow-up on the framework agreement signed with

Kuwait and the planned development of data centers. HH the Crown Prince emphasized Kuwait's commitment to developing and enhancing the technological skills of Kuwaiti youth. Country Manager of Google Cloud in Kuwait Shaymaa Al-Turkait was present. Both meetings were attended by Kuwaiti officials, in addition to Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikha Al-Zain Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah. — KUNA



A Saudi folk troupe performed the Saudi Ardha as part of a celebration held at the Saudi embassy in Kuwait to mark the 94th anniversary of the Saudi National Day.

## Kuwaiti PM, officials mark Saudi Arabia's National Day

KUWAIT: The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the State of Kuwait marked on Monday the 94th anniversary of the Saudi National Day, in the presence of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, alongside a number of ministers, senior state officials and heads of diplomatic missions.

The Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan

bin Saad Al-Saud, said that Kuwait holds a special place in the hearts of all Saudi people. He recalled the early efforts of Saudi Arabia's founding father King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al-Saud to unify the kingdom, which began in Kuwait.

The ambassador thanked the leadership and people of Kuwait for joining the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in celebrating its national day. He also congratulated the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al-Saud and the Saudi people on this occasion. The ceremony included several events and activities that celebrated Saudi Arabia's cultural heritage. A Saudi folk troupe performed the Saudi Ardha, which is a prominent part of Saudi national folklore and reflects the distinguished folk heritage of the kingdom. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (left) poses for a photo with Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad Al-Saud. — KUNA photos

## Kuwait FM attends Arab League session on sidelines of UNGA

NEW YORK: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya participated in the annual consultative ministerial meeting of the foreign ministers of the member states of the Arab League, which took place Monday on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City. Yahya headed the Kuwaiti delegation to the meeting, where various issues were discussed, including the current UN General Assembly session work. One of the persistent issues examined during the meeting was Palestine, the peace process in the Middle East, and the current developments in the region and international arena. Ways



NEW YORK: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya is seen with officials during the annual consultative ministerial meeting of the foreign ministers of the members of the Arab League. — KUNA

to enhance coordination between the Arab League and United Nations was also tackled during the meeting. Minister Al-Yahya also co-hosted a working dinner for the ten non-permanent members of the UNSC

(E10), along with Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovenia Tanja Fajon, and Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Maria Gabriela Sommerfeld Rosero, the E10 coordinator for the month. Discussions at the event focused on key issues and challenges facing the Middle East, which constitutes a third of the topics on the Security Council's agenda, with particular emphasis on the Palestinian issue. The participating foreign ministers exchanged views on strategies to address the region's threats and discussed the international community's actions in this regard.

The meeting also explored ways to empower non-permanent members of the Security Council to take measures ensuring adherence to the UN Charter and international law, while promoting transparency and effectiveness in the council's operations. The five newly elected members set to join the Security Council were also in attendance, as they engaged in discussions on enhancing the role of non-permanent members in global peace and security efforts. — KUNA

### In my view

## Workplace stress: What I've learned from the trenches

By Dr Sajed Al Abdali, MD



As the clock strikes midnight, another employee sends that "urgent" email. Across town, a manager tosses and turns, worrying about tomorrow's presentation. These scenes, playing out in countless homes, point to a growing epidemic: workplace stress. After two decades as an occupational health specialist, I've witnessed its rise firsthand. Here's what you need to know about this silent productivity killer.

### What's causing all this stress?

From what I've observed, there are a few big culprits: First up is the never-ending to-do list. I can't tell you how many times I've heard people say they feel like they're drowning in work. When tasks keep piling up and deadlines loom, it's no wonder people feel overwhelmed. Then there's the fear factor. In today's economy, job security isn't what it used to be. I've counseled plenty of folks who lie awake at night, worrying if they'll have a job tomorrow.

It doesn't help when management keeps everyone in the dark. Office politics can be another major headache. Whether it's a micromanaging boss or coworkers who don't pull their weight, bad relationships at work can turn even the best job into a daily struggle. And let's not forget about work-life balance – or the lack thereof. With smartphones keeping us connected 24/7, it's harder than ever to switch off. I've seen this issue skyrocket since remote work became more common.

### The toll of stress

Now, you might think a little stress is just part of the job. But trust me, when stress becomes chronic, it takes a serious toll. I've seen normally upbeat employees sink into anxiety and depression. Productivity takes a nosedive when people can't focus or make decisions. And don't get me started on the physical effects – from headaches and insomnia to more serious issues like high blood pressure and heart problems. One thing that often gets overlooked is how stress impacts attendance. Some folks call in sick more often, while others show up but aren't really "there." Both scenarios hurt the business in the long run.

### So, what can we do about it?

The good news is, we're not helpless against stress. I've seen some great initiatives that really make a difference: For employers, it's all about creating an environment where people feel supported. Clear communication goes a long way – people are less stressed when they know what's expected of them. Realistic workloads and the right resources are crucial too. Flexibility is another big one. Companies that offer options like remote work or flexible hours often see happier, less stressed employees. And don't underestimate the power of a good break – encouraging time off can work wonders. On the employee side, it's about taking charge of your own well-being. I always advise people to set clear boundaries and not be afraid to speak up when the workload gets too heavy. Learning to unplug after hours is crucial too – those emails can wait until morning!

### Wrapping it up

Stress at work isn't going to disappear overnight. But when both employers and employees tackle it head-on, amazing things can happen. A less stressed workforce isn't just happier – it's more productive, more creative, and more likely to stick around. It's not always easy, but in my book, creating an environment where people can do their best work without sacrificing their health is always worth it.

## Local

## Kuwait Times

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DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF  
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## Kuwait Times congratulated on anniversary



KUWAIT: Omar Rahbani, Cluster Director of Sales at the St Regis Hotel and Sondos Bokhary, Assistant Public Relations Manager at the hotel, pose with the Kuwait Times team. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Ministry of Information congratulates Kuwait Times

Minister of Information and Culture  
**Abdulrahman Baddah Al-Mutairi**

I am pleased to extend to you our congratulations on the 63rd anniversary of Kuwait Times Newspaper, asking Almighty Allah to help you carry out your duties at its best. We also laud your major role in presenting valuable content which has embodied the true message of journalism. I highly appreciate your efforts and those of Kuwait Times family and all employees.



I ask Almighty Allah that all our efforts be for the sake of our beloved country Kuwait, under the wise leadership of HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, May Allah protect him, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, May Allah protect them.

Information Ministry Undersecretary  
**Dr Nasser Al-Muhaisen**

We are pleased to extend to you and to the family of Kuwait Times our congratulations on the 63rd anniversary of Kuwait Times newspaper. The newspaper was able to occupy its prestigious status among local and international papers due to the outstanding efforts of the Kuwait Times family and their keenness on objectivity and media professionalism. As we bless this good effort, we ask Almighty Allah to guide you to what is good for our beloved country Kuwait and wish you more success.



Flower arrangements sent by the Information Ministry on Kuwait Times' anniversary.

Islamic Republic of Iran  
Ambassador Mohammad Totonji

We are delighted to join in the celebration of the Kuwait Times newspaper's annual anniversary. Kuwait Times continues to offer its best efforts with dedication and loyalty, committed to presenting the news truthfully and conveying accurate information, ensuring reliability and credibility. We wish you continuous progress and success, with ongoing achievements under the leadership of His Highness the Amir of the country and His Highness the Crown Prince. Good luck.

Peru Chargé d'Affaires  
Pedro Javier Sedano

On behalf of the Embassy of Peru, I would like to extend my congratulations to the Kuwait Times on the occasion of its 63rd anniversary. For over six decades, the Kuwait Times has been a vital source of reliable news and has fostered informed dialogue within Kuwait and beyond. Your commitment to journalistic excellence is truly admirable, and I am confident that Kuwait Times will continue to serve the community with the same dedication for many more years to come.



A flower bouquet sent by Al-Anba daily newspaper.



A flower bouquet sent by Al-Ahli Bank to congratulate Kuwait Times.

## The Embassy of Georgia

The Embassy of Georgia in the State of Kuwait expresses heartfelt congratulations and profound appreciation to the team of dedicated professionals of the Kuwait Times on the occasion of its 63rd anniversary. As the beacon of the English language news in Kuwait and wider GCC region, we

commend decades old successful collaboration with the Kuwait Times, showcasing the flourishing cooperation between Georgia and the State of Kuwait.

Under the exceptionally wise guidance of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his Government, our bilateral Georgia-Kuwait partnership has entered a new path of fruitful relations, bearing concrete results for the well-being of the citizens of our

countries. By highlighting the success stories of our partnership to the broader audience, the Kuwait Times brings invaluable contribution to the fostering of investment, touristic and cultural relations between our countries that Georgia very much strives to achieve. The Embassy of Georgia in the State of Kuwait wishes continued success to the Kuwait Times and counts on further enhanced cooperation with its team.



Gado Gado



Indonesian spices are showcased at the event.

## Indonesia focused on growing trade with Kuwait: Envoy

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: With approximately 7,000 Indonesians residing in Kuwait, Indonesian Ambassador Lina Marianna noted that many have called Kuwait home for over 15 years, contributing diligently to sectors like hospitality, healthcare, and oil and gas. At an event titled "Indonesia Spice Up the World" held at the Indonesian official residence this week, Kuwait Times spoke with the ambassador about the strong people-to-people connection between Indonesia and Kuwait. She mentioned that the Visa-on-arrival policy has made travel easier, with 1,900 Kuwaitis visiting Indonesia in the first half of this year; Bali remains a favorite destination for Kuwaiti tourists.

Beside tourism, Indonesia is focused on strengthening trade relations with Kuwait. The ambassador highlighted several upcoming events, including an investment forum to be held on November 7 and a series of exhibitions promoting Indonesian products in October. "We invite all traders and investors from Kuwait to participate in these events," she said, adding that Indonesia offers a range of affordable products in high demand in Kuwait, such as bukkhoor and coal.

Touching on cultural and social connections between the two countries, Marianna also shared common values of respect, support, and cooperation between the two countries. She referred to the Indonesian concept of "Gotong Royong," that's



KUWAIT: The Indonesian Ambassador to Kuwait Lina Marianna (center) sits at the table with her guests.

particularly reflected in Kuwait, which promotes sharing burdens and helping one another, fostering trust and lasting friendships. Ambassador Marianna likened this to Kuwait's strong sense of charity and community support, evident in initiatives like building orphanages and mosques, as well as other projects in Indonesia, such as Sheikh Jaber Ahmad Village. She described Kuwait as "a very generous community."

Regarding the Indonesian culinary diversity showcased at the event, Marianna highlighted the growing

popularity of Indonesian cuisine in Kuwait. Dishes like Gado Gado, a vegetable salad with peanut sauce, have become favorites among Kuwaitis. "It includes ingredients familiar to Kuwaitis like cabbage and potatoes, but the peanut sauce is what makes it special," she explained. She also mentioned other Indonesian dishes, such as chicken skewers, which are similar to kebab but with a unique flavor, and beef rendang, a rich and spicy dish. "It's very spicy, but also very delicious," she said.

## Children at risk of lower back pain in Kuwait: Physio

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Children in Kuwait suffer from lower back pain just like adults, said a health official at the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Hospital. The difference, according to the hospital's head of the pediatrics department Noura Al-Subaei, is the type of pain and its causes. The main culprit, she said, was the children's heavy school bags and their bad posture when they use electronic devices for long periods of time.

The remarks came as the Physiotherapy Department at the Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Hospital marked World Physiotherapy Day under the theme "Physiotherapy and Backache". The event focused on raising awareness of backache and improving patients' understanding of the health issue. The department, said Subaei, aims to provide advice to parents to protect their children from back pain.

Head of the men's physiotherapy department Dr Mustafa Bu Abbas said back conditions are common in society although they are preventable by simple steps and the event aimed at promoting awareness of prevention and treatment means. Acting Hospital Director Shujaa Al-Enezi said colleagues at the hospital's departments were doing a tremendous job treating patients, adding that the hospital carries out all types of physiotherapy, including water therapy and traditional Chinese therapy. The hospital received 427 cases in 2024, Head of the women's department Nafeesa Kamal said.



Mali junta chief reviews strategy after massacre by jihadists

Back to death row? Retrial verdict due in murder saga

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## Police make multiple arrests after US woman uses machine-assisted suicide

Swiss public prosecutor opens criminal proceedings

GENEVA: Swiss police said Tuesday they arrested several people after a US woman used a controversial suicide pod to end her life. The space-age looking Sarco capsule, which replaces the oxygen inside it with nitrogen, causing death by hypoxia, was used on Monday at a forest location near the German border. The portable human-sized pod, self-operated by a button inside, providing death without medical supervision, has raised a host of legal and ethical questions in Switzerland. Active euthanasia is banned in the country but assisted dying has been legal for decades. Switzerland's interior minister Elisabeth Baume-Schneider told lawmakers on Monday that the Sarco was "not legal". Police in the northern Schaffhausen canton said several people had been taken into custody and face criminal proceedings.

### 'Peaceful, fast, dignified'

The Last Resort organization, an assisted dying group, presented the Sarco pod in Zurich in July, saying they expected it to be used for the first time within months, and saw no legal obstacle to its use in Switzerland. In a statement to AFP, The Last Resort said the person who died was a 64-year-old woman, who was not named, from the midwestern United States. She "had been suffering for many years from a number of serious problems associated with severe immune compromise", the statement said. "The death took place in open air, under a canopy of trees, at a private forest retreat." The association's co-president Florian Willet was the only other person present, and described the woman's death as "peaceful, fast and dignified", according to the statement.

### Several arrests

The cantonal public prosecutor's office "has opened criminal proceedings against several people for inducement and aiding and abetting suicide... and several people have been placed in police custody," a



SCHAFFHAUSEN: A handout picture released by "The Last Resort", an assisted dying group, on September 24, 2024 shows the Sarco pod at the location where it was allegedly used by a 64-year-old American woman who "died using the Sarco device" at approximately 4:01 pm on September 23, 2024, according to a statement by "The Last Resort". — AFP

police statement said. The public prosecutor's office had been informed by a law firm on Monday that an assisted suicide had taken place at a forest hut in Merisshausen. The police, the forensic emergency service and the public prosecutor's office "went to the crime scene". The Sarco suicide capsule was secured and the deceased taken away for an autopsy. "Several people in the Merisshausen area were taken into police

custody," the statement said. The Dutch newspaper De Volkskrant said one of its photographers had been arrested by Schaffhausen police.

