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No joke: Indian comedian Das under nationalist fire



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E-buggies replace horse carts at Jordan's Petra



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Lakers' Staples Center to be renamed in \$700m deal







# Barrak returns to Kuwait, thanks Amir for pardon

Ex-MP Tahous also returns • Only ex-MP Mislem remains in Turkey



KUWAIT: Former opposition MPs Musallam Al-Barrak (left) and Khaled Al-Tahous are welcomed by supporters as they arrived in Kuwait yesterday after being pardoned by the Amir. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and Fouad Al-Shaikh



By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Prominent opposition leader and former MP Musallam Al-Barrak yesterday returned to Kuwait after three and a half years in exile following an Amiri pardon, as hundreds of his supporters gave him a hero's welcome. Barrak was accompanied on the same flight from Istanbul by former MP Khaled Al-Tahous and three activists who were also given Amiri pardons as part of a national dialogue to resolve political problems.

Barrak, Tahous and the activists thanked HH the Amir for pardoning them, and Barrak in particular wished the Amir good health. Dressed in a grey suit without a tie and with a Kuwaiti flag draped over his shoulders, Barrak and his companions kneeled and kissed the soil of Kuwait immediately after disembarking the Kuwait Airways aircraft. Hundreds of supporters had waited for the returnees at T4 terminal at Kuwait Airport, but they had to move quickly to nearby Sheikh Saad Airport, where Barrak and the activists were taken.

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Robots, big data as Gulf bets on AI



DUBAI: In this photo taken on Oct 2, 2021, visitors walk past a robot outside the Dutch pavilion at the Dubai Expo 2020. — AFP

DUBAI: Robots puttering around Dubai's hi-tech Expo site could be a sign of things to come for the Gulf, where new cities are being built from scratch with artificial intelligence at their core. The 5G-enabled Expo, covering an area twice the size of Monaco, will remain as a "city of the future" and tech industry hub, Expo's chief told AFP before its grand opening last month.

But the \$7 billion project, featuring robots that greet visitors and can be used to order food, is not alone in the wealthy Gulf, where petrodollars are being invested heavily in a post-oil future. Neighboring Saudi Arabia is lavishing \$500 billion on NEOM, a brand new, next-generation Red Sea tech center that will offer ultra-connectivity to its potential population of one million-plus, and is trialing airborne taxis.

AI is also at the heart of other Saudi developments including the Red Sea Project, a new tourist area that will use smart systems to monitor environmental impacts and visitor movements. Analysts say the Gulf monarchies are willing to bet big on AI, knowing they must move away from their reliance on fossil fuel industries and become more active in tech, tourism and other areas.

"You've got very forward (-looking), somewhat risk-loving leadership that sees the need to transform," said Kaveh Vessali, a partner at consultancy firm PwC Middle East. "I think that's just completely the opposite of what I see in the rest of the world." Artificial intelligence courses in Bahrain primary schools, the UAE's plans for

Continued on Page 2

Free KPTC bus service to, from Mubarakia



KUWAIT: Free transportation by bus will be offered to and from Mubarakia from four stops in the capital district, Kuwait Public Transport Company (KPTC) said yesterday. CEO of KPTC Mansour Al-Saad told KUNA during the launch ceremony of the service, attended by governor of the Capital district Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-

UAE seeks to bolster arms industry



DUBAI: Drones, guided missiles, simulators: the United Arab Emirates is on the offensive to develop its defense industry in a bid to wean itself off dependence on imports. Khalid Al-Breiki heads one of five clusters of the Emirati defense consortium EDGE, formed two years ago and bringing together 25 Emirati arms firms in a bid to develop "national capacities".

Schools shut as Delhi, Lahore choke in smog



NEW DELHI: India's capital has shut schools and coal plants as it battles dangerous levels of air pollution in the region that yesterday also left Lahore in neighboring Pakistan choking on acrid smog. Air quality has worsened across northern India and adjacent parts of Pakistan in recent years, as industrial pollutants, smoke from seasonal crop burn-off, and colder winter

Sabah, that the service will operate from 10:00 am to 10:00 pm with trips available every 30 minutes.

The four stations are located in the parking lot of Souq Sharq, the yard near Jahra roundabout and Sheraton hotel, Sanabel Complex, and the ministries complex in Mirqab, he revealed. Saad added that the service will run until March 2022, and will be renewed if there is considerable demand. Hopefully, the service will lessen traffic jams in Mubarakia, indicated the KPTC CEO, pointing out that the buses included in this service are unique in shape, color and passenger capacity. — KUNA

According to him, the Abu Dhabi-based defense consortium is an indicator of the "maturity of our industry in the UAE".

EDGE became the first Middle Eastern company to rank among the top 25 military firms in the world last year, with gross sales of over \$5 billion, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. "We realized that we needed to bring our capabilities under one roof to focus on what we want to manufacture and service in the country, and now we can go global with that," Breiki told AFP. "We have a start-up mentality, but with an economy of scale."

Continued on Page 2

temperatures coalesce into toxic smog.

Delhi is consistently ranked the world's worst capital for air quality, with levels of pollutants last week reaching more than 30 times the maximum limit recommended by the World Health Organization. The city on Tuesday ordered the closure until the end of the month of six of 11 coal-fired power plants surrounding the metropolis in a bid to tackle the filthy air.

The move comes after India led the charge at the weekend to weaken anti-coal pledges at the UN COP26 climate summit, with critics saying it prioritized economic growth over the planet's future.