### Sarco: 3D-printable capsule

Tested in a workshop in Rotterdam, the Sarco was invented by Philip Nitschke, a leading global figure in right-to-die activism. The 3D-printable

capsule cost more than 650,000 euros (\$725,000) to research and develop in the Netherlands over 12 years. Future Sarcos could cost around 15,000 euros. In a statement, Nitschke said he was "pleased that the Sarco had performed exactly as it had been designed to do: that is to provide an elective, non-drug, peaceful death at the time of the person's choosing". To use the Sarco, the person wishing to die must first pass a psychiatric assessment.

The person climbs into the purple capsule, closes the lid, and is asked automated questions such as who they are, where they are and if they know what happens when they press the button. In July, Nitschke explained that once the button is pressed, the amount of oxygen in the air plummets from 21 percent to 0.05 percent in less than 30 seconds. The Sarco monitors the oxygen level in the capsule, the person's heart rate and the oxygen saturation of the blood. Nitschke's Exit International organization, which owns the Sarco, is a non-profit group funded by donations. The only cost for the user is 18 Swiss francs (\$21) for the nitrogen.

### Suicide law

In July, Willet said Switzerland was "by far the best place" for the Sarco to be used, due to its "wonderful liberal system". Swiss law generally allows assisted suicide if the person commits the lethal act themselves. But interior minister Baume-Schneider, taking questions in parliament on Monday, said: "The Sarco suicide capsule is not legally compliant in two respects. Firstly, it does not meet the requirements of product safety law and therefore cannot be placed on the market. Secondly, the corresponding use of nitrogen is not compatible with the purpose article of the Chemicals Act," she said. Fiona Stewart, who is on The Last Resort's advisory board, said the group was acting on legal advice, which "since 2021 has consistently found that the use of Sarco in Switzerland would be lawful". — AFP



NEW YORK: (From left, clockwise) UNICEF Youth Advocates Alaine Perdomo, 17, from Belize, Emmanuel Jidisa, 17, from the DRC, Maria Marshall, 15, from Barbados and Areej Essam, 17, from Yemen pose for a photo on September 23, 2024. — AFP

## 'Lead the future': Youths challenge world leaders

UNITED NATIONS: Fired up by their desire for change, Alaine, Maria, Emmanuel and Areej are speaking up for young people ahead of the UN's annual diplomatic bonanza in New York. Maria Marshall, 15, has been a youth activist for several years and has produced short films to raise awareness of climate change and its impact — particularly in her native Barbados. "I think people think that we could just go to, maybe, Mars," but "there's only so much that we can really do with money," said the UNICEF ambassador ahead of the UN's annual General Assembly week. "We only have planet Earth."

Marshall has seen firsthand the dire consequences of climate change in her own country, where beaches disappeared after Barbados was ravaged by hurricane Beryl in July. "Imagine that — if all of the beaches of Barbados were to be eaten away like that, it would start to eat into the land," she said ahead of the UN gathering.

Unbowed by some of her peers teasing her for wanting to "save the world", she now hopes to press her case in the corridors of power. Her videos on social media on how to recycle clothes, along with other up-cycling tips "that average people can do" attract hundreds of views. "How we can help stop climate change is actually by all of us working together," she said. Her fellow activist Alaine Perdomo, 17, has battled gender inequality in Belize and helped survivors of sexual violence and gender-based discrimination. "I really saw it happening in my family and (among) my friends and my peers so often," she said.

In response, the student-turned-software developer created an app — "Safescape" — to be a safe space where survivors of assault can share as well as obtain support and information. Following the adoption of a "Pact for the Future" Sunday to chart a course for later generations, Perdomo said she believed world leaders "care." "I just think that it's always important to hear from different perspectives," she said. "The point of the United Nations General Assembly is to do that, to bring people together and these fresh perspectives."

Emmanuel Jidisa, 17, also wants to see the views of young people given more weight. "There's a saying that even the biggest journeys start with small steps — often taken by those who are directly affected by any given situation. It's young people themselves who are best-placed to say what they think," he said.

Jidisa educates schoolchildren about the perils of climate change in his home country, Democratic Republic of Congo. The university student, who is a person living with albinism, said that he became aware of the danger caused by the sun when he saw the burns on his own skin. "It shouldn't be that we choose extinction. The world is getting smaller... I am just calling on leaders to build a world for young people." Areej Essam, 17, said that being in New York on the sidelines of the UN gathering gave her the "power to advocate for people in my country (Yemen) and for children that don't have voices." "If we want a good future, we have to invest in children's education... and peace," she said.

"We have to make sure that they have a sustainable environment to grow in so they can lead the future." In stark contrast to the overwhelmingly negative mood music at this year's gathering, against a backdrop of wars, famine and uncertainty, Perdomo struck a positive note. "You have something incredible within you that you can bring and contribute to the world," she said calling on the assembled dignitaries to follow their "passions." — AFP

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## International

# Back to death row? Retrial verdict due in murder saga

## World's longest-serving death row prisoner faces Japanese court

**TOKYO:** The world's longest-serving death row prisoner hears from a Japanese court on Thursday if he will again face execution or finally be acquitted, a decade after obtaining a retrial of his murder conviction. Iwao Hakamada, 88, was jailed under the death penalty for 46 years until he was freed in 2014 pending a retrial. The former boxer was first convicted in 1968 of killing his boss, the man's wife and their two teenage children. But over the years, questions arose over fabricated evidence and coerced confessions, sparking scrutiny of Japan's justice system, which critics say holds suspects "hostage".

"For so long, we have fought a battle that has felt endless," Hakamada's sister

Hideko, 91, told reporters in July. "But this time, I believe it will be settled". Prosecutors meanwhile have said they remain convinced of his guilt "beyond reasonable doubt". Japan is the only major industrialized democracy other than the United States to retain capital punishment, a policy that has broad public support. Hakamada is the fifth death row inmate granted a retrial in Japan's post-war history. All four previous cases resulted in exoneration.

After decades of detention, mostly in solitary confinement, Hakamada's health has deteriorated and he sometimes seems like he "lives in a world of fantasy", according to his lead lawyer Hideyo Ogawa. Speaking to AFP in

2018, Hakamada underlined his ongoing battle to obtain an acquittal, saying he felt he was "fighting a bout every day". "Once you think you can't win, there is no path to victory," he said.

### Blood and miso

Although the Supreme Court upheld Hakamada's death sentence in 1980, his supporters fought for decades to have the case reopened. A turning point came in 2014 when a retrial was granted on the grounds that prosecutors could have planted evidence, and Hakamada was released from prison. Legal back-and-forth, including a pushback by prosecutors, meant it took until last year for the retrial to be-

gin. Hakamada initially denied having robbed and murdered the victims, but confessed following what he later described as a brutal police interrogation that included beatings.

Central to the trial is a set of blood-stained clothes found in a tank of miso - fermented soybean paste - a year after the 1966 murders, used as evidence to incriminate Hakamada. The defense argues investigators likely set up the clothes, as the red stains on them were too bright, but prosecutors say their own experiments show the color is credible. Hakamada's supporters and rights groups say his saga exposes Japan's flawed justice process and the cruelty of the death penalty.

In Japan, death row prisoners are notified of their hanging a few hours in advance. The case is "just one of countless examples of Japan's so-called 'hostage justice' system". Teppei Kasai, Asia program officer for Human Rights Watch, told AFP. "Suspects are forced to confess through long and arbitrary periods of detention" and there is often "intimidation during interrogation", he said. Hakamada's defense team has petitioned the Shizuoka prosecution office to let a not-guilty verdict stand if that is how the court rules on Thursday. "We told prosecutors that the onus is on them to put an end to this 58-year-old case", Ogawa told reporters this month. — AFP

## 3 killed, thousands evacuated as floods hit central Vietnam

**HANOI:** Serious flooding in central Vietnam has killed three people and forced more than 10,000 residents to evacuate their homes, disaster officials said on Tuesday. Earlier this month large swathes of the country's north were devastated by flooding in the wake of Typhoon Yagi, which left nearly 300 people dead and caused \$1.6 billion worth of damage.

But as Yagi floodwaters began to recede in the north, central Vietnam was last week struck by another severe storm which brought heavy rain and sent river levels dangerously high. Disaster management officials in Thanh Hoa province said Tuesday that over the past three days more than 11,700 people had left their homes - many of them partially submerged - for higher ground.

In neighboring Nghe An province, three people were reported dead after being swept away in flashfloods. Since Saturday, around 320 houses have been damaged while more than 6,300 hectares of crops were destroyed, the ministry of agriculture said, adding that at least 40 school buildings in the area were flooded or damaged. In northern Thailand, flash floods triggered by heavy rain have killed two people in Lampang province and affected 1,500 households, the kingdom's Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation said on Tuesday.

Authorities have also urged people living along the swollen River Wang to move to safety. Northern Thailand, Myanmar and Laos were all badly hit by Typhoon Yagi, with 702 fatalities reported. Myanmar was worst hit with 384 deaths, followed by Vietnam



**HANOI:** Soldiers help farmers salvage their harvest from a flooded rice field in Hanoi's Chuong My district on September 24, 2024. — AFP

with 299. Nearly 1,000 schools across Vietnam and Thailand have been damaged since early September, forcing children out of classes, according to Save the Children. In Hanoi, some homes on the outskirts of the capital remain partly under water two and half weeks after Yagi hit, and farmers are still battling with the aftermath of flooded fields.

Rice farmers could be seen Tuesday harvesting their crop weeks earlier than usual, trying to save

anything that had not yet been destroyed. "We lost almost all our crops. We cut the rice today in a hope to save as much as we could," 60-year-old Dinh Thi Thu told AFP. Vietnam is prone to tropical storms, which often bring in deadly flash floods and landslides, hitting the country between June and November every year. But human-made climate change is causing more intense weather patterns that can make destructive floods more likely. — AFP

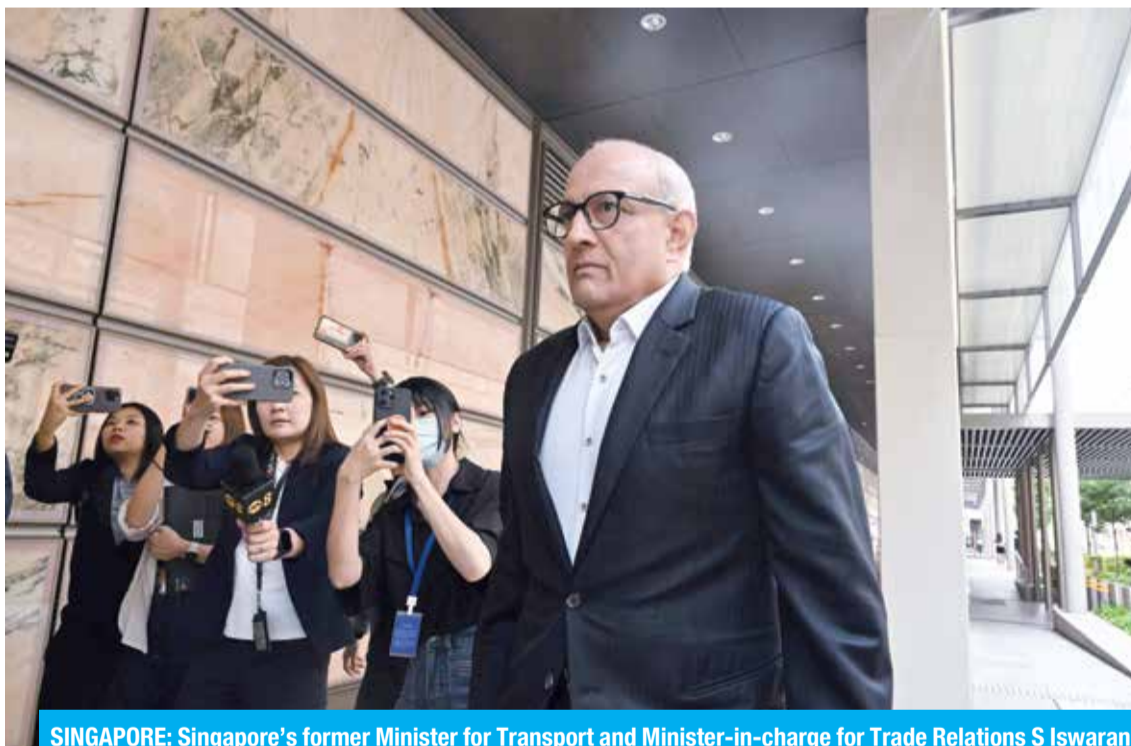
## Singaporean former minister convicted in a rare graft trial

**SINGAPORE:** A Singaporean former minister was convicted Tuesday of obstruction of justice and accepting illegal gifts, the public prosecutor said, in the city-state's first political graft trial for nearly half a century. Ex-transport minister S Iswaran, known for helping bring Formula One to the financial hub, was earlier this year hit with 35 charges mostly related to graft in a nation often cited as one of the world's least corrupt.

But prosecutors moved forward with five lesser charges only, including some related to a billionaire property tycoon. "S Iswaran pleaded guilty to and was convicted... of four charges for obtaining gifts from two local businessmen. He also pleaded guilty to and was convicted of one charge for obstruction of justice," the attorney general's office said in a statement.

Prosecutors are seeking six to seven months in prison combined for the charges, while the defense is hoping for no more than eight weeks, The Straits Times reported. The sentencing date has not been formally announced by the attorney general's office, but local media said it was set for October 3. After the court session ended, 62-year-old Iswaran said he could not comment on the trial. "I just want to thank all of you for coming, and let's see how it goes," he told reporters outside the Supreme Court. His trial has been deemed by observers to be one of the most politically significant in the city-state's history.

It also risks damaging the reputation of the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) before general elections expected to be held by November next year. Iswaran quit in January after being formally notified of the charges which include accepting gifts worth more than \$300,000. In a resignation letter at the time, he said he would clear his name in court. Iswaran has paid back around \$295,000 in financial gain to the government and gifts including a Brompton bicycle were also seized from him, the attorney general's office said.



**SINGAPORE:** Singapore's former Minister for Transport and Minister-in-charge for Trade Relations S Iswaran arrives at the Supreme Court in Singapore on September 24, 2024. — AFP

The charges include obstruction of justice relating to an attempt to block Singaporean authorities from investigating a business class flight at the expense of Malaysian hotel tycoon Ong Beng Seng, one of Singapore's richest residents. The other four charges relate to his receipt of gifts from Ong, the managing director of Hotel Properties Limited, and a top director at a construction company, including bottles of whiskey and golf clubs. Neither businessman has faced punishment. The charge of obstructing justice carries a maximum sentence of seven years and a fine, while accepting gifts of value has a maximum sentence of two years and a fine.

### Salary payback

Most of the charges against Iswaran have been levelled with a rarely used criminal law that states it is an offence for public servants to accept objects of value from figures they officially work with. Singapore's former prime minister Lee Hsien Loong said at the time of Iswaran's resignation that he had pledged

to return money received as part of his salary and allowances since his arrest. Cabinet ministers are paid salaries comparable to the top earners in the private sector to deter corruption. Lee has previously admitted that his long-ruling PAP had "taken a hit" after a spate of political scandals. Last year two PAP legislators resigned for having an affair.

Before that, two heavyweight cabinet members were investigated for allegedly getting favors in their rental of sprawling colonial-era bungalows, but were subsequently cleared. Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, who succeeded Lee, has said the PAP's anti-corruption stance is "non-negotiable". The government said it would review the terms of its Formula One Grand Prix deal after Iswaran's resignation. This year's race in Singapore concluded on Sunday. Singapore's last senior politician convicted for graft dates to 1975, when Wee Toon Boon, then minister of state for environment, was found guilty of accepting bribes worth more than \$600,000 according to local media. — AFP

## 15 die in Pakistan sectarian clashes

**PESHAWAR:** At least 15 people have been killed in clashes between two tribes in northwestern Pakistan, a local official said Tuesday, as a deadly feud over land is reignited. With heavy weapons including mortar shells, the violence hit Kurram district near the border with Afghanistan where the same

tribes fought in July. "The conflict, initially over land, involves two tribes - one Sunni and the other Shiite - which has turned the dispute into a sectarian clash," a senior administrative official stationed in Kurram told AFP on condition of anonymity.

He said 15 people had been killed since Saturday. The Associated Press of Pakistan, the official news agency, reported around twenty other people had been wounded. The Kurram district, formerly a semi-autonomous area, has a history of bloody clashes between tribes belonging to the Sunni and Shiite sects of Islam that have

claimed hundreds of lives over the years.

The last clashes in July killed 35 people and ended only after a jirga (tribal council) called a ceasefire, with officials attempting to broker a new truce. Tribal and family feuds are common in Pakistan. However, they can be particularly protracted and violent in the mountainous northwestern region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where communities abide by traditional tribal honor codes. In Pakistan, a predominantly Sunni Muslim country, the Shiite community says they have long suffered discrimination and violence. — AFP

## 2 killed in Mexico as John weakens to tropical storm

**MEXICO CITY:** At least two people died after Hurricane John slammed into Mexico's southern Pacific coast overnight, authorities reported Tuesday, with the cyclone since downgraded to a tropical storm and expected to weaken further. Forecasters nevertheless warned of strong rains and flash floods inundating the coast for the next few days. "Two people were reported dead due to a landslide in their home" in the southern city of Tlacoachistlahuaca, Evelyn Salgado, the governor of the Mexican state of Guerrero, told a press conference.

The US-based National Hurricane Center (NHC) warned of intense rainfall in coastal areas of southwest Mexico this week. "This heavy rainfall will likely cause significant and possibly catastrophic, life-threatening flash flooding and mudslides" in the southern states of Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero. Authorities had warned residents to seek shelter as strong winds and rain battered beaches ahead of John making landfall near Marquelia in Guerrero.

The NHC said maximum sustained winds weakened to around 50 miles (85 kilometers) per hour - after earlier topping 120 mph - according to a 1200 GMT update. "Additional rapid weakening is anticipated, and John is expected to become a tropical depression later today," the NHC said. Through Thursday, John was forecast to produce up to 15 inches of rain in parts of Chiapas, and nearly double that in areas of Oaxaca and Guerrero, it said. "John is producing extraordinary rains (greater than 250 mm) (9.8 inches) in Oaxaca and Guerrero; torrential rains in Chiapas," the National Civil Protection agency said in a post on X early Tuesday. The agency had issued a red alert on Monday, telling people to stay indoors and keep away from windows.

### 'Things are replaceable'

President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador told his morning press conference that John "was a strong phenomenon, with a lot of rain." He had earlier urged people living along the affected coastline to be prepared. "Seek higher ground, protect yourselves and do not forget that the most important thing is life; material things are replaceable," he wrote on X. Authorities in Oaxaca said Monday that they were opening temporary shelters, suspending school classes, closing beaches and mobilizing machinery in case needed to clear roads. School classes in Guerrero were also cancelled on Tuesday, the state education agency said on X. The international airport in the tourist resort of Puerto Escondido suspended all flights.

In Guerrero, authorities said around 300 temporary shelters were ready if needed. Restaurant workers were seen bringing furniture in from beaches, while fishermen returned to shore. Hurricanes hit Mexico every year on both its Pacific and Atlantic coasts, usually between May and November. In October last year, Hurricane Otis, a scale-topping Category 5 storm, left a trail of destruction and several dozen people dead after slamming into the beachside city of Acapulco in Guerrero. Otis rapidly intensified within hours from a tropical storm to the most powerful category of the five-step Saffir-Simpson scale, taking authorities by surprise. — AFP



**SALINA CRUZ, Mexico:** Fishermen return to shore ahead of the arrival of Hurricane John in Salina Cruz, Oaxaca State, Mexico. — AFP

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2024

# Fishy business caught by fraying India-Bangladesh diplomatic ties

## Dhaka bans exports of hilsa fish after Hasina ouster



NAMKHANA, India: Fishermen return on trawlers after catching hilsa fish at sea, in Namkhana in West Bengal. — AFP photos

KOLKATA: Shimmering piles of silver fish are snapped up for exorbitant prices in India's port of Kolkata, the unlikely side effect of a diplomatic fallout after a student-led revolution in neighboring Bangladesh.

Demand is so high for the herring-like hilsa—the national fish of Bangladesh and a much-loved delicacy in India's adjoining West Bengal state—that Dhaka this year banned exports. The decision follows a festering diplomatic dispute between Dhaka and New Delhi, after Bangladesh's autocratic leader Sheikh Hasina was ousted in August and escaped by helicopter to old ally India.

"You have to taste it to know why it is so in demand," said Kolkata fishmonger Mohammed Zeeshan. As long as a forearm, the saltwater fish is commonly steamed, fried in fragrant mustard oil, or steeped in spicy curry sauce. "I cannot describe it in words", 29-year-old Zeeshan added, beaming a wide smile.

Fans say its white flesh is not only delicious and nutritious. It is also an integral part of religious festivals, especially during Hindu celebrations for the goddess Durga, which this year falls in October.

Its near-sacred status has inspired art, poetry and literature. When the "hilsa season" of fishing begins, Kolkata's

newspapers hail the "queen of fishes" and carry photographs of the first catch.

Indian fishing fleets trawl the brackish waters of the River Ganges, feeding rampant demand in the megacity of Kolkata and the wider state of West Bengal, with a population of more than 100 million people. But major overfishing means stocks fall far short. Traders previously turned to Bangladesh to fill the shortfall. Much of Bangladesh comprises deltas, where the Ganges and the Brahmaputra wind towards the sea after coursing through India.

Many millions also depend on the fish in Bangladesh. Environmental experts say fish stocks have also been hit by changes to the ecologically sensitive and low-lying deltas, threatened by rising seas driven by climate change. Dhaka's authorities have imposed fishing restrictions to ensure the sustainability of stocks, and keep prices low for its 170 million people.

Bangladesh had tightly restricted exports in previous years. But Hasina also pursued a soft-power strategy, allowing several thousand tons to be exported ahead of Kolkata's main religious holiday, the weeklong Durga Puja celebrations. Hasina herself would gift hilsa on trips to India. But her fishy diplomacy ended with her dramatic downfall on August 5. Her government was accused of widespread



DHAKA: A Bangladeshi vendor sells hilsa fish at a market in Dhaka.

human rights abuses, and the interim administration now running Bangladesh wants her extradited.

Dhaka belatedly announced a partial lift of the ban on Saturday to allow the export of 3,000 tons of hilsa for the Durga Puja festival. That is nearly 1,000 tons less than what was permitted for import by India last year, and the official trade is not expected to resume until later

in the month.

Already costly, prices have surged by a third since Hasina was ousted. Fish sells for as much as 1,800 rupees (\$21.45) a kilogram, compared to around 1,300 rupees (\$15.50) last year.

It is a princely sum, about what a laborer could earn in around two days. "The ban has had a huge impact on business," said Zeeshan, the fishmonger. "Supply is

less, and the price has gone up."

Celebrating Durga Puja and a hilsa dish go together for many Kolkata residents. This year, many are priced out. "Only the rich will be able to afford it," added Zeeshan. "Where will the poor go?" At India's Namkhana port, 52-year-old fisherman Anath Das said costs meant "people will face problems". Das said it was better to sell his catch than keep and eat some himself.

India's West Bengal fish importers association wrote a letter to Dhaka appealing for the resumption of trade, saying hilsa is in "great demand amongst the connoisseurs of fish". Some hilsa is slipping through the net across the border. But that is being sent by road and air—rather than via Bangladeshi boats landing their catch at Indian ports—and the fish spoils easily.

India's border force has stopped "multiple attempts" by fish smugglers bringing hilsa in small boats on backwater routes. Yet across the border in Bangladesh, prices are still high because catches are low.

The fish costs up to 2,200 taka (\$18.40) a kilogram in Dhaka's Kawran Bazar. "The quantity has declined," said fish seller Mofiz Rana, 40. "But if it was exported to India this year, then the price would have gone up even more." — AFP

## IMF: Ready for talks with Sri Lanka's new leftist govt

COLOMBO: The International Monetary Fund is ready to discuss its controversial \$2.9 billion bailout program for Sri Lanka with the country's new government, a spokesman said.

Anura Kumara Disanayake, sworn in Monday as the country's first leftist president, has said he wants to renegotiate the deal, which has brought unpopular austerity measures. "We look forward to working together with President Disanayake... towards building on the hard-won gains that have helped put Sri Lanka on a path to economic recovery," an IMF spokesperson in Washington said Monday.

The lender of last resort noted that the South Asian nation, which defaulted on its debt in April

2022, had stabilized since the bailout. "We will discuss the timing of the third review of the IMF-supported program with the new administration as soon as practicable," the spokesman said referring to the periodic review of the bailout.

A senior aide of the new president told AFP a day after the election that his People's Liberation Front party will "not tear up" the IMF deal. "Our plan is to engage with the IMF and introduce certain amendments," Bimal Ratnayake said. "We will not tear up the IMF program. It is a binding document, but there is a provision to renegotiate." Sri Lanka's tiny stock market fell sharply within the first few minutes of trading on Monday, when Disanayake took office, but recovered quickly and ended the day with the main All Share Price index 1.19 percent higher.

Disanayake has pledged to reduce income taxes that were doubled by his predecessor Ranil Wickremesinghe, and also slash sales taxes on food and medicines. "We think we can get those reductions into the program and continue with the four-year bailout program," Ratnayake said. — AFP



COLOMBO: A laborer (center) carrying a carton, walks across a vegetable market in Colombo on Sept 24, 2024. — AFP

## US consumer confidence falls in Sept

WASHINGTON: US consumer confidence unexpectedly dropped in September on labor market concerns, according to survey data published Tuesday, signaling dampening optimism about the economy as November's presidential election approaches.

That could prove challenging for Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris given the economy remains a top issue for voters ahead of the election, in which she is running against Republican former president Donald Trump. The Conference Board's consumer confidence index fell sharply to 98.7 in September, down from a revised 105.6 last month.

This was well below market expectations, according to Briefing.com. "The deterioration across the Index's main components likely reflected consumers concerns about the labor market," despite the jobs market actually remaining quite healthy, The Conference Board's chief economist Dana Peterson said in a statement. "The proportion of consumers anticipating a recession over the next 12 months remained low but there was a slight uptick in the percentage of consumers believing the economy was already in recession," she added.

The steep decline in September was the largest since August 2021, with all five components of the index falling, according to Peterson. The biggest drop in confidence was seen among respondents between the ages of 35 and 54, and among consumers earning less than \$50,000 per year. "Consumer confidence plunged in August," economists at High Frequency Economics wrote in a note to clients published Tuesday. "The decay in the perceptions of jobs available was striking."

While the fall in confidence supports the Federal Reserve's decision to cut its key lending rate by half a percentage point last week, "it also will deliver a warning message about the state of the economy to financial markets," they added. — AFP

### News in Brief

#### Libya's oil exports plunge in Sept

LONDON: Libya's crude oil exports have slumped to about 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) this month from August's 1.02 million bpd, port and shipping data show, as the OPEC member grapples with a political crisis that has slashed output. The bulk of Libya's crude exports this month were destined for Italy and Greece, data from oil analytics firm Kpler and port agent data show, with some heading to China and Canada. The crisis began last month when western Libyan factions moved to oust central bank governor Sadiq Al-Kabir, prompting eastern factions to declare a shutdown to all oil output. —Reuters

#### Greece to sell National Bank stake

ATHENS: Greece's bank bailout fund HFSF will start the process to sell a stake of up to 12 percent in National Bank of Greece early next week, two officials with knowledge of the matter said on Tuesday. "Our plan is to start the process for the sale of 10 percent-12 percent on Monday and conclude by Wednesday," one of the officials told Reuters. A second official confirmed the timing of the sale. HFSF holds a 18.4 percent stake in National Bank, Greece's second largest lender by market value. —Reuters

#### Akzonobel slashes 2,000 jobs

THE HAGUE: AkzoNobel, the world's leading paintmaker and manufacturer of Dulux paint, said Tuesday it was cutting 2,000 jobs globally, more than five percent of its workforce, as it strives to cut costs. Chief Executive Greg Poux-Guillaume said the job losses would allow the Dutch company to "become more agile in volatile markets and offset headwinds such as rising labor cost." — AFP



## Business

# Gulf Bank reopens three renovated branches in Abdullah Al-Salem, Nuzha and Jabriya



Nasser Al-Salman speaks at GB Talks series.



The interior of the new fully renovated new branches.

**KUWAIT:** As part of the GB Talks series, Nasser Al-Salman, Project Manager of Gulf Bank's Facilities Management, announced that the bank has reopened three fully renovated branches in Abdullah Al-Salem, Nuzha and Jabriya. Additionally, Gulf Bank also opened its first fully eco-friendly branch in Sabah Al-Ahmad, demonstrating its commitment to sustainability and its ambitious plan to transform its entire branch network into eco-friendly spaces.