Continued on Page 2



KUWAIT: A free bus service to Mubarakia is launched during a ceremony yesterday. — KUNA



DUBAI: This picture taken on Nov 14, 2021 shows a view of the Desert Sting DS-16 precision-guided glide weapon by Halcon, a part of the EDGE advanced technology group, at the 2021 Dubai Airshow. — AFP



LAHORE: Vehicles make their way over a bridge amid heavy smog yesterday. — AFP



## Local

# Zain platinum sponsor of NUKS USA 37th annual conference

## Under patronage of Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its platinum sponsorship of the 37th annual conference of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students in the United States of America (NUKS USA), which is set to be held from the 25 - 28 November in Chicago, Illinois under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

The announcement was made during the press conference held at the Kuwait Economic Society, which witnessed the presence of Zain Kuwait's Internal and External Relations Department Manager Hamad Al-Musaibeeh, NUKS USA



Held in Chicago  
from Nov 25-28

Director Abdulaziz Al-Kandari, as well as NUKS USA representatives and the event's sponsors.

Zain expressed its pride in being the platinum sponsor of the conference, which makes a return after a halt of nearly two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, Zain continues its role as a main supporter of the event for 17 years. The conference is considered the largest gathering of Kuwaiti students abroad, and Zain's support comes in line with its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy towards the youth and education sectors. The company is proud to have become an integral part of this event's success, through which it connects with the country's youth abroad.

As always, Zain will be contributing to the event



**KUWAIT:** Officials pose for a group photo during a press conference to announce Zain's platinum sponsorship of the 37th annual conference of NUKS USA.

by organizing a number of unique activities and programs for the students. The company will sponsor a special sports seminar featuring many distinguished current and past Kuwaiti athletes, as well as sponsor a health seminar that will host Ministry of Health Spokesperson Dr. Abdullah Al Sanad, who will share a behind-the-scenes look at the ministry's efforts to curb the COVID outbreak last year.

Zain will take part in a special exhibition for sponsors, where the company will present available career opportunities to students, as well as showcase its leading experience in the telecom sector. In addition, Zain has prepared a number of surprises for students who will be visiting the event. The company is also set to host ZAINPHONIC, a special workshop that shares tips and tricks of smartphone photography, giving the students a chance to learn the best techniques for taking pro-level photos with their smartphones and helping them

unleash their creativity.

Zain's presence in the event conveys its enthusiasm to interact with the future generations of Kuwaiti youth, especially those who pursue their education abroad, as the NUKS USA conference is considered the largest gathering of Kuwaitis outside of Kuwait, and welcomes students from all over the US. The event appeals to students on both intellectual and social levels and it serves as an open forum for them to exchange opinions and views regarding important domestic issues with the presence of distinguished national figures from the Kuwaiti community, including academics, media personalities, athletes, doctors, and more who fly to the US for the purpose of meeting with the students and sharing their experiences with them.

Zain sees its annual participation in the conference as part of its responsibility as a leading

national company to help provide bright and enthusiastic young Kuwaitis with a great social experience, as well as listen to their ideas and experiences while pursuing their education abroad.

The National Union of Kuwaiti Students in the United States of America (NUKS USA) serves nearly 14,000 Kuwaiti students studying in the United States. The union aims, through its events and programs, to connect Kuwaiti students with each other on one level, and with their nation and the latest updates of the Kuwaiti community on another. NUKS USA was publicized in the USA and was granted the recognition of the United States government. The achievement is considered a proud milestone for Kuwait's youth, and is a direct result of the great relations between the State of Kuwait and United States. Such a recognition is a clear reflection of the strategic relations between the two nations.

## Gulf Bank grants gold sponsorship to NUKS conference

**KUWAIT:** In a press conference held by the National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS) yesterday in Kuwait, Gulf Bank announced it is granting gold sponsorship to the National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS) conference in the United States. This year, Gulf Bank is renewing its partnership with NUKS as part of its social sustainability program and commitment to supporting and empowering Kuwaiti youth.

This year's NUKS conference will be taking place in Chicago, California from November 25 to November 28 and will host several events and activities for Kuwaiti students who are studying abroad in the United States. Gulf Bank will be organizing numerous entertaining activities for the students present at the conference.

Commenting on Gulf Bank's sponsorship of this



Mohammad Al-Qattan

year's NUKS Conference, Mohammed Al-Qattan, General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, said: "At Gulf Bank, we make it a point to seize every opportunity available to support our local youth and enable them to excel and succeed on both the professional and personal fronts. One such opportunity is our annual support of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students conference in the United States of America. We are planning to launch multiple events and surprises at this year's conference, as we gradually celebrate the return of in-person events abroad. We are looking forward to meeting our international Kuwaiti students at the conference, and we wish all our students every success in their academic journeys."

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The bank is constantly engaging

and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust sustainability program at the community, economic, and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives that are strategically selected to benefit both the country and the bank. The bank also supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various relevant parties to achieve it.

## Barrak returns to Kuwait, thanks...

Continued from Page 1

Hundreds of others had been waiting at the diwanias of Barrak and Tahous and the three activists to greet them. Supporters thronged Barrak as he emerged from the airport, then carried him on their shoulders and shouted slogans. Barrak thanked the good treatment he was given by police officers, saying they completed all procedures within seconds.

His supporters also surrounded Barrak's vehicle on the Fifth Ring Road on the way to his diwaniya. Traffic was paralyzed and came to a halt despite police intervention. At Barrak's diwaniya in Andalus, preparations had started from Tuesday as people performed traditional bedouin dances and songs, waving swords in celebration for their hero's return.

## UAE seeks to bolster arms...

Continued from Page 1

The group has 13,000 employees "from all over the world", but it wants to hire more UAE citizens, with a focus on striking agreements with universities in the country or abroad. Its targets align with a country-wide "Emiratization" strategy that has seen the authorities push for more local hires in an oil-rich Gulf country, where the foreign population outnumbered citizens at almost nine to one.

At the Dubai Airshow, the huge display erected by EDGE boasts several homemade products, from guided missiles to cybersecurity systems. The group's contracts have multiplied recently, nearly all of them with the UAE government. Particularly lucrative deals have included maintenance of military jets, worth almost \$4 billion, as well as providing guided munitions at \$880 million.

Like neighboring Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the UAE is among the world's top arms importers and is seeking to diversify its economy. In the defense industry, this occurs through "offsets", which require defense manufacturers to invest in countries that import equipment from them. "We have 20 products done under the 'Made in the UAE' initiative and 13 new products announced this year,"

Firecrackers were also burst.

Barrak and his companions were greeted by Kuwaiti travelers first at Istanbul Airport when he boarded the plane, which was brought back to the country by pilot Ammar Al-Ajmi, himself a former MP. The five exiles sang the Kuwaiti national anthem as the plane approached Kuwait Airport, according to videos posted on Twitter. The five men were among some 15 former opposition MPs and activists who left Kuwait for Turkey in the summer of 2018 to escape jail terms passed against them by the top court for storming the National Assembly building in 2011.

On Monday, three former MPs returned to the country, and two years ago, two other former MPs returned to Kuwait after a special Amiri pardon. Only former MP Faisal Al-Mislem has not returned so far and it is not immediately known when he is due to come back. Mislem has not been enthusiastic about the deal that led to the Amiri pardon, fearing concessions were made in return for the pardon. Mislem has not made any comment for the past several days and his supporters have launched a campaign on Twitter urging him to return.

Breiki said. "There is an inspiration to have an indigenous capability, however we haven't matured enough that we can do it without partners."

EDGE has signed multiple deals with foreign partners, including US firms Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, and Brazil's Embraer, Breiki said, adding that they are also part of the "Airbus ecosystem". He added that the company has set up "strategic partnerships" with certain firms "where they buy from us and sell for us".

The establishment of diplomatic relations with the Zionist entity last year has opened up new opportunities for partnerships with Zionist defense firms, which have made their first appearance at the Dubai Airshow. "We're discussing with them, we're signing contracts with them," Breiki said, adding: "We're in line with our government".

On Sunday, Zionist weapons giant Elbit, known for its sophisticated unmanned aerial systems, announced the creation of a UAE subsidiary that seeks to "lead the transfer of technologies to local partners". EDGE, which has so far signed about 20 contracts for defense and munitions, hopes to expand its foothold on the international scene.

One of its companies specialized in precision engineering for aerospace, EPI, already exports more than 60 percent of its production. "Export is important, not only on the economic side," but also to demonstrate the quality of Emirati products abroad, Breiki said. "We have this criterion: If we have a good product, we should be able to sell it abroad." — AFP

## Robots, big data as Gulf...

Continued from Page 1

automated delivery drones and Dubai's ambition to have 25 percent of all transport automated by 2030 offer further evidence of the Gulf's tech aspirations.

The Middle East is predicted to receive only two percent of the estimated \$15.7 trillion global AI economy by 2030, according to PwC. But analysts say the Gulf countries - Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE - are playing the long game, positioning themselves to leapfrog global players. The annual growth rate of the Middle East AI market is about 20 to 34 percent, led by the UAE and then Saudi Arabia, PwC said in a report, predicting that more than 10 percent of each of the two countries' GDP will come from AI by 2030.

"Governments have the luxury of being more strategic," said Vessali, citing the 20 and 50-year plans which are a hallmark of Gulf governments. "This is unheard of a) in the private sector, and b) in the West," he adds. Vessali said most AI companies in

## Schools shut as Delhi, Lahore...

Continued from Page 1

The Indian capital of 20 million people has also cancelled school classes and urged people to work from home, while banning non-essential trucks from entering the city in an effort to clean the smog. In an order passed late Tuesday, the city's Commission for Air Quality Management said all education institutions should remain shut until further notice.

"Anti-smog guns" - which spray mist into the air - and water sprinklers were ordered to operate at pollution hotspots at least three times a day. The commission also said that at least half of government workers were being sent home and private firms should follow suit. The order came days after the Delhi government pushed back against a call by India's Supreme Court to declare the city's first "pollution lockdown", which would restrict the population to their homes.

In neighboring Pakistan, the city of Lahore in Punjab province near the border with India was ranked the most polluted city in the world yesterday

Gulf states are fully, or at least semi, governmental, with comparatively low pressure to generate short-term returns. However, the region has a history of investing in companies which did not become particularly profitable, outside a few core industries such as oil and gas, he warned.

While the region might be known as culturally conservative, its AI strategies are better characterized as liberal and aggressive, according to some local players. In 2017, the UAE appointed its first minister of state for artificial intelligence, Omar bin Sultan Al-Olama, to spearhead the country's AI strategy, launched that same year. The UAE has said it aims to become one of the leading nations in AI by 2031, creating new economic and business opportunities, and generate up to 335 billion dirhams (\$91 billion) in extra growth.

"The region seems to classify being left behind on new technologies as a bigger risk than anything else," said Cesar Lopez, the CEO of Datumcon. "Taking the risk to do what others aren't has attracted and built business," he told AFP. The data and AI solutions company based in the UAE and Saudi Arabia is using computer vision to scan and identify damaged containers at Jebel Ali port in Dubai, one of the world's busiest, operated by logistics company DP World. — AFP

by a Swiss air quality monitor. By evening the air above the city of 11 million had cleared slightly. But levels of PM2.5 - the smallest and most harmful particles polluting the air - were still at 118 micrograms per cubic meter, nearly eight times the WHO's daily recommended maximum.

"Children are experiencing breathing diseases... for God's sake, find a solution," labourer Muhammad Saeed told AFP. In recent years, Lahore residents have built their own purifiers and filed lawsuits against government officials in desperate bids to clean the air. But authorities have been slow to act, blaming the smog on India or claiming the figures are exaggerated.

Lahore is consistently ranked one of the world's worst cities for air pollution. "We are poor people, we can't even afford a doctor's charges," shopkeeper Ikram Ahmed told AFP. "We can only plead with them to control the pollution. I am not a literate person, but I have read that Lahore has the worst air quality and then comes India's Delhi. If it continues like this, we will die."