Al-Salman stated, "We are working on renovating more branches as part of our goal to convert over 50 branches into eco-friendly spaces, aligning with our new branch identity. This plan is part of our 2025 strategy and Kuwait's Vision 2035, supporting the country's efforts to move towards a sustainable economy and reduce carbon

## Nasser Al-Salman: We are committed to continuing our plan to transform our entire branch network into eco-friendly spaces

emissions." He stated that the revamped branches feature modern designs and offer faster, more advanced banking services, incorporating the latest technology to keep up with global banking trends.

He added, "The new branches are designed for greater comfort, ease, and speed for customers. They are fully sustainable and environmentally friendly, meeting green building standards by reducing electricity consumption through solar panels, maximizing natural light, and using sen-

sors to minimize power usage. Thermal insulation is also installed to naturally lower indoor temperatures, and we've included electric vehicle charging stations."

Al-Salman concluded by saying, "At Gulf Bank, we are focused on delivering an exceptional customer experience, whether through our mobile app, which is the easiest and fastest in the sector, or through branch visits, ATMs, and our updated customer service center with an interactive voice

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

In alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035, "New Kuwait," and its commitment to fostering collaborative partnerships, Gulf Bank is dedicated to driving robust sustainability initiatives across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions. The bank is committed to implementing strategically selected and diverse sustainability programs both internally and externally.

## Union says new Boeing pay offer 'missed the mark'

**NEW YORK:** Union negotiators slammed Boeing's new offer to lift hourly wages for striking workers by 30 percent on Monday, saying it "missed the mark" and won't be voted on by members.

"This proposal does not go far enough to address your concerns, and Boeing has missed the mark with this proposal," union negotiators told members in a message. "They are trying to drive a wedge between our members and weaken our solidarity with this divisive strategy." Boeing had sweetened its initial offer in an effort to end a 10-day stoppage that shuttered Seattle-area plants.

"We first presented the offer to the union and then transparently shared the details with our employees," Boeing told AFP in a statement. "We have bargained in good faith with the IAM (union) since formal negotiations began in March." The aviation giant gave workers until Friday at midnight to ratify its "best and final offer." The International Association of Machinists and Aero-

space Workers (IAM) said there wasn't enough time to discuss the offer with members and tend to the voting before the Boeing deadline. "The company has refused to meet for further discussion; therefore, we will not be voting on the 27th," union negotiators told members. The union noted it will gather workers' opinions regarding the offer.

About 33,000 IAM members from District 751 in the Pacific Northwest region walked off the job on September 13 after overwhelmingly voting down an earlier offer, effectively shutting down assembly plants for the 737 MAX and 777. The 30 percent general wage increase improves on the 25 percent in the earlier offer, which was initially endorsed by IAM leaders before the rank-and-file workforce rejected it decisively. Workers have sought a 40 percent wage increase, citing more than a decade of meager pay boosts that have taxed family budgets in a costly region of the United States during a period of consumer price inflation.

The new proposal also reinstates an annual bonus that had been removed in the earlier version. Line workers had complained that the loss of the bonus meant that the earlier proposal amounted to less than the 25 percent wage hike advertised by the company. The new proposal also doubles a rat-



PORTLAND, US: Striking Boeing workers hold rally at the Boeing Portland Facility on Sept 19, 2024, in Portland, Oregon. — AFP

ification bonus to \$6,000 and lifts the company's contribution to employees' 401K program. But the amended offer does not reinstate the pension, a demand of some workers.

The two sides undertook two days of mediation last week with assistance from government officials. Boeing CEO Kelly Orberg said ending the strike was "a top priority." Surveys of line workers have shown general wages, the reinstatement of the bonus

and the pension as priorities, the IAM has said. Brian Bryant, president of the IAM international union, said the latest offer from Boeing "validates" the decision to strike. "Employees knew Boeing executives could do better, and this shows the workers were right all along," Bryant said in a statement.

Boeing employee Mike Corsetti said he looked forward to studying the proposal in detail, saying, "it's closer but I'm not sure it's good enough." — AFP

## France's debt woes unnerve EU partners, markets

**BRUSSELS:** Concerns are growing among France's European Union partners and on financial markets that the fragility of its minority government could weaken efforts to shore up its public finances and so risk undermining the EU's new fiscal rules. France unveiled a new government on Saturday, led by Prime Minister Michel Barnier, which will have to rely on the far-right National Rally in key votes like the 2025 budget or the seven-year debt reduction plan required by EU rules. Both the far-right and the far-left - each with around one third of the seats in parliament - oppose spending cuts, even as France's budget deficit is set to rise to around 6 percent of GDP this year, twice the EU limit.

"The political fragility of the coalition is clear," said one eurozone official, who like others interviewed for this story requested anonymity because of the political sensitivities involved. "I would not say that expectations are overly optimistic." The European Commission reckons France's public debt, at 110.6 percent of GDP in 2023, will rise to 112.4 percent this year and 113.8 percent in 2025 unless action is taken. EU rules require a fall of 1 percent point of GDP a year. "This is a real dilemma, obviously. Putting together a debt-cutting plan that is both compliant with the new framework and politically acceptable in the hostile French parliament is going to be extraordinarily difficult," a second euro official said. "In the end, one needs to hope that there is sufficient realization in Paris that the cost of failure could be very high, and that will encourage some parties to at least temporarily lend their support to the government," he said.

Market concern about French public finances is pushing the country's borrowing costs higher. The



PARIS: Newly-appointed French Delegate Minister for Social and Solidarity Economy, Profit-Sharing and Incentive Schemes Marie-Agnes Pousier-Winsback arrives for the first Cabinet meeting of the Barnier government, in Paris on Sept 23, 2024. — AFP

yield on France's 10-year bonds briefly rose above Spain's on Tuesday for the first time since the 2008 financial crisis.

Barnier plans to present the 2025 budget to the French parliament and the European Commission by mid-October. A 7-year plan of reforms, investments and debt reduction is expected a couple of weeks later, by end-October. While EU officials believe market pressure could put pressure on French politicians to make tough decisions, they fear a weak plan would undermine the credibility of the new EU fiscal framework that came into force in April.

"I don't expect that this time France will easily get away, this would be a major blow for the new rules," a third senior eurozone official said. France has in the past enjoyed special treatment from the EU executive when it comes to compliance with EU fiscal rules. The country has long fallen foul of EU rules requiring member states to keep budget deficits to less than 3 percent of economic output, and Paris has not booked a surplus since 1974, three years before President Emmanuel Macron was born. Former Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker once explained that the country got special treatment because "France is France." — Reuters

## US finalizes \$123m chips award for Polar Semiconductor

**WASHINGTON:** The US Commerce Department said on Tuesday it had finalized a \$123 million grant for Polar Semiconductor to expand its plant in Minnesota, which would allow the company to nearly double its US production capacity of power and sensor chips. The award, part of the Biden administration's \$52.7 billion semiconductor manufacturing and research subsidy program, is the first in the program to be finalized by the department. Commerce will distribute funds based on Polar's completion of project milestones.

Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said the award would help "create a new US-owned foundry for sensor and power semiconductors" and boost Polar production from roughly 20,000 wafers per month to 40,000 serving aerospace, automotive, and defense needs. The state of Minnesota is contributing \$75 million to the \$525 million expansion at Polar. In April, Polar - 70 percent owned by Sanken Electric and 30 percent held by Allegro MicroSystems - said Niobrara Capital and Prysm Capital planned to invest \$175 million for around 59 percent of Polar.

Commerce has allocated more than \$35 billion for 26 projects including \$6.4 billion in grants to South Korea's Samsung to expand chip production in Texas, \$8.5 billion for Intel, \$6.6 billion for Taiwan's TSMC to build out its American production and \$6.1 billion for Micron Technology to fund US factories.

The department must complete due diligence before it can finalize awards. "We expect this to be the first of many awards to be finalized soon," said top White House economic adviser Lael Brainard on Monday. Added Raimondo: "You're going to start to see more awards like this, dollars to companies in the coming weeks and months." — Reuters

## Bankman-Fried's ex-girlfriend Ellison to be sentenced

**NEW YORK:** Former cryptocurrency executive Caroline Ellison is set to be sentenced on Tuesday for her role in her imprisoned former boyfriend Sam Bankman-Fried's theft of about \$8 billion in customer funds from the now-bankrupt FTX exchange he founded. Ellison has pleaded guilty to seven felony counts of fraud and conspiracy, and testified as a prosecution witness in the trial of Bankman-Fried, who was convicted of fraud and other charges last year and is serving a 25-year prison sentence stemming from FTX's November 2022 collapse.

At her sentencing hearing scheduled for 3 pm EDT (1900 GMT) before US District Judge Lewis Kaplan in Manhattan, Ellison will learn how much leniency she will earn from her cooperation with prosecutors. Ellison, 29, will almost certainly get far less prison time than Bankman-Fried did. The crimes to which she pleaded guilty carry a maximum sentence of 110 years in prison. Her lawyers have argued that she should get no prison time due to her cooperation. Without recommending a specific prison term, the US Attorney's office in Manhattan, which brought the charges, also urged Kaplan to go easy on Ellison, citing her "extraordinary" cooperation and expression of remorse.

"As FTX collapsed, Bankman-Fried persisted in publicly denying knowledge and fault," prosecutors wrote in a Sept. 17 court filing. "Ellison, on the other hand, expressed relief that the fraud was exposed, and responsibility for her wrongdoing." Prosecutors said Ellison met with them about 20 times to help them piece together FTX's unraveling and make their case against Bankman-Fried.

Prosecutors have called Bankman-Fried's actions one of the biggest financial frauds in US history. Bankman-Fried, 32, rode a boom in cryptocurrency prices during the COVID pandemic to a net worth by October 2021 of, according to Forbes magazine, \$26 billion. He gained prominence as a generous donor to philanthropic causes and Democratic politicians. His wealth evaporated when FTX collapsed in November 2022 amid a flurry of customer withdrawals. The company had been widely viewed as a relative safe-haven in a cryptocurrency industry beset by volatility and scams.

Bankman-Fried was charged a month later with stealing FTX customer funds to plug losses at Alameda Research, a cryptocurrency-focused hedge fund he founded and that Ellison ran from 2021-2022. Ellison pleaded guilty in December 2022. Bankman-Fried is appealing his conviction and sentence, arguing that Kaplan wrongly excluded evidence showing he thought FTX had enough funds to cover customer withdrawals. In testifying in his own defense at trial, Bankman-Fried admitted to making mistakes while running FTX, but denied stealing money. In his closing argument at Bankman-Fried's trial, defense lawyer Mark Cohen accused Ellison of "pointing at Sam" to escape the pressure she faced after FTX's collapse. Ellison testified over three days at Bankman-Fried's trial, telling the jury he directed her and others to take money from FTX's customers without their knowledge. In tearful testimony, Ellison said she felt "incredibly bad" about the fraud, and that FTX's collapse lifted the "dread" hanging over her.

"I felt a sense of relief that I didn't have to lie anymore," Ellison testified. Nishad Singh and Gary Wang, two other former FTX executives who cooperated with prosecutors, are scheduled to be sentenced on Oct 30 and Nov 20, respectively. — Reuters

## Business

# China unveils fresh stimulus to boost its struggling economy

## Leaders grapple with debt crisis, deflationary pressure and youth unemployment

BEIJING: China unveiled some of its boldest measures in years on Tuesday aimed at boosting its struggling economy as leaders grapple with a prolonged property sector debt crisis, continued deflationary pressure and high youth unemployment. The world's second-largest economy has yet to achieve a highly anticipated post-pandemic recovery and the government has set a goal of five percent growth in 2024 - an objective analysts say is optimistic given the headwinds it is facing. Central bank chief Pan Gongsheng told a news conference in Beijing on Tuesday that the bank would cut a slew of rates in a bid to boost growth, pledging to "promote the expansion of consumption and investment".

The moves represent "the most significant... stimulus package since the early days of the pandemic", said Julian Evans-Pritchard, head of China economics at Capital Economics. However "it may not be enough", he warned, adding a full economic recovery would "require more substantial fiscal support than the modest pick-up in government spending that's currently in the pipeline".

Among the measures unveiled on Tuesday was a cut to the reserve requirement ratio (RRR), which dictates the amount of cash banks must hold in reserve. The move will inject around a trillion yuan (\$141.7 billion) in "long-term liquidity" into the financial market, Pan said. Beijing would also "lower the interest rates of existing mortgage loans", he said.

The decision would benefit 150 million people across China, Pan said, and lower "the average annual household interest bill by about 150 billion yuan". Minimum down payments for first and second homes would be "unified", with the latter reduced from 25 to 15 percent, Pan said. Beijing would also create a "swap program" allowing firms to acquire liquidity from the central bank, Pan said,

which he said would "significantly enhance" their ability to access funds to buy stocks.

"The initial scale of the swap program will be set at 500 billion yuan, with possible expansions in the future," Pan said. Shares in Hong Kong and Shanghai surged more than four percent on Tuesday. However, Heron Lim at Moody's Analytics said the move was expected given gloomy economic data in recent months that suggested Beijing could miss its 2024 growth target. "But this is hardly a bazooka stimulus," he told AFP. "Far more monetary easing and a stronger government stimulus is also desirable to finish bailing out the real estate market and inject more confidence into the economy," he said. At a minimum, he said, "broader direct household support in helping them consume more goods will be useful, which is currently just too narrowly designed for industrial goods".

People on the streets of Beijing welcomed the new measures but said it was unclear whether they would have a significant impact on the economy. "I think lowering the rates on existing mortgages is definitely a good thing because it will save people money," said Hu Xianyao, a 35-year-old financial company managing director. "But whether it can boost consumption depends on improvements in employment and people's expectations for the future," Hu told AFP. "I don't think (the measures) will make me more optimistic about the economy." Property and construction have long accounted for more than a quarter of China's gross domestic product but the sector has been under unprecedented strain since 2020, when authorities tightened developers' access to credit in a bid to reduce mounting debt.

Major companies including China Evergrande and Country Garden have teetered since then, while falling prices have dissuaded consumers from in-



People rest on a bench along a business street in Beijing on September 24, 2024. — AFP

vesting in property. Beijing has unveiled a number of measures aimed at boosting the sector, including cutting the minimum down payment rate for first-time homebuyers and suggesting the government could buy up commercial real estate. Those measures failed to boost confidence and housing prices have continued to slide. Adding further strain, local authorities in China face a ballooning debt burden

of \$5.6 trillion, according to the central government, raising worries about wider economic stability. Li Yunze, director of the National Administration of Financial Regulation, said Beijing would "actively cooperate in resolving real estate and local government debt risks". "China's financial industry, especially large financial institutions, is operating stably and risks are controllable," he said. — AFP

## Biden's car-tech ban is a powerful weapon against Chinese EVs

WASHINGTON/DETROIT: The Biden administration's proposed ban on Chinese connected-car technology could prove its strongest weapon yet to fend off an onslaught of cheap Chinese electric vehicles that has upended the global auto industry. The ban on hardware and software, announced Monday by the US Commerce Department, is the administration's latest salvo after imposing 100 percent tariffs on Chinese EVs and denying a \$7,500 consumer EV subsidy to any vehicle with made-in-China components.