Laborer Saeed said he had stopped taking his children outside for walks because of the dirty air. "There are factories and small industries operating here - either shift them somewhere else, give them compensation or provide them with modern technology, so we can get rid of this smog," he said. — AFP



## Local

# Food helps strengthen our ties and friendship: Japan envoy

## Embassy hosts 'washoku' to celebrate 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Kuwait, the Embassy of Japan organized a washoku (Japanese cuisine) event to promote Japanese food culture in Kuwait. It was attended by owners, suppliers and representatives of Japanese restaurants in Kuwait. Speaking during the event, Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait Takaoka Masato lauded his country's partnership with Kuwait, adding one of the connections that bind them dearly is food. "People in Kuwait and perhaps everywhere in the world, whenever we talk about food, we smile with gratitude. We want to smile back with gratitude to the people of Kuwait and to more than 100 restaurants and cafes serving Japanese cuisine," he said.

"The popularity of Japanese food in Kuwait is quite significant; we fully appreciate their efforts and our hearts are overjoyed with all their contributions to the growing love of Japanese food in Kuwait. Many of the suppliers and business owners are Kuwaitis and they appreciate our food culture. Food helps us strengthen our ties and friendship as

food is something that we always have all the time on our table," the envoy said.

Masato said Japanese food was introduced to Kuwait in 1981. "At that time, people in Kuwait didn't really eat outside food. We highly understand that because you have your own taste that are



### Japanese food introduced to Kuwait in 1981

accustomed to it. Therefore, a lot of effort has been made to introduce our food and acceptance of our taste to the people of Kuwait," he said. "The first Japanese restaurant in Kuwait - Kei - opened in 1981. Japanese food must have been very remote from the taste that the Kuwaitis were used to. Of course, it must have required enormous efforts and

commitment to bring good Japanese food supplies and talented people and match Japanese food to the taste of Kuwaitis. I am excited today to hear from you all the experiences, challenges and passions about Japanese food and Japanese food business," he added.

Masato also lauded Kuwait for a well-managed effort to confront the COVID-19 pandemic. His stint as Japan's ambassador to Kuwait began during the start of the pandemic. "It was hard for everyone, but we managed to overcome all those challenges and circumstances. We couldn't travel, we couldn't meet each other. I would like to congratulate Kuwait for successfully overcoming the challenge of the pandemic. The number of cases has drastically decreased and we hope it will stay low, and perhaps lead to zero cases," he concluded.



Takaoka Masato

## Kuwait's October trade surplus with Japan almost double

TOKYO: Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan in October nearly doubled from a year earlier to JPY 67.0 billion (\$583 million) as exports remained strong, government data showed yesterday. The surplus soared by 189.1 percent, up for the seventh consecutive month, and Kuwait posted black ink with Japan for 13 years and nine months, the Finance Ministry said in a preliminary report. Kuwaiti overall exports to Japan surged 105.4 percent year-on-year to JPY 75.9 billion (\$661 million) for the seventh straight month of expansion. Imports from Japan fell 35.0 percent to JPY 9.0 billion (\$78 million), down for the second month. Middle East's trade surplus with Japan swelled 134.8 percent to JPY 610.6 billion (\$5.3 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region jumping 78.9 percent from a year earlier.

Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and other natural resources, which accounted for 94.2 percent of the region's total exports to Japan, inflated 80.6 percent. The region's overall imports from Japan declined 12.9 percent on sluggish car shipments. Japan posted a global trade deficit of JPY 67.4 billion 6 (\$587 million) in October, marking the third monthly red ink, as car exports plunged 36.7 percent due to supply chain disruptions in Southeast Asia. However, overall exports from the world's third-biggest economy still grew 9.4 percent from a year earlier, thanks to robust demand of steel, semiconductor production equipment and mineral fuels. Imports also rose 26.7 percent on higher bills of crude oil, coal and LNG. China remained Japan's biggest trade partner, followed by the US. The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors. —KUNA

## Kuwait's cycling team wins first place in Arab tourney

CAIRO: Kuwait's national cycling team won first place in the men's competition during the fourth day of the Arab Championship in Cairo, Egypt. Meanwhile, Kuwait's cyclist Jaafar Al-Ali won the gold medal in the men's individuals' event, held yesterday at the Egyptian capital.

Kuwait's cyclists Latifa Al-Yaseen and Noura Al-Ameeri had won the silver and bronze medals in the women's individuals' competition the previous day during the same tournament. Earlier, Kuwait's national women's cycling team took first place in the time category during the tournament on Sunday. The team's win came after beating Egypt and the UAE whose teams finished second and third respectively. Kuwait is participating in the six-day tournament with teams in the men's, women's and juniors' competitions in various categories.



CAIRO: Members of Kuwait's team pose for a group picture.



## Kuwait oil up \$1.14 to \$82.96 pb

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti crude oil surged by \$1.14 during Tuesday's trading sessions to hit \$82.96 per barrel (pb), compared with \$81.82 pb the day earlier, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. Benchmark Brent went up 38 cents to \$82.43 pb and West Texas Intermediate fell 12 cents to

reach \$80.76 pb. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) announced meanwhile that OPEC's daily basket stood at \$82.01 a barrel on Tuesday, compared with \$80.90 the previous day. It added in its daily bulletin that the annual average rate of the OPEC basket for 2020 amounted to \$41.47 pb. The OPEC Reference Basket of Crudes (ORB) is made up of the following: Saharan Blend (Algeria), Girassol (Angola), Djeno (Congo), Zafiro (Equatorial Guinea), Rabi Light (Gabon), Iran Heavy (Islamic Republic of Iran), Basra Light (Iraq), Kuwait Export (Kuwait), Es Sider (Libya), Bonny Light (Nigeria), Arab Light (Saudi Arabia), Murban (UAE) and Mercy (Venezuela). — KUNA

## KFF employee stole KD 2 million by inflating salary

KUWAIT: A senior officer at the salary department of Kuwait Fire Force became the "king of rosaries" among his colleagues and at Souq Mubarakia after stealing over KD 2 million in public funds and using it to start a business at the famous market, selling expensive 'misbah' prayer beads. The suspect reportedly embezzled money for two years and raised his salary several times, with his pay reaching more than the senior-most employee in the state, which went undiscovered, Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported yesterday.

A security source said detectives received information about an official at the salary department of Kuwait Fire Force, whose spending raised suspicions. A senior colleague at work discovered a salary certificate of KD 4,000, although the suspect's actual salary did not exceed KD 2,000. The source said detectives intensified their investigations and planned the arrest after finding out that the suspect embezzled KD 2 million over two years after mastering a mechanism to raise his salary.

He said detectives found the salary raise was gradual - from KD 4,000 to 9,000, then three months later he raised his salary to KD 17,000. When he felt comfortable and no one had noticed

anything, he hiked his salary to KD 42,000, which is the highest salary any public official receives in Kuwait. Detectives arrested the official at work. During interrogation, he admitted to his crimes, adding he did not expect to be discovered as two years had elapsed. Kuwait Fire Force commented on the case, saying in a statement to the press yesterday that the suspect has been referred to the public prosecution for further action.



### Underage drivers

In other news, a local daily reported yesterday that 1,808 juveniles were apprehended, whose ages range between 13 and 16 years, for driving in violation of the law and endangering their lives and that of others, especially as they do not qualify to get a driving license. It is notable that this large number exceeds by nearly eightfold the number registered before the pandemic, as 435 juveniles were referred to the prosecution in 2019 for driving without a license, Al-Rai Arabic newspaper reported. According to statistics, juveniles arrested from Jan 1 until Nov 10, 2021 are as follows: 1,264 by the traffic department, emergency (najda) police arrested 479, while general security arrested 65 juveniles.

Security sources quoted in the report warned against the effect of the violations on the employment future of the children, especially those who plan to join the military, as the violation will be on their criminal record. "The ball is now in the court of parents who allow their children to drive at this age before obtaining licenses," the sources said.

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## Higher education ministry gains ISO certificates

**CAIRO:** Kuwait's Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) is keen to direct cultural offices abroad to work on raising the level of performance and to ensure quality of services, which will positively reflect on students, the Head of the Kuwaiti Cultural Office in Cairo, Dr Ahmad Al-Mutairi said. Mutairi made his remarks on the sidelines of the office's celebration of renewing the (ISO) certificates for the third straight year, namely the international standard for the quality management system ISO 9001:2015, the international standard for environmental management system ISO 14001:2015, and the international standard for occupational safety, and health management system ISO 45001:2015. He expressed his happiness for renewing the ISO certificates for the cultural office for the third year in a row. The care offered to quality, institutional governance and rational management represents "a global concern that is not new, but has been adopted by many countries of the world," he affirmed.

Mutairi considered that "starting from the concept of quality and the principle of corporate governance is the cornerstone for launching any process of development, change, or understanding a future vision for any institution." The real wealth of our nation is the "human", Mutairi said, noting that raising the quality of services will have the greatest impact on the quality of the product, "which is for our children to be an added value in the quality of work in our beloved country, Kuwait", he added. He stressed on the importance to adapt the principles of institutional governance "of transparency, efficiency, fairness, participation, combating corruption, accountability and the rule of law".

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti cultural attache, Professor Dr Abdulmohsen Al-Qahtani, endorsed the achievement, quality, and control he observed in the efforts exerted by the Cultural Office since he joined the work a short time ago. Qahtani thanked the head of the office and all the employees, as well as MOH for its continuous support, which would raise the efficiency of work and serve Kuwaiti students studying in Egypt. "It is not easy for any organization to maintain the ISO certificates they gained for a period of three years," Director of ISO Certifications at (SGS) International Company in Egypt, Yasser Qansoura said, praising the achievement the Kuwaiti Cultural Office has fulfilled in this field. — KUNA

## KFH signs two agreements with King Hussein Cancer Foundation and Kuwait Red Crescent

For treatment of Syrian and Gaza refugee cancer patients in Jordan



(From left) Abdulwahab Al-Rushood, Princess Ghida Talal and Maha Al-Barjas.



Abdulwahab Al-Rushood and Princess Ghida Talal.



Abdulwahab Al-Rushood with Ambassador of Kuwait in Jordan Aziz Al-Deehani and other officials.



Abdulwahab Al-Rushood receives a gift from Nisreen Qatamesh.

**KUWAIT:** Acting Group CEO at Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Abdulwahab Essa Al-Rushood signed two donation agreements with Kuwait Red Crescent Society, represented by the Secretary General, Maha Al-Barjas and King Hussein Cancer Foundation, represented by Princess Ghida Talal, the Chairperson of King Hussein Cancer Center in Jordan, for the treatment of Syrian and Gaza Strip refugee cancer patients in Jordan.

Attendees at the signing ceremony, held at King Hussein Cancer Foundation premises in the Jordanian capital, were the Ambassador of Kuwait in Jordan Aziz Al-Deehani, Kuwait Red Crescent Society Consultant Msaed Al-Enizi and the General Manager of King Hussein Cancer Foundation Nisreen Qatamesh.

During the signing ceremony, Rushood indicated that the humanitarian aid presented by KFH to King Hussein Cancer Foundation is part of the social and relief activity which the bank conducts within the framework of its social responsibility and commitment.

He added that the donation presented by KFH shall be partially allocated for the treatment of Gaza refugees while the other part shall be utilized for the treatment of Syrian refugees. He expressed his pride in concluding the partnership with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society for the execution of qualitative human and relief programs.