Unlike those measures, the connected-car tech prohibition would apply even to cars built by Chinese firms outside China - such as in Mexico or Europe, where they're planning factories.

"It's a powerful statement," said Michael Dunne, a consultant who closely follows the China auto industry. After imposing high tariffs, he said, US officials "looked at it again and said: 'Is that going to be enough?' And they concluded - probably not."

Chinese EV leader BYD has said it plans a Mexico plant. While it has emphasized the factory would only serve the local market, US trade groups are wary, saying Chinese EVs could cause an "extinction-level event" for US automakers. Biden's proposal also calls for barring Chinese software or self-driving cars from testing or deployment, effectively creating a trade barrier that could protect US EV pioneer Tesla and other automakers seeking to develop robotaxis, analysts said. Tesla's Elon Musk has this year increasingly staked the company's future on autonomous technology, another sector where it faces stiff Chinese competition.

Analysts warn of China trade-policy retaliation, which could target Tesla's sprawling China operations. Tesla did not respond to a request for comment. Biden administration officials on Monday cast the threat of Chinese vehicles and technology as both a national-security threat that could enable espionage and an economic threat. China's heavily subsidized EV sector has been a leader in both battery and software technology, including systems for in-dash driver features.

Few Chinese-made vehicles are currently sold in the United States - and none from Chinese brands. Monday's action aims to keep it that way by closing loopholes, US Commerce officials said. "If we had just said, 'No Chinese vehicles,' we would really have been leaving a front door open for China to come in via automotive software," said Liz Cannon, who heads the department's information and communications technology office.

The Biden plan would prohibit software in 2026, for 2027 model vehicles, and hardware for the 2030 model year. The administration hopes to finalize the new rules before Biden leaves office on Jan 20, 2025. Chinese officials warned before Monday's announcement that they would defend the nation's interests. "China opposes the US generalization of the concept of national security and discriminatory practices against Chinese companies and products," said China Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian. China's foreign ministry declined to comment further on Monday.

US lawmakers have expressed security concerns about Chinese autonomous-vehicle technology being tested in the United States. Earlier this year, the Biden administration added China-based Hesai Group - whose lidars help autonomous-driving systems create three-dimensional road maps - to a list of companies allegedly working with Beijing's military. — Reuters

## Fed rate cut offers limited relief for US factories

WASHINGTON: Drew Greenblatt loves that the Federal Reserve has cut interest rates. But the half-point reduction, the first in what is expected to be a series of cuts, won't help him win what he calls the "trench warfare" he's fighting with one of his big customers. That buyer moved work out of China during the COVID-19 pandemic - placing about \$800,000 in orders at Greenblatt's small US factory last year. Greenblatt bought robots and hired more workers to meet the new demand. Then orders stopped earlier this year. "When I asked why, they said they'd gone back to China, to save money," said Greenblatt, president of Marlin Steel, a Baltimore-based maker of highly engineered wire baskets used in industrial and laboratory machines.

Greenblatt's problem underscores headwinds facing US producers that lower interest rates won't alleviate, including supply chain snarls, stubbornly high prices for many raw materials, simmering labor unrest in some sectors, and especially, China. US Vice President Kamala Harris plans to roll out new economic policies on Wednesday that aim to help Americans build wealth, and set economic incentives for businesses to aid that goal, Reuters reported. The new policies come as undecided voters seek more information about how Harris would help them economically if she were elected president, the sources said.

A key issue in the Nov 5 election is how Harris and former President Donald Trump plan to respond to the competitive challenge posed by China. The Biden administration has proposed prohibiting key Chinese software and hardware in connected vehicles on American roads due to national security concerns. Greenblatt, the basket manufacturer, is hoping for more aggressive action on trade, and not just against China.

"If they put on more tariffs, we'd have more shipments to our clients," he said. "Instead, our clients

## China retirement age reforms not enough to fix pension headache

HONG KONG: China's move to raise retirement ages is a starting point to plug gaping pension deficits and bolster a shrinking workforce but more pain lies ahead as the economy slows, making further reforms urgent, say economists and demographers. Aging populations are a global phenomenon, but the issue is particularly stark in China due to the legacy of its one-child-policy, which was in place for three decades and has exacerbated its demographic challenges.

China's number of births dropped to 9 million last year and the United Nations forecasts China's working age population will decline by nearly 40 percent by 2050 from 2010 if fertility rates remain at current levels.

Both older and younger workers have expressed worries about the changes as policymakers grapple with widespread discrepancies between rural and urban pensions, maintaining public stability and high youth unemployment. "They need to solve the pension problem now because this is when they still have some growth to finance the deficit," said Alicia Garcia Herrero, Natixis' chief economist for Asia Pacific.

China's economic growth rate has slowed from around 8 percent in the early 2000s to around 5 percent now and could be as low as 1 percent after 2035, she said. Wary of public concerns, Chinese lawmakers fast-tracked the policy with-



ALHAMBRA, US: Construction workers work on the roof of a house being built in Alhambra, California on Sept 23, 2024. — AFP

are buying from countries that allowed their currencies to be subsidized."

High interest rates make it costlier to borrow or fund ongoing operations and are often cited as a leading contributor to the broad slowdown at US factories since early last year. After adding nearly 750,000 jobs in 2021 and 2022, US manufacturers have shed about 7,000 jobs in 2023 and so far this year, according to the Labor Department. Production at US factories surged in August, according to the Federal Reserve, amid a rebound in motor vehicle production, but data for July was revised lower, suggesting that manufacturing continued to tread water.

A report last week from the Philadelphia Fed, meanwhile, pointed to rising supply chain aggravations and a pickup in input costs hitting factories in their region in September. "What the Fed can do is create expectations for short-term growth with a rate cut, which is powerful," said Cliff Waldman, CEO of New World Economics, an economic consulting firm in Washington that focuses on the industrial

sector. Lower rates could encourage companies to move forward with new capital projects.

"But that's really only a small part of the challenging picture facing US manufacturing," Waldman said.

He noted that many producers continue to battle one another over who will absorb the higher costs due to inflation. Add to this the disruption of global supply chains during the pandemic, which is still playing out. For Kevin Kelly, the latest headache is an unexpected surge in electricity prices. Emerald Packaging, his family-run business, makes plastic bags for produce companies at its factory outside San Francisco and uses large amounts of power to run huge printing presses that put labels and images onto the bags. Kelly said his power bill in June jumped to \$350,000 from \$290,000 the month before because of higher-than-expected summer rates. "We just didn't see that coming," he said. "We knew there were increases coming through and that the summer rates would be expensive, but we didn't realize they'd be that expensive." — Reuters

out public consultation in September, changing retirement ages that had been set in the 1950s.

Life expectancy in China has risen to 78 years as of 2021 from about 44 in 1960 and projected to exceed 80 by 2050. Chinese Premier Li Qiang said the reform is a "significant move" to improve China's social security system and "better safeguard and improve people's livelihoods," according to the Xinhua official news agency. Still, China's state-led basic pension system is under significant financial pressure. About one-third of China's provincial-level jurisdictions are running pension deficits. China's Academy of Social Sciences has estimated the pension system will run out of money by 2035 without reforms. Monthly urban pensions range from roughly 3,000 yuan (\$425) in less-developed provinces to about 6,000 yuan in Beijing and Shanghai. Rural pensions, introduced nationwide in 2009, are meager.

China's cohort of those aged 60 and older is expected to rise at least 40 percent to more than 400 million by 2035, equal to the populations of Britain and the United States combined. Migrant workers, who typically receive poor pensions, continue to work into their older years versus state-sector employees with relatively generous government pensions who have less incentives to opt into the higher retirement ages. The contribution period needed to receive a pension in China will rise to 20 years from 15, starting in 2030. Expanding the contribution time frame further "especially in the context of the current state of the gig and informal economy could make it harder for many blue-collar workers to be eligible to receive their pension," said Stuart Gietel-Basten, professor at the Hong Kong Uni-



YIWU, China: Employees work at a plastic factory in Yiwu, China's eastern Zhejiang province. — AFP

versity of Science and Technology.

The initial fiscal impact from the raising retirement ages will likely be muted because the increases are largely voluntary, said Ernan Cui, China consumer analyst at Gavekal Dragonomics.

"Raising the retirement age may entail only a limited fiscal gain for now... The coming increase will effectively be optional for many workers, though the increase in the minimum contribution period to obtain a pension will not," she said. John Wang, an analyst at Moody's Ratings, said the new legislation could pose a social risk due to China's demographic challenges and income inequalities.

"Successful implementation of China's retirement age reforms will depend on managing risks... such as the skill set of the elderly population, the available jobs and their adaptability to developments in technology and innovation." — Reuters

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2024



People take part in a social and community training event for "World Pull Up day" organized by British anti knife crime charity Steel Warriors at the calisthenics gym they created by melting the knife blades handed over by the Metropolitan Police, at Finsbury Park, in London.

## From blades to pull-up bars: UK charity tackles knife crime

**B**en Wintour looked over the equipment that made up the London outdoor exercise park: pull-up bars, parallel bars, angled benches -- all formed out of melted-down knives.

The equipment in each calisthenics park is made from knives provided by London's Metropolitan Police force: knives that were either surrendered voluntarily or seized in a bid to tackle rising knife crime.

"Our gyms stand as a powerful metaphor... that a negative can be turned into a positive," he said.

This gym at a park near Brixton, south London, is one of four in the British capital constructed by the "Steel Warriors" charity. Wintour and co-founder Pia Fontes set it up in 2017 to steer young people away from knife crime.

"There's a lot of awareness around it, but we wanted to understand what the reasons were for young people carrying knives," Wintour told AFP on a sunny morning at the gym, where around a dozen people were training. He said a need for self-protection, bravado and a sense of danger walking the streets were prime motivating factors for young people who carried knives. "We learned that the police take a ton of knives off London streets every month and we wanted to see if we could take that steel and use it to help young people feel more protected and safe walking the streets."

Well-meaning campaigns had been effective in raising the issue "but perhaps less effective at changing young people's behavior and giving them real solutions", he explained.

### Knife offences up

Official figures lay bare the scale of the problem. In London alone, the number of knife or sharp instrument offences recorded by the police rose to more than 15,016 in 2023/24 -- from 12,786 in previous year. A ban on "zombie knives" -- long blades with a serrated edge -- comes into force in the UK on Tuesday.

Steel Warriors says it is "sitting on about 10 tonnes of knives" in its warehouse. It has even had to put a pause on taking some knives as they already have too many. But the gyms they have built were to meet another problem they had identified: the lack of affordable facilities for young people.

He hopes the open-air exercise parks -- together with training courses the charity provides for at-risk youths to become personal trainers them-



Head of Marketing & Community at a British anti knife crime charity Steel Warriors Christian d'Ippolito (left) and Kirsten Varela (right), founder of Elysium Calisthenics Park based in India, look at a selection of confiscated knives handed over by the Metropolitan Police during the filming of a social media post made to raise awareness about knife crime at a storage facility in London.—AFP photos



Christian d'Ippolito, shows one of the confiscated knives.



Christian d'Ippolito, shows one of the confiscated knives.



Christian d'Ippolito, shows the confiscated knives.



People take part in a social and community training event for "World Pull Up day" organized by British anti knife crime charity Steel Warriors at the calisthenics gym they created by melting the knife blades handed over by the Metropolitan Police, at Finsbury Park, in London.



selfes, will help remedy that. He also hopes the calisthenics parks will serve as a beacon to the wider communities. "It's important not just to focus on the issue and the negative, but also to have some level of hope," he said.

"We like to think that our gyms stand as quite a powerful metaphor of transformation -- not just when it comes to the knives and melting them down and recycling them to into outdoor gyms, but also that a negative can be turned into a positive.

"And there are lots of young people that are going through difficult times, and we can help to transform that as well," he added.

The first Steel Warriors street gym was located in Poplar, east London. Now there are four of them, with a fifth planned for nearby Stratford.

### 'Ambition to fail'

"The ambition and the vision was always really to grow Steel Warriors into something that made a real difference," said Wintour. "We'd really like to scale across the UK and we've even talked about potentially going global."

The initiative has high-level endorsements from the likes of champion boxer Anthony Joshua, and financial backers such as Paramount Pictures. And last week, it unveiled a partnership with UK-based multi-national athletic apparel retailer Gym Shark.

The aim is to make "fitness more accessible and building stronger communities to show that lives should be built on steel, not destroyed by it", Steel Warriors said in a statement. That move will help the charity build on its success. But Wintour has another goal too. "Sometimes we say our ambition is to fail," he said. "It would be a great outcome if we have no steel to work with."—AFP



Bollywood Indian actress and model Aishwarya Rai Bachchan



Canadian internet personality Glamzilla presents a creation for L'Oreal Paris show "Walk Your Worth".



US actress, model and director Andie MacDowell

# Goosebumps and stars as Paris Fashion Week kicks off



Models and celebrities acknowledge the applause at the end of the presentation for L'Oreal Paris show "Walk Your Worth" as part of the Paris Fashion Week Women Ready-to-wear Spring-Summer 2025 collection at Palais Garnier (Opera national de Paris) opera house, in Paris. — AFP photos



Danish model Mathilde Gohler

Paris Fashion Week



British singer and television host Rochelle Humes.



Brazilian actress and model Tais Araujo



French alpine skier Marie Bochet



French streamer Maghla (third left) presents a creation for L'Oreal Paris show "Walk Your Worth".