Rushood emphasized that KFH always considers social and human work as a priority. He added that the relief initiatives were and still are at the top of its schedule, thus referring to the several successful programs of cooperation with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society inside and outside Kuwait. These programs have proved KFH's leading and pioneering position in social responsibility and the long



Abdulwahab Al-Rushood tours the King Hussein Cancer Center.

and distinguished record of social initiatives and achievements.

Meanwhile, Princess Ghida expressed her appreciation and gratitude to the State of Kuwait and to KFH's initiative to support King Hussein Cancer Center as part of its social and relief efforts. From her side, Barjas praised and appreciated KFH's social and relief efforts and stated that the present cooperation between the Kuwait Red Crescent Society and King Hussein Cancer Center goes back to 2016 as the treatment expenses of many cancer patients were covered.

She added that the allocation of part of the human donation presented by KFH to the patients from Gaza Strip takes into consideration the difficult conditions which the inhabitants of the strip live in and the lack of medicines and care which cancer patients are experiencing.

It is worth mentioning that KFH has signed an



Abdulwahab Al-Rushood

agreement with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society to execute relief and medical projects for the Syrian refugees in Jordan in cooperation with the Jordan Red Crescent. The agreement covers winter clothing, medical relief, Kuwaiti doctors' participation in surgical operations, provision of one year food supplies, a clinic, and other social activities.

### Princess Ghida appreciates KFH's support



## Official touts Kuwait's pro-tolerance efforts

**DUBAI:** A Kuwaiti official yesterday underlined the country's exemplary efforts to promote tolerance and fight extremism. Addressing a meeting held in the GCC Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai as part of the Tolerance and Inclusivity Week, Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for Development and International Cooperation Meshari Al-Nibari said Kuwait is committed to promoting the principle of moderation and Islamic tolerance. Kuwait has played host to a set of conferences and workshops, attended by international experts, on fighting terrorist and extremist notions and advocating peaceful coexistence and social togetherness, the official stressed. In this context, he listed pieces of legislation adopted by the State of Kuwait, including one for setting up a national committee on fighting money laundering and financing terrorism, underlining the role of state bodies and media in combatting terrorism in all forms



**DUBAI:** Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for Development and International Cooperation Meshari Al-Nibari speaks during a meeting held in the GCC Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai as part of the Tolerance and Inclusivity Week. — KUNA

and manifestations. The official, further, spoke highly of the efforts exerted by the Higher Committee for Promoting Moderation for developing initiatives and strategies purposed to decry extremism and educate young people about the values of Islam. — KUNA

## Kuwait official at Amman forum: Clear Mideast of WMDs

**AMMAN:** A visiting Kuwaiti security official yesterday re-affirmed the State of Kuwait's support for rendering the Middle East a region clear of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) underscoring the need to restrict nuclear energy to peaceful applications. Kuwait's renewed official stance was manifested by the assistant undersecretary for research and studies,

Abdelaziz Al-Salem, in remarks to the press during his participation in the 12th "Amman Security forum" that kick-started in the Jordanian capital yesterday. Salem called for deep tackling of challenges facing the Arab region, singling out nuclear proliferation. He also lauded methods of addressing topics put on the table of the forum by the participating experts from Arab and foreign countries. Participants in the two-day forum address topics such as "the Arabs and Turkey," "what the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) can present to the Middle East," "engaging youth and women in security and disarmament," "security challenges in the Middle East," in addition to other matters related to biological and chemical materials. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Ambassador of Belgium to Kuwait Marc Trenteseau hosted a reception on the occasion of the King's Day at his residence recently. Higher officials, diplomats and Belgian community members attended the event.— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat





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MOSCOW: People stand at the Monument to the Conquerors of Space, bearing the model of a rocket, on top of the National Cosmonautics museum in Moscow. Russia has admitted to destroying one of its satellites during a missile test, but rejected US accusations that it had endangered the International Space Station. —AFP

# Mounting arms race in space

## Satellite attack: Laser-shooting has moved from science fiction to reality

**WASHINGTON:** Last year a US general made an ominous revelation: two Russian satellites in orbit were stalking a US spy satellite high above the earth. It wasn't clear if the Cosmos satellites could attack USA-245, an American surveillance spacecraft. "It has the potential to create a dangerous situation in space," said General Jay Raymond, head of the Pentagon's Space Command.

The incident passed, but it marked a new stage in the mounting arms race in space, where potentially bomb-armed satellites, laser-shooting spacecraft and other technologies have moved from science fiction to reality. The stakes were made clear Monday when Russia launched a missile from Earth and blasted to pieces one of its satellites in a show of force, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg called the act "reckless." "It demonstrates that Russia is now developing new weapons systems that can shoot down satellites," he said at a meeting Tuesday with EU defense ministers.

### Kamikaze satellites

The militarization of space is as old as the space race itself-as soon as Sputnik was launched into orbit in 1957, Washington and Moscow began exploring ways to both arm and destroy satellites. In the beginning, the biggest worry was nuclear weapons in

space. In 1967 the superpowers and other countries signed the Outer Space Treaty, banning weapons of mass destruction in orbit. Since then, Russia, the United States, China and even India have explored ways to fight in space outside of the treaty. That competition today focuses on destroying a rival's satellites, which are increasingly essential to every advanced military for communications, surveillance and navigation.

In 1970, Moscow successfully tested a satellite loaded with explosives that could destroy another satellite in orbit. The US answered back in 1983, when then-president Ronald Reagan announced his ambitious Strategic Defense Initiative-the "Star Wars" program promising precision-guided anti-missile missiles and satellites emitting laser beams or microwaves-to make the US militarily superior. Much of the technology envisioned was unfeasible. But in a landmark move, the Pentagon used a missile to destroy a failed satellite in a 1985 test.