Hollywood stars braved the rain to open Paris Fashion Week at L'Oreal's giant outdoor show Monday as rumors swirl of musical chairs at the top of fabled French brands. The cosmetics giant persuaded Jane Fonda -- in snazzy silver sneakers -- Kendall Jenner, Eva Longoria and several of its other brand ambassadors to walk in a spectacular public show in front of the gilded glory of the Opera Garnier. With invites to the big luxury shows strictly limited to the glitterati and fashion insiders, L'Oreal said it wanted to democratize the glamour of fashion week. Introduced by singer Celine Dion, the "Walk Your Worth" show also featured Andie MacDowell, Indian star Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, models with prosthetic limbs and Brazilian supermodel Luma Grothe proudly showing off her bump. "The idea is to let the public see for themselves the beautiful clothes, settings and people that they would never normally have access to," L'Oreal's Paris director general Delphine Viguier told AFP. Fashion's young guard had earlier endured a stormy start to the nine-day extravaganza -- Rising French star Victor Weinsanto staged his spring-summer show on the wet and windy roof of the Pompidou Centre museum, his fishnet and mesh ensembles created around Croatian drag queen Le Filip being tested by the elements. The Paris shows started as falling profits at the two luxury giants LVMH and Kering have sent a shudder through the industry, fuelling talk of a "Game of Thrones" among top designers. Celine's Hedi Slimane and Simon Porte Jacquemus -- the young French designer who made tiny handbags and tiny everything else a thing -- are being talked of to fill Karl Lagerfeld's empty chair at Chanel after Virginie Viard, who took the reins after the death of "the Kaiser" in 2019, bowed out in June.

John Galliano might go, with his contract at Maison Margiela nearing its end. The first shows from the big-hitter French houses will come Tuesday with Dior and Saint Laurent, with a packed calendar confirming Paris's crushing dominance over rivals Milan, New York and London. And there is no let-up at the end: Chanel opens the final day on October 1 by returning to the vast Grand Palais, the scene of some of Lagerfeld's most jaw-dropping shows, after an absence of four years. The house is shelling out 30 million euros (\$33 million) to stage its shows at the iconic Belle Epoque edifice, which reopened after a major facelift to host fencing and taekwondo at the Paris Olympics and Paralympic Games. With Viard -- long Lagerfeld's right-hand woman -- gone, observers expect a collection drawn from Chanel classics. In contrast, there could well be fireworks from Alessandro Michele, the mercurial Italian designer who transformed Gucci, who may be keen to make his mark with his debut show for Valentino. Equally anticipated is French duo Coperni, who are staging their show at Disneyland Paris on the final night, with an after party in the theme park that promises to go on into the wee hours. The brand's founders, Arnaud Vaillant and Sebastien Meyer, pulled off a coup with their outfit for Belgian singer Angele for the Olympics closing ceremony, and are clearly in a mood to celebrate. Another hot duo, the Olsen twins, the Los Angeles child actors turned designers, have kept their place for their luxury line The Row in fashion week proper thanks to a cash injection from the owners of Chanel and L'Oreal. Paris will, however, be without Givenchy this time, with its new British designer Sarah Burton, a stalwart at Alexander McQueen for a quarter of a century, just made creative director. —AFP

Hotly anticipated

Tongues are also likely to wag at the spring-summer shows over where

Lifestyle

# Meloni-themed restaurant opens next to Albania migrant camp

Close to a new migrant camp in Albania, an unusual theme restaurant has opened: dedicated to Italy's far-right Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who promoted the controversial asylum site. In the northern port of Shengjin - by the Adriatic Sea where many migrants risk their lives trying to cross to Italy - the "Trattoria Meloni" serves fish and shellfish, with dozens of portraits of her on the walls. "When cuisine, art and politics come together, you can make beautiful things," restaurant owner Gjergj Luca told AFP. Funded by Italy, the asylum centre - one of two in the area due to open in coming weeks - has been largely welcomed by local people for creating jobs in an impoverished region.

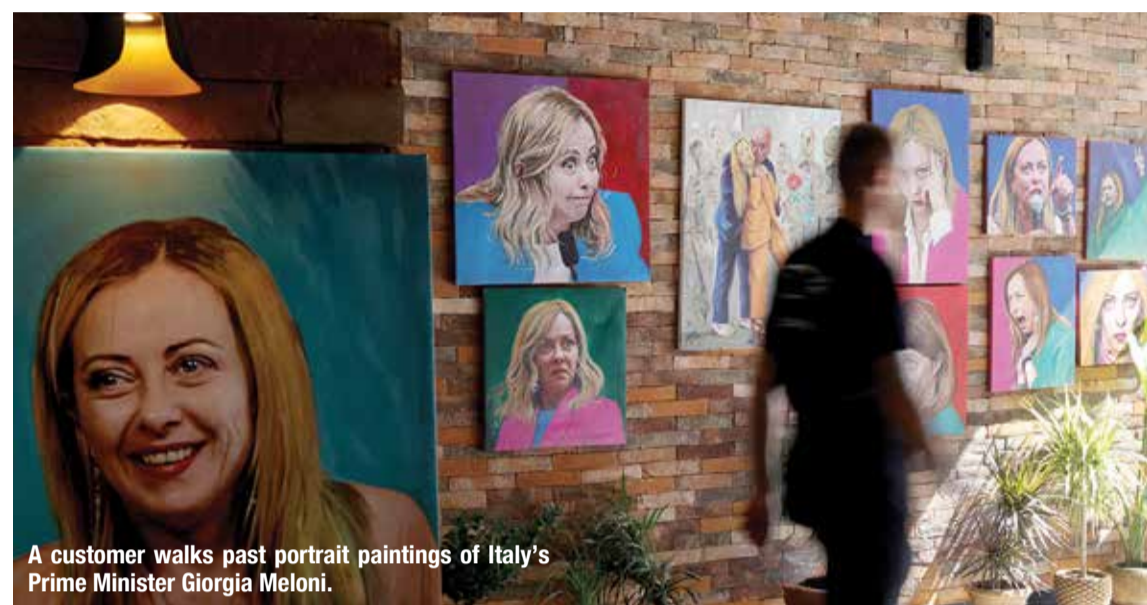
Human rights groups have branded it illegal under international law, warning that Albania, a non-



Waiters await dishes at the counter of "Trattoria Meloni" restaurant in Shengjin.



Customers eat a meal as portrait paintings of Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni adorn the walls of "Trattoria Meloni" restaurant in Shengjin, some 60kms northwest of Tirana. - AFP photos



A customer walks past portrait paintings of Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.



Customers eat a meal at "Trattoria Meloni" restaurant in Shengjin.



A waiter carries dishes past portrait paintings of Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.

EU country, offers limited protections for the asylum seekers. Meloni visited the future centre in Shengjin in June, before the restaurant was opened. The 58-year-old owner Luca, son of a famous Albanian actor and a former actor himself, said he was charmed by her personality, calling her "extraordinary". He said he hopes she will come back to taste his food and admire her portraits, which adorn every inch of the restaurant's walls.

The portraits were all painted by Heliton Haliti, a well-known Albanian artist. A smiling Meloni, a serious Meloni, an angry Meloni, Meloni as a child, teenager or politician - 70 portraits of the leader of the post-fascist Brothers of Italy party hang in the restaurant. Meloni is a "very interesting, strong character, and even if her political convictions aren't my own, that hasn't stopped me from doing a passionate job," Haliti told AFP. "Did I need a permission to paint her portrait?" he added. "Did Andy Warhol need permission to paint Marilyn Monroe? In postmodernism, it's allowed, and I think that with Meloni, I've succeeded." — AFP



A waiter walks by portrait paintings of Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.



A waiter stands at the counter of "Trattoria Meloni" restaurant in Shengjin.

## Fake 'Brad Pitt' scams two women in Spain of 325,000 euros

Spanish police said Monday that they had arrested five people accused of scamming two women of 325,000 euros by posing as the Hollywood star Brad Pitt via online and WhatsApp messages. The suspects made contact with the women on an Internet page for fans of the Oscar-winning actor and led them to believe "they had a sentimental relationship with him", Spain's Guardia Civil police force said in a statement. Posing as Pitt, the members of the gang then allegedly proposed that the women invest in various projects that did not exist.

One woman, from the southern region of Andalusia, was defrauded of 175,000 euros (\$195,000) while the other, from the northern Basque Country, lost 150,000 euros. "The cybercriminals, to capture

the victims, had studied their social networks and made a psychological profile of them, thus discovering that both women were two vulnerable people, lacking in affection and in a state of depression," police said.

"They also used instant messaging platforms to exchange messages and emails with the two women until they reached a point where they believed they were chatting via WhatsApp with Brad Pitt himself, who promised them a romantic relationship and a future together." Police arrested five people in the southern region of Andalusia, including the suspected leaders of the group. They raided five homes as part of their operations, seizing several mobile phones, bank cards, two computers and a diary "in which the phrases used by the fraudsters to deceive their victims were written down". Officers were able to recover 85,000 euros of the money that was defrauded from the two women. — AFP



Brad Pitt

## Mysterious 18th century diamond necklace set for auction



A gallery assistant poses wearing an 18th century diamond jewel necklace weighing approximately 300 carats at a press preview at Sotheby's in London. — AFP photos



A mysterious 18th century necklace made from around 500 diamonds, some of which are believed to have been taken from a piece that contributed to Marie Antoinette's demise, will go on sale in November, Sotheby's said on Monday. The piece, from a private Asian collection, will go under the hammer in Geneva on November 11, with online bidding opening on the auction house's website on October 25.

The necklace, which is composed of three rows of diamonds finished with a diamond tassel at each end, will make its first public appearance in 50 years on Monday, and is expected to fetch between \$1.8 and \$2.8 million. "It's a wonderful find because, normally, jewelry in the 18th century was broken up in order to be repurposed... so to have an intact piece of the Georgian period of this importance, this amount of carats... is absolutely fabulous," Andres White Correal, chair-

man of the Sotheby's jewelry department, told AFP.

"The jewel has passed from families to families. We can start at the early 20th century when it was part of the collection of the Marquesses of Anglesey," he added. Members of this aristocratic family are believed to have worn the jewel twice in public: once at the 1937 coronation of King George VI and once at his daughter Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953.

Beyond that, little is known of the necklace, including who designed it and for whom it was commissioned, although the auction house believes that such an impressive antique jewel could only have been created for a royal family. It probably would have been made during the decade preceding the French Revolution, it added. — AFP

## Black Eyed Peas star harnesses AI for novel radio product

Unlike many artists, will.i.am, lead singer of the Black Eyed Peas, is not at war with artificial intelligence. On the contrary: he has just launched a new radio concept, where AI plays host and DJ. "Tech is the most creative space," will.i.am told AFP on the sidelines of Salesforce's annual event in San Francisco. Working with technology is like starting a band, he said.

"When you put a team of developers together, it's like, 'hey, let's start a group. What type of songs do you want to make? Where do you want to tour?'" As founder and CEO of the startup FYI, will.i.am recently unveiled RAiDIO.FYI, a set of themed, interactive stations available on the FYI.AI app. The platform features an AI host that reads news and introduces music, mimicking traditional radio stations. The key difference is that users can interrupt and interact with the AI. "I heard Melania Trump was modeling nude with five hamsters. What's that about?" will.i.am provocatively asked his app as a demonstration.

"Whoaaa... where are you getting these wild stories from?" the radio answered back. "She did do some nude modeling back in the day," it continued, "but I never heard any credible sources mentioning her modeling with five hamsters. Sounds like some fake news, right?" Currently, the radio station has a limited playlist of 40 tracks. However, William Adams (will.i.am's birth name) is



will.i.am performs onstage during the BET Experience - Roots Picnic: Hip-Hop is The Love of My Life at Hollywood Bowl on June 29, 2024 in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

actively working to secure rights to broader music catalogs. His goal is to innovate in radio because he sees it as an ally to musicians, unlike streaming platforms such as Spotify, which he believes underpay artists.

will.i.am's venture into AI-powered radio is just the latest chapter in his tech-savvy career. Since his rise to fame with the Black Eyed Peas, the rapper has invested in various sectors, from fashion to technology. He's particularly passionate about generative AI, setting him apart from many artists who view the technology with concern. Many artists are up in arms over models such as ChatGPT, which produce texts, images and audio simply by being asked in everyday language, after being trained by material scraped online.

will.i.am draws parallels to the past. "We saw this when we went from paintings to cameras: ah, it took me two weeks to make this painting, and this guy comes and puts the button and boom, now he has a photo!" he said. "There's always going to be this growing pain, and that's because something is birthing. A new type of artist is coming," he added. will.i.am believes that human creativity remains safe from the power of AI. "What AI doesn't do is imagine, it mimics," he said. "It's not going to imagine better than you." — AFP

## New Zealand scientists discover ghostly 'spookfish'

Scientists in New Zealand said Tuesday they have discovered a new species of "ghost shark", a type of fish that prowls the Pacific Ocean floor hunting prey more than a mile down. The Australasian Narrow-nosed Spookfish was found living in the deep waters of Australia and New Zealand, according to scientists from Wellington-based National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA).

The specimens were discovered during research in the Chatham Rise, an area of the Pacific which stretches around 1,000 kilometers (621 miles) east near New Zealand's South Island. Ghost sharks, or chimaeras, are related to sharks and rays, but are part of a group of fish whose skeletons are entirely made of cartilage. Also known as spookfish, the ghost sharks have haunting black eyes and smooth, light brown, scale-free skin.

They feed off crustaceans at depths of up to 2,600 meters (8,530 feet) using their distinctive beak-like mouth. "Ghost sharks like this one are largely confined to the ocean floor," said research scientist Brit Finucci. Finucci gave the new species its scientific name "Harringtonia" in memory of her grandmother. "Their habitat makes them hard to study and monitor, meaning we don't know a lot about their biology or threat status, but it makes discoveries like this even more exciting." The spookfish was previously thought to be part of a single globally distributed species until scientists discovered it is genetically and morphologically different to its cousins. — AFP

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This handout picture released by the National Institute Of Water and Atmospheric Research Ltd (NIWA) on September 24, 2024, shows a new species of ghost shark. — AFP

## Sports

# Red Bull building back from Monza low point, says Horner

'We were better in Baku, we were better here'

**SINGAPORE:** Formula One champions Red Bull hope to pick up the pace over the last six rounds of the season after Max Verstappen emerged stronger than expected from back-to-back street races in Azerbaijan and Singapore, team boss Christian Horner said.

The triple world champion, who will be 27 next week, had his advantage over McLaren's Lando Norris cut from 62 points after the Italian Grand Prix at Monza on Sept. 1 to a current 52. The season now has a four-week lull before a US-Mexico-Brazil sequence starting in Austin, Texas, on Oct. 20, followed by another final triple-header of Las Vegas-Qatar-Abu Dhabi.

"I think we've got a vein of development and I think we've understood some of the issues with the car. I think we're starting to address them," Horner told reporters after Verstappen finished a distant second to Norris in Singapore.

"We were better in Baku, we were better here," Verstappen finished fifth in Baku after sixth at Monza, a result that equalled

Monaco in May as his worst of the season so far but could have been far worse. The Dutch driver won all six of the remaining races last year, the most dominant season the sport has seen, and Horner felt the team were on the right path despite McLaren taking a 41-point lead in the constructors' standings.