Since then, rivals have sought to show they had the same targeting skills: China in 2007 and India in 2019. After trying for some time, Russia's successful shoot-down on Monday was unsurprising for many experts. "The Russians did not need to detonate the satellite to demonstrate that they had the ability to do so," said Isabelle Sourbes-Vergier, a space expert at France's National Centre for Scientific Research. It was a demonstration "that if necessary in asymmetric responses, Russia will not permit the United States to be the only one in control of space," she said.

### Creating a dangerous situation in space

#### Space stalkers

Countries are intensely secretive about their military space activities, and because many of the technologies involved are dual-use-useful for both civilian and defense purposes-their capabilities are not fully clear. But the race is such that by 2019, the year the Pentagon established its Space Force, it believed that Russia and China had the potential to surpass the US. "Maintaining American dominance in that domain is now the mis-

sion of the United States Space Force," said then-Secretary of Defense Mark Esper. The race has evolved from the idea of killing satellites with missiles, or kamikaze satellites, to finding ways to damage them with laser or high-powered microwave weapons.

Both Russia and China have developed "space stalker" satellites that can be manipulated to physically interfere with others, according to Brian Chow, an independent space policy analyst who spent 25 years at the Rand Corp think tank. With robotic arms, "they can just stalk the opponent satellite and move it somewhere else, or bend an antenna" to render it useless, said Chow. Those satellites remain few, but Russia's deployment of two to menace the US satellite in 2020 shows the technology has arrived.

China and the United States both have ultra-secret programs of small, reusable, robotic, winged spacecraft which could potentially be used with weapons and damage a rival's satellites. Countries are also developing surface-based weapons to jam and spoof satellite signals, and to use directed energy to damage them. The US Defense Intelligence Agency said in 2019 that China had five bases with ground-based lasers that could be used to disable enemy satellites. "Every satellite that passes over China would be subject to attack," said Chow. — AFP

## No joke: Indian comedian under nationalist fire

**NEW DELHI:** An Indian comedian and actor has been forced to defend himself against online accusations of "insulting the country" after he performed a "two Indias" monologue in Washington. Vir Das, one of India's top satirical performers, is known for his willingness to critically observe his country. Critics say there has been rising intolerance against minority communities in India since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in 2014, and that freedom of speech is under threat in the world's biggest democracy.

"I come from an India where we worship women during the day and gang rape them at night," Das told a packed Washington, DC venue during his current world tour. In an almost seven-minute long video posted Monday, he covered issues ranging from air pollution, journalism and Modi's coronavirus relief efforts to cricket. "I come from an India where we bleed blue every time we play green," he said, referring to the sporting uniforms of his country and arch-rival Pakistan. "But every time we lose to green, we turn orange all of a sudden."

Orange refers to muscular Hindu nationalism, often symbolized by the color saffron. "I come from an India that will watch this and know there is a gigantic joke. It



TAMPA: Bollywood actor Vir Das arrives for a rehearsal on stage at the Mid Florida Credit Union Amphitheater in this file photo. — AFP

just isn't funny," he said. Soon after Das released the video social media users accused him of insulting India on the global stage, and at least two police complaints were filed against him. Leading Indian actress Kangana Ranaut slammed Das, calling the video "soft terrorism" and writing on Instagram: "Strict action should be taken against such criminals." Das took to Twitter insisting the video was a "satire about the duality of two separate Indias that do different things. "Like any nation has light and dark, good and evil within it." The backlash against Das is not the first time an Indian comic has come under fire from right-wing Hindu groups and activists. — AFP

## Zionist firm linked to Mideast cyberattacks

**PARIS:** Technology sold by Zionist spyware company Candiru appears to have been used for a campaign of cyberattacks targeting high-profile Middle Eastern websites, an analysis by cybersecurity firm Eset said. "We think it was a client of Candiru that carried out these attacks," Eset investigator Matthieu Faou told AFP. Eset did not name the client, but pointed to an investigation by researchers at the University of Toronto that suggested in June that Saudi Arabia may have used similar techniques. Based in Tel Aviv, Candiru sells sophisticated spyware to governments. It was blacklisted by the US government earlier this month.

The offensive revealed by Eset used what are known as "watering hole" attacks, which add malicious code to legitimate websites that the targeted user is likely to visit. Once the person visits the site, the code can then be used to infect their computer-potentially to spy on them or inflict harm in other ways. The websites targeted in this campaign included UK-based news site Middle East Eye as well as Yemeni media outlets like Almasirah linked to the Houthi rebels battling the Saudis, Eset said. Another victim was thesaudioireality.com, which Eset said was

likely a dissident media outlet in Saudi Arabia.

Internet service providers in Yemen and Syria were also targeted along with the Iranian foreign ministry, Syria's electricity ministry, and Yemen's interior and finance ministries. Other targets included sites run by the pro-Iranian militant group Hezbollah, Italian company Piaggio Aerospace and Denel, a state-owned South African aerospace and military technology conglomerate. "The attackers also created a website mimicking a medical trade fair in Germany," Eset noted in a press release, adding that the intrusions were recorded between July 2020 and August this year.

Candiru has earned comparisons with NSO, another Zionist company that was engulfed in scandal this year over accusations that governments used its Pegasus technology to spy on rights activists, politicians, journalists and business executives. The US government blacklisted NSO earlier this month, restricting exports from American firms. Faou said the Candiru campaign did not appear to be aimed at mass data collection, specifically targeting a "very, very small" number of people.

Meanwhile, the UN nuclear watchdog yesterday "categorically" denied its cameras played a part in a June attack on an Iranian nuclear facility, after Tehran said it was investigating the possibility. In a report seen by AFP, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said its "Director General categorically rejects the idea that Agency cameras played a role in assisting any third party to launch an attack on the TESA Karaj complex." — AFP



## International

# Wikipedia's editor 'warriors' fight lies, bigotry and Nazis

## Volunteers battle false COVID death reports, 'fake' info

WASHINGTON: False COVID death reports, a vast gender gap, Nazi "fan fiction": These are some of the perils an international crowd of volunteers battle across Wikipedia's tens of millions of online entries. The world's largest internet encyclopedia is often the first result to pop up when users ask the internet a question-and thus a massively influential source of free information but which also reflects humanity's faults.