"I think the encouraging thing was the car reacted as we hoped it would and what our tools were telling us," he said of Singapore. "I think the team are starting to get a direction and an understanding of where some of the limitations are and some of the causes of limitations. That opens up development paths and veins that hopefully will be productive."

"I think what Monza really exposed was perhaps some of the root cause, or helped to identify the root cause of the issue. So I'm taking Monza as the low point and we're starting to build out of that." While McLaren believe the drivers' championship is on, the mathematical reality is that Norris still has a mountain to climb.

One retirement could blow the battle wide open, or kill it off, but the Briton will have to increase his scoring rate on current form. With three sprint races adding to the available tally, there are a maximum 180 points still to be won.

Azerbaijan and Singapore were seen as circuits where Norris and McLaren could make big gains, and Ferrari looked more of a threat, but in the end Verstappen lost only 10 points to his rival. In real terms, Norris is still almost as far from Verstappen as when he secured his first victory in round six in Miami in May — a race that came after the Red Bull driver had won four of the first five.

That win lifted the Briton to 53 points behind. There have been 12 races since and although Verstappen has not won since June, an eight-race losing streak, his lead has remained stubbornly healthy.

"Pretty pleased, but still a lot of work to do," he said after Sunday's race. "We know that. Hopefully now we can really kick-start things." — Reuters



SINGAPORE: Second placed Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen celebrates on the podium after the Formula One Singapore Grand Prix night race at the Marina Bay Street Circuit in Singapore. —AFP

## Sabalenka chases year-end number one ranking

**BEIJING:** Aryna Sabalenka said Tuesday that she wants to cap off a stellar year by returning to the top of the world rankings. The world number two is the top seed at the China Open this week following the withdrawal of top-ranked Iga Swiatek, the defending champion, because of undisclosed "personal matters".

Fresh from winning the US Open, Sabalenka can take a large step towards overhauling the Pole at the top of the rankings with victory in Beijing. "Of course that's one of my goals, to finish the season at world number one," the Belarusian, who won the Australian Open at the start of the year for a second time, said.

But the 26-year-old added: "I'm not trying to focus on that, I'm trying to focus on my game. There is only three tournaments left. I'm just trying to bring my best tennis on court. After the season, I'll see if it was enough to finish the year at number one or have to improve something else to get to number one."

The three-time major champion first became world number one a year ago, before being usurped by Swiatek. "To be called the best player in the world, that means everything. It's good to know that you've been doing the right thing, all of that hours of training, wasn't a waste of time," she said.

Sabalenka will be playing for the first time since beating Jessica Pegula in the final in New York earlier this month. She has a bye in the first round. Pegula also features at the prestigious 1000 WTA hardcourt event in the Chinese capital, along with fellow American Coco Gauff, four-time major champion Naomi Osaka and China's Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen. The competition begins on Wednesday. A men's ATP 500 event runs alongside the women's tournament. — AFP

## England cricket captain Knight reprimanded

**LONDON:** England women's cricket captain Heather Knight has been reprimanded and given a suspended £1,000 (\$1,300) fine after a historical photograph of her in "blackface" emerged on social media. Knight, set to lead England at next month's Women's T20 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates, said she was "truly sorry" for conduct that was deemed "racist and discriminatory" by Cricket Discipline Commission adjudicator Tim O'Gorman.

However, O'Gorman accepted there was no racist or discriminatory intent by Knight, who was 21 when the image was taken at a sports-themed fancy dress party in 2012. Knight, whose fine has been suspended for two years, said in a statement: "I'm truly sorry for the mistake I made in 2012. It was wrong and I have long regretted it."

"Back then, I simply was not as educated as to the implications and consequences of my actions as I have become since. There was no ill-intent meant. "Whilst I can't change the past, I am passionate and committed to using my platform to promote inclusivity across the game, ensuring under-represented groups are afforded the same opportunities and fulfilment within the game as I have."

The picture of Knight in blackface was posted to the Facebook account of another person. Knight promptly accepted the charges brought last month, showed remorse and apologized for her conduct. Her punishment also takes into account the fact she did not have any education about the issues involved in posing for such a photo at the time and the work she undertakes to promote diversity and inclusion.

O'Gorman's judgement said: "At a 'sports stars' themed party in 2012, Ms Knight appeared in a photo in fancy dress with blackface. This, I find, was racist and discriminatory conduct. "(But) I find and accept that there was no racist or discriminatory intent in the blackface itself. — AFP

## All Blacks seek to end Wellington jinx

**WELLINGTON:** Sam Cane wants New Zealand to snap their winless streak in Wellington when they face old rivals Australia, with the veteran flanker poised to play his 100th game for the All Blacks. New Zealand host the Wallabies on Saturday at Sky Stadium where the All Blacks are winless in their last five games since 2018 - including last month's shock 38-30 defeat to Argentina.

Cane, who is on 99 Tests, is set to become only the 13th All Black to reach the 100 milestone in what is likely to be his last international on New Zealand soil. He joins Japanese club Suntory Sungoliath later this year on a three-year contract, leaving him ineligible for the All Blacks after the end of season tour of Japan, England, Ireland, France and Italy, which starts in October.

"You need a bit of luck along the way to get to 100," Cane told reporters on Tuesday at the All Blacks training base near Wellington. "The first 50 came reasonably quickly, without too much trouble, but this next 50, I've had to be patient."

"It's tested me a wee bit more, with a few road bumps, but it will be really nice to look back on in



WELLINGTON: New Zealand's flanker Sam Cane speaks to reporters at the New Zealand Campus of Innovation and Sport in Upper Hutt, near Wellington, ahead of their second rugby Test match against Australia on September 28. — AFP

time and crack that club." Since his 2012 debut when he scored two tries against Ireland, Cane has seen several teammates reach 100 Tests, including Sam Whitlock who set the New Zealand record of 153 appearances in last year's World Cup final.

Cane is only eclipsed in the current squad by Beauden Barrett, who has played 130 internationals. The match against Australia is a dead rubber since

the All Blacks retained the Bledisloe Cup by beating the Wallabies 31-28 in Sydney last Saturday

Both teams are also out of contention for The Rugby Championship title. However, Australia are chasing their first victory over New Zealand since 2020, while the All Blacks want to end their six-year wait for a win in Wellington.

"It hasn't been good enough," Cane replied when asked why the All Blacks have failed to win in the capital since 2018. "We've touched on it this week. We're excited about the opportunity to sort that out."

Having become All Blacks captain in 2020 after Kieran Reed retired, Cane was skipper in last October's Rugby World Cup final defeat to South Africa when he was sent off after a first-half red card for a dangerous tackle.

He has regained his place in the starting side after a neck injury sidelined him earlier this season, with Scott Barrett taking over as All Blacks captain. Cane said stepping down as skipper meant he could concentrate on his own game.

"It's probably just the mental load. It's something you underestimate, or don't understand, until you go into the role," he said. "Coming back in and not having that (the captaincy) means just being able to contribute where I can and focus on being the best player I can be." — AFP



UNCASVILLE: Caitlin Clark #22 of the Indiana Fever shoots a three point basket during the game against the Connecticut Sun during round one game one of the 2024 WNBA Playoffs. — AFP

## New York Liberty riding WNBA boom into playoffs

**NEW YORK:** Five years ago, the New York Liberty were used to playing games in a deserted, 2,100-capacity arena out in the suburbs, a world away from the bright lights of the Big Apple. But when the star-studded WNBA team steps out at a packed Barclays Center in Brooklyn on Tuesday they will do so as one of the hottest tickets in town, as surging interest in women's basketball this season ushers in a new era for the sport.

"I go to a lot of sporting events, and nothing beats the energy here," longtime Liberty season ticket holder Lolita Beckwith told AFP. Beckwith, a professional photographer, has been following the team since the WNBA was launched in 1997.

Her 27-year allegiance to the Liberty has encompassed the team's early days, when they played games at the legendary Madison Square Garden, to the bleak era when the team was exiled to the suburban city of White Plains, closer to Connecticut than Brooklyn.

"It's just great because for 27 years, it was looked down upon," Beckwith said as she reflected on a sea of green-shirted Liberty fans thronging the arena. "No one watched, there weren't many fans. It was mostly women and kids. So to see it become what it is now is just absolutely amazing," she added.

"I wish I had a daughter so I could bring her to

the games." While the Liberty's success on the court has undoubtedly boosted the team's appeal, the jump in crowd sizes are part of a broader trend in a league that has enjoyed skyrocketing interest since the arrival of rookie phenomenon Caitlin Clark.

Indiana Fever star Clark has taken the WNBA by storm this year after a record-breaking US collegiate career. This season the Liberty have rewarded the loyalty of fans such as Beckwith with the best regular season in the franchise's history. The team, spearheaded by the likes of Olympic gold medallists Sabrina Ionescu and Breanna Stewart, finished top of the WNBA's Eastern Conference with 32 wins and only eight defeats.

With the playoffs under way, the team is perfectly positioned to end its long wait for a first ever WNBA championship. On Sunday the Liberty demolished the Atlanta Dream 83-69 in game one of their opening playoff series. "To have the crowd that we had here definitely made it a lot easier," US Olympic team star Stewart said after the win.

### Attendances surge

During the regular season, New York averaged more than 12,000 fans per game, a whopping 64% increase on the 2023 average, which itself had surged 45% from the 2022 campaign. Those kinds of ticket sales will be music to the ears of owner Joe Tsai, the Taiwanese-Canadian billionaire co-founder and chairman of Chinese multinational firm Alibaba, who purchased the team in 2019 with his wife Clara Wu Tsai, and who also owns the Brooklyn Nets NBA team as well as the Barclays Center itself.

"Two years ago, we could barely fill the lower bowl," said Liberty fan Justin Tartamella, 27.

These days, thousands of fans flock to the arena wearing sneakers in the Liberty's colors as well as T-shirts bearing the slogan "Everyone watches women's sports." Other fans, meanwhile, line-up to take selfies with the team's mascot, Ellie the Elephant, whose TikTok account has nearly 180,000 followers. For some fans, Liberty games are an increasingly attractive option in a New York sporting landscape already studded with iconic men's franchises. Baseball has the New York Yankees and the Mets, the NBA has the New York Knicks and the Brooklyn Nets, while the NFL offers New York Giants and New York Jets.

Adam Reid, a 35-year-old computer programmer who recently opted for a Liberty game over a Mets fixture, explained the team's appeal. "You can get very close-up seats for an affordable price, compared to a very high up seat to the baseball game," Reid told AFP. "And they've been a blast."

The inclusivity of the WNBA has also drawn in fans. "Historically, it's been very LGBTQ+ friendly, which is really important," said David Smith, a 51-year-old consultant. "As a gay man, this is where I feel the most welcome."

Indiana's Clark, meanwhile, has helped boost the Fever's average crowds this season to more than 17,000 per game, with a record 20,000 fans turning out for one fixture. Those kinds of figures are translating to big business off the court: in late July, the WNBA announced a new 11-year broadcast contract worth an estimated \$200 million per season — more than triple the previous amount. The WNBA is also preparing to expand the league, with three new franchises joining the competition in coming seasons. — AFP

Sports

# UK town catches Subbuteo fever

## Tunbridge Wells is the 'spiritual home' of Subbuteo

**TUNBRIDGE WELLS:** With a quivering finger, England Subbuteo veteran Rudi Peterschinnig conceded the free-kick that sent his country's World Cup quarter-final into extra-time before smashing his plastic goalkeeper on the floor in frustration.

In the genteel southern English town of Tunbridge Wells, 300 elite players have gathered to play the game they love. "I won't say this is the best weekend I've ever had in my life, but it's certainly in the top two," said Hughie Best, 58, who flew in from Perth, Australia, to compete and commentate at the event.

Tunbridge Wells is the "spiritual home" of Subbuteo which was invented here in 1946 before being copied around the world. The game of skill and strategy fell out of fashion with the advent of computer games, but is enjoying a renaissance among nostalgists and also the younger generation, with this year's tournament the largest ever.

Around 5,000 people visited the three-day tournament's various events, according to Stewart Grant, press officer with organizer The English Subbuteo Association, as the town embraced the unusual honor. "Everybody you speak to, they say it's the home. It's a pilgrimage for some people," he added.

The game's collectability has always been part of its allure, with many people accumulating the finely-painted teams, stands, supporters, floodlights, replica trophies and scoreboards without actually playing. "It's quite cool, you can control the ball and the amount of power with your own hands," said spectator and part-time player Harry Brown, 12. "I like how you can paint the players and change the teams," he added.

### Lockdown boost

England youth player Alex Scott told AFP that he didn't play video games because Subbuteo is "a lot

more fun". "Its the competitiveness and going around different places meeting new people," he added.

His father, Justin, runs a club in Wolverhampton and was one of many at the event who said they had noticed an increase in members. "A lot of people went into their loft and found their Subbuteo" during Covid lockdowns, and "then looked if there was a club when everything reopened," he explained.

The aim of the game is the same as football, to score more goals than your opponent. This is achieved by flicking the tiny players, who either have a flat or semi-circular base, into the ball and maneuvering it into goalscoring positions.

The team event knockouts (U12s, U16s, U20s, veterans, women and open) at the climax of the tournament took place around the same time as Sunday's Premier League match between Manchester City and Arsenal. But all eyes in the Tunbridge Wells Sports centre were on the 50 bright green 90 x 50 centimetre cloth tables. Before the games, the combatants took their star players out of their ornate wooden boxes, lubricated their bases and set them up in precise formations. After a 10-second countdown, the flick-off began 30 minutes of action.

### 'Bloodied hero'

The team games consist of four simultaneous individual matches, with huge roars punctuating the general buzz of the spectators, indicating where goals were being scored. Tensions came close to spilling over on occasion, including when England players took off on a victory dash after scoring a goal against the mighty Italians, only to have it controversially ruled out.

But that disappointment was forgotten when "super" Bob Varney scored the golden-goal winner in England's veteran semi-final against Belgium, sparking wild celebrations as he was mobbed by dozens of



**TUNBRIDGE WELLS:** People look on as England veteran player Darren Clarke (R) takes a shot against Belgium during the Subbuteo World Cup in Tunbridge Wells in south east England. — AFP

teammates and spectators. "Just remember, it's a children's board game, recommended age group 7-11. It says it on the box," Varney had joked to an AFP photographer, moments before his goal. The veteran, co-founder of Drops Cycling—the UK's most successful women's cycling team—was playing with a plaster on his finger after sustaining a nasty injury while making a save, later asking lightheartedly that he be described as the "bloodied hero".

Varney's team lost in the final to the Italians, who also won the main open event after scoring the winning goal three seconds from the end of their final with Belgium, much to the delight of the team's wives, families and coaches gathered on the sidelines. "I don't know what to say. It was lost, it's incredible," World Cup winner Matteo Ciccarelli, 25, told AFP, with sweat pouring from his brow after winning his final match 4-1. — AFP

## Man Utd, Spurs eye respite from domestic woes in Europa League

**PARIS:** Manchester United and Tottenham kick off their Europa League campaigns this week, hoping to put disappointing starts to the Premier League season behind them. Erik ten Hag's United have failed to show any real improvement from a miserable season last term, sitting outside the top 10 already domestically with just seven points from five matches.

The Dutch manager narrowly clung on to his job despite leading the Old Trafford giants to their worst-ever Premier League finish of eighth last term, largely thanks to a surprise FA Cup final victory over Manchester City.

United spent heavily in the transfer market, but the expected upturn in fortunes on the pitch are yet to materialize ahead of their Europa League opener at home to Twente on Wednesday. A goalless draw at Crystal Palace last weekend snuffed out some of the positivity garnered from the 3-0 win over Southampton and League Cup thrashing of Barnsley, but Ten Hag insists his team are progressing.

"The performance is good, but we are not happy with the score. We are disappointed with the score, it's clear," he said after the stalemate at Selhurst Park. "But I know one thing for sure in football, it's a long way to go and when you play in the quality we now deliver the points will come, the goals will come."

"Now we can work on the team, we can build structures, we can also bring out some consistency in selection, and that helps, of course, to bring the patterns and routines in, and then you play better." Man United are back in the revamped Europa League after a disastrous Champions League performance last season that saw the three-time European champions finish bottom of their group.

### Spurs seek solace

Anything other than a victory against Dutch club Twente, back in the competition proper for the first time since 2012, in the first of their eight league-phase matches would pile the pressure on Ten Hag and his players.

## Arne Slot praises Alexander-Arnold's defensive work

**LONDON:** Arne Slot said Trent Alexander-Arnold has been a good defender "all his life", even though the Liverpool right-back is often praised more for his attacking prowess.

The 25-year-old, who is in the final year of his contract at Anfield, believes the perception that he is a better attacker than defender is "harsh". The Anfield youth product, linked with a move to Real Madrid, feels he is benefiting from the input of Slot, who is in the early weeks of his tenure after replacing Jurgen Klopp.

"We talked about targets and aims and I said



**MANCHESTER:** Manchester United's Argentinian midfielder #17 Alejandro Garnacho (R) jokes with Manchester United's Dutch manager Erik ten Hag as he leaves the pitch after being substituted off during the English League Cup third round football match between Manchester United and Barnsley. — AFP

Discontent has also started to grow among Tottenham fans for the first time since their blistering start to life under Ange Postecoglou 12 months ago. A 3-1 victory over Brentford at the weekend at least helped them bounce back from successive Premier League defeats at the hands of Newcastle and local rivals Arsenal. But Spurs will be desperate to end their 17-year wait for a major trophy and will see the new Europa League, which will not feature any teams dropping down from the Champions League like in previous seasons, as a golden opportunity.

They host Azeri club Qarabag on Thursday. "I keep saying to people, 'Show me a success story and I'll show you a struggle'. People forget the struggle and look at the end bit," Postecoglou said last week. Elsewhere, crisis-hit Roma welcome Athletic Bilbao to the Stadio Olimpico, hoping to continue their strong recent form in Europe.

to him that I would like to be the defender that no one wants to come up against in Europe," Alexander-Arnold said after Liverpool's 3-0 win against Bournemouth on Saturday.

"We agreed that he will be harsh on me. Any time an attacker gets past me he will call it out in meetings and individual meetings and say this cannot happen," Slot, speaking Tuesday, on the eve of Liverpool's League Cup third-round clash against struggling West Ham, said: "It's clear to me that he (Alexander-Arnold) has been a good defender all his life."

"But because he is so, so special with the ball, the main emphasis goes to him doing special things with the ball and I think with him it is not about if he is capable of doing things, it's more can his concentration rate constantly be in 100 percent focus, that's what it's more about with him. "So this is what we talk about a lot, that he has to stay active in every situation of the game, even if the ball is further away from him. — AFP

The Serie A club have reached at least the Europa League semi-finals in three of the past four seasons—the exception their 2022 Conference League triumph under Jose Mourinho. However, Roma supporters were left furious by the sacking of coach Daniele De Rossi, venting their fury at management and players they consider responsible during Sunday's win over Udinese.

The anger at De Rossi's dismissal has been such that CEO Lina Souloukou, who resigned on Saturday morning, had been placed under police protection after online threats made against her and family. A banner hung outside Roma's Trigoria training ground described Greek Souloukou, who was previously CEO of Olympiakos, as "evil". Other Europa League fixtures include 2022 winners Eintracht Frankfurt hosting Viktoria Plzen, while four-time European champions Ajax take on Besiktas in Amsterdam. — AFP



**LIVERPOOL:** Liverpool's English defender #66 Trent Alexander-Arnold challenges Bournemouth's Dutch striker #19 Justin Kluivert during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Bournemouth. — AFP

## Packed calendar has overloaded top players

**LONDON:** The best players have been overloaded due to a packed fixture calendar leaving them prone to injury, Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag said ahead of the Old Trafford side's Europa League opener against his boyhood club Twente on Wednesday.

Last season, England recorded the highest number of domestic back-to-back matches, 87, among top European leagues, with Premier League clubs averaging the shortest recovery time between games at 67.3 hours.

Manchester United experienced the shortest turnaround between matches in November last year, when they beat Fulham in the Premier League 64 hours and 15 minutes after losing to Newcastle United in the League Cup.

"There are too many games - the top players are overloaded. It is not good for football. Maybe it is good for commercial (reasons)," Dutchman Ten Hag told reporters on Tuesday. "There is a limit and players are getting injuries. It is almost unavoidable because of the overload of so many games... We are professionals and revenues have to come, but we have to balance this out."

All three European club competitions have been expanded to 36 teams this season with Manchester City midfielder Rodri having said the players could be close to strike action over the amount of games they are required to play.

In July, soccer players' union FIFPRO said it is filing a complaint with EU antitrust regulators regarding FIFA's international match calendar. "First we have to take the experience, every match is significant, every goal is significant," Ten Hag said of the new league phase format of the Europa League.

"An opportunity and more roads to achieve the target you want. It is the most difficult (pathway to the Champions League), probably. In a tournament of 36 you have to be the best. It is a target and a road we want to go." United won the Europa League under Jose Mourinho in 2017 with a 2-0 victory over Ajax Amsterdam.

Ten Hag said it would hurt to beat his boyhood club Twente, having helped them win the Dutch Cup as a player in 2001. "I would have preferred to play against somebody else. It's not nice to hurt something you love. Of all the teams, Twente is the team I follow the most," Ten Hag added.

"I watch them as a fan, as a supporter, not as an analyst. It's a different way of watching their games. Twente brought me a lot. I was put through their academy, so for me a great deal of history there." Twente are fourth in the Eredivisie following back-to-back wins. After hosting Twente, United welcome Tottenham Hotspur in the Premier League on Sunday. — Reuters

# Classifieds

### Change of Name

**I, Abbas Ali,** Father Moiz Hussain, Caste Bohra, resident of house number 44, KH Bohra Gali, Near Bohra Masjid, Tehsil Jeeran, District Neemuch, Madhya Pradesh, Pin code-458336. That earlier I was known as Abbas Ali Bohra S/o Moiz Hussain Bohra and currently I have changed my name to Abbas

Ali S/o Moiz Hussain and now I will be known and recognized as Abbas Ali S/o Moiz Hussein. (# 6171 25/09/2024)

**I, Fakhruddin,** holder of Passport No. Z3200987 do hereby change my name to Fakhruddin Ali Mohammed (as given name) Sultan (as surname)

for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Fakhruddin Ali Mohammed Sultan and I also undertake to carry out this name change all my documents. (# 6170 24/09/2024)

**I, Murtuza S/o Asgar Ali,** holder of Indian Passport No. T0703760 (issued at Kuwait on 19/11/2018)

resident of House No. 26/30, Kotawala Bagh, Ratlam, Madhya Pradesh, 457001, India has changed my name from Murtuza to Murtuza Kangsawala in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of MuRtuza (given name) and Kangsawala (surname). (# 6168 23/09/2024)

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## Phils sink Cubs, secure NL East crown

### Matt Chapman's inside-the-park HR helps Giants top D-backs



PHILADELPHIA: Nico Hoerner #2 of the Chicago Cubs forces out Nick Castellanos #8 of the Philadelphia Phillies during the second inning at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. — AFP

**PHILADELPHIA:** J.T. Realmuto and Kyle Schwarber homered in support of right-hander Aaron Nola as the host Philadelphia Phillies secured their first National League East title in 13 years by defeating the Chicago Cubs 6-2 on Monday. The Phillies entered the day with a magic number of one to clinch the division — a bit of a disappointment after a 2-5 road trip against the Milwaukee Brewers and New York Mets. However, some home cooking proved to be the right recipe for Philadelphia (93-64), which remains a half-game behind the Los Angeles Dodgers in the race for the best record in the NL. Realmuto, Schwarber, Bryce Harper and Nick Castellanos each finished with two hits for the Phillies. Nola (13-8) allowed two runs on seven hits in six-plus frames. He walked two and struck out seven to earn

his first victory since Aug. 27. Isaac Paredes registered a pair of hits for the Cubs, who had won three of their previous four games.

#### Giants 6, Diamondbacks 3

Matt Chapman hit San Francisco's first inside-the-park homer in seven-plus years and Michael Conforto and Casey Schmitt hit conventional homers to help the Giants record a victory over Arizona at Phoenix. Chapman added an RBI triple to go with his two-run homer as San Francisco improved to 6-1 on its nine-game road trip. Conforto and Mark Canha joined Chapman with two hits apiece. Gerardo Perdomo had two hits and an RBI for Arizona, which lost its second straight contest following a four-game winning streak. The Diamondbacks fell

into third place in the NL wild-card chase, a half-game behind the New York Mets.

#### Mariners 6, Astros 1

Bryce Miller stymied host Houston by logging seven scoreless innings as Seattle gained ground in the American League playoff race. Jorge Polanco, Julio Rodriguez and Randy Arozarena each had an RBI double for the Mariners, who closed within 1 1/2 games of the final AL wild-card spot. Miller (12-8) scattered two hits and two walks while striking out five, including consecutive punchouts with runners on second and third in the seventh inning. Hunter Brown (11-9) was just as stingy as Miller over his six innings for the Astros, who would have clinched their fourth straight AL West

title with a win Monday. The right-hander limited the Mariners to one run on three hits and three walks while fanning eight.

#### Red Sox 4, Blue Jays 1

Wilyer Abreu had two hits, including an RBI double, and visiting Boston took advantage of 10 walks to defeat Toronto. Red Sox right-hander Tanner Houck (9-10) pitched five scoreless innings, allowing one hit and one walk in the opener of a three-game series. He didn't record a strikeout. Boston has won three in a row. Spencer Horowitz had an RBI single for the Blue Jays. Toronto starter Chris Bassitt (10-14) gave up three runs (two earned) on four hits and seven walks while striking out two in 4 1/3 innings. — Reuters

## Buffalo Bills trample Jaguars, Commanders claw Bengals

**NEW YORK:** Josh Allen produced a monster performance as the Buffalo Bills trampled over the Jacksonville Jaguars 47-10 to maintain their perfect start to the NFL season on Monday. Bills quarterback Allen was in superb form as Buffalo buried the Jags in an avalanche of first-half scoring that saw them power into a 34-3 lead at the break.

Allen threw four touchdowns and finished with 263 passing yards while Buffalo's defense gave Jaguars quarterback Trevor Lawrence a torrid time at the Bills' Highmark Stadium. Lawrence was sacked four times as the Bills sent winless Jacksonville sliding to their third defeat of the season from three games.

Bills running back James Cook grabbed the first touchdown of the game, rushing over from six yards to cap a 10-play, 70-yard opening drive. After Jacksonville punted their first possession, Buffalo were back in the end zone on their next drive when Dalton Kincaid collected Allen's short pass to make it 13-0 after Tyler Bass's extra point.

Cam Little got Jacksonville on the board with a 41-yard field goal early in the second quarter, but Allen then took over with touchdown passes to Keon Coleman, Khalil Shakir and Ty Johnson to leave Buffalo up by 31 points at the end of the second quarter.

The biggest roar of a one-sided first-half came when safety Damar Hamlin — who almost died on the field after suffering a cardiac arrest in a game against Cincinnati last year — snagged the first interception of his career to set up the drive which led to Shakir's touchdown.

#### 'Special place'

Hamlin was mobbed by his Bills teammates after his maiden pick, and said they had been instrumental in his recovery last year. "They were a big part of me being able to make this type of comeback," Hamlin said. "They were even happier than I was to get my first interception. That just shows the community we have here in Buffalo. It's a special place."

There was a flicker of offense from Jacksonville early in the second half, with Lawrence stitching together an eight-play, 70-yard drive that finished with Brenton Strange gathering a six-yard touchdown pass. But two more Bass field goals left Buffalo 40-10 up before Ray Davis's late rushing touchdown from three yards completed the scoring. In Monday's other game, the Cincinnati Bengals were left still looking for their first win of the season after suffering a 38-33 home defeat to the Washington Commanders. Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow made a bright start, finding Ja'Marr Chase for a 41-yard touchdown to open the scoring in the first quarter.

But thereafter Washington took over with rookie quarterback Jayden Daniels showing a composure that belied his 23 years to guide the Commanders to a superb win. Daniels finished with two touchdowns and 254 yards from 21 of 23 passes — a record 91.3



CINCINNATI: Terry McLaurin #17 of the Washington Commanders catches a 27-yard touchdown pass against the Cincinnati Bengals during the fourth quarter at Paycor Stadium on September 23, 2024 in Cincinnati, Ohio. — AFP

percent completion rate for a rookie quarterback.

The Bengals, who had trailed by 15 early in the third quarter, got back to within five points after Burrow found Chase in the end zone in the fourth quarter. Daniels though nervously converted a fourth down opportunity to keep a drive alive and

then hit Terry McLaurin in the end zone for a 27-yard touchdown to make it 38-26. Bengals rusher Zack Moss cut the Washington lead with 40 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter, skipping over from one yard out to help make it 38-33, but it was too little too late for the home side. — AFP