### Other dark spots in human history

With entries that can in theory be written by anyone with an internet connection-in some 300 languages-it comes down to editing by mostly anonymous volunteers to police the site. "I always carry my laptop along wherever I go, to edit Wikipedia," said Alaa Najjar, who is based in the Middle East, but asked that specific details about his identity be omitted to protect his privacy.

"It is an addiction, as my friends say. I prefer to say it's my passion," he told AFP by email. Najjar said he

contributes to almost 500 entries a week, and as a medical doctor he has been busy fighting a flood of false information unleashed during the pandemic. Among the strains of misinformation that surfaced on Wikipedia, he has spotted false reports COVID-19 had killed notable people and inaccurate boosting of some nations' death and case numbers.

"I reviewed hundreds of articles during the COVID-19 pandemic, and rejected many misleading or erroneous amendments," said Najjar, who got the platform's top honor in 2021 for his work. The 20-year-old encyclopedia-which even has an article devoted to its own controversies-has received positive accolades in recent years for its fact-checking capacities. Though it's a sprawling platform, the site does not seek to make money and so avoids the profit-over-safety criticism that has battered Facebook, for example.

Instead, Wikipedia has volunteers who are deeply invested in the site's stated mission of providing access to a written compendium of all branches of human knowledge. Of course, it can be a thankless job to kick dubious reports off the platform. "One particular editor called me a 'vandal' for removing unsourced information," said Ksenia Coffman, who has battled what she termed "fan fiction" about World War II on Wikipedia, including how Nazis and German generals were depicted.

A strand of writing that ignores historical context regarding war-time atrocities such as the Holocaust, and



WASHINGTON: Ksenia Coffman stands for a portrait in San Jose, California. The world's largest online encyclopedia is often the first result to pop up when people ask the internet a question - and thus a massively impactful source of free information but which also reflects humanity's faults. — AFP

instead romanticizes German forces, has influenced a subculture that has found its way to the platform. "Why am I getting pushback when I am trying to correct this to remove these unsourced globs of text that just glorify these supposed Nazi war heroes?" asked Coffman, who lives in California but grew up in the

Soviet Union and contributes around 200 edits per month. She said the pushback from the subculture's believers as well as from editors who didn't like to be challenged was a "tactical mistake" by her detractors that in fact motivated her to stick around and take on the issue.

And other dark spots in human history have a way of popping up on Wikipedia, too. Women have been less well-covered than men in published written works in general, which creates a barrier to women appearing in equal numbers to men in Wikipedia's articles. The platform requires reliable, published sources from news outlets or academia to underpin an article, noted Dublin-based volunteer editor Rebecca O'Neill. "Wikipedia is an uncomfortable mirror to show the world because it reflects back all of the systemic knowledge gaps that we have," she said, adding that she puts in about 40 minutes per day on the platform.

In 2015 it became clear that only 15 percent of English language biographies on the platform were about women, sparking an effort to try to balance out the disparity. Six years later, the figure has risen to over 19 percent, said O'Neill. Last year she was writing Wikipedia articles at the clip of one per day, and in the ratio of 19 biographies on women for every one she did about a man. "I as an individual can offer something. I'm just going to set aside the time and just do it and not turn it over too much in my head," she added. "It's something I can do." — AFP



ABBOTSFORD: This aerial handout image shows flooding on the Sumas Prairie in Abbotsford, Canada. — AFP

## One dead in mudslides that cut off Vancouver

OTTAWA: Police said at least one person has died in torrential rains that trapped motorists in mudslides, forced thousands to evacuate their homes and cut off Vancouver from the rest of Canada. Search and rescue teams recovered the body of a woman from a mudslide near Lillooet, 250 kilometers north of Vancouver, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said.

Staff Sergeant Janelle Shoihet added that investigators have received two missing person reports, but that they believe "there may have been other occupied vehicles that were lost in the slide." "The total number of people and vehicles unaccounted for has not been confirmed," she said. The rains had let up by late Tuesday afternoon. But mudslides, rocks and debris washed out several highways leading to Vancouver,

trapping hundreds of motorists who were rescued by military helicopters by nightfall on Monday.

Local television showed video footage of the Trans Canada highway-which connects the coastal city to the rest of the country-inundated. A bridge was also washed out. Other routes have also been closed, according to Drive BC, which said on Twitter: "Highways are closed until further notice." As a result, motorists wanting to travel to or from Vancouver would have to travel south to the United States and back up into Canada. Anyone taking this circuitous route, however, would have to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test upon re-entry into Canada.

Landslides also cut off rail traffic to and from Vancouver-one of Canada's busiest freight sea ports. "Both CN and CP Rail indicate that no rail traffic is currently able to transit between Kamloops and Vancouver," a port spokesperson said. In Ottawa, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his government is "watching closely" the evolving situation in British Columbia. He was to speak with the province's premier, John Horgan, later in the day to see what federal help might be needed. "We'll be there to help in any way, shape or form," he told reporters.—AFP



NAIROBI: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (left) and Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs Ambassador Raychelle Omamo speak at a press conference after their bilateral meeting at the Serena Hotel in Nairobi yesterday. — AFP

## Blinken warns on democracy at start of Africa tour

NAIROBI: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday urged Africans to watch out for rising threats to democracy as he began a three-nation tour of the continent where he is also seeking momentum to end Ethiopia's year-long war. Blinken, who will also visit Nigeria and Senegal, wants to demonstrate a new US commitment to Africa with a focus on democracy, climate change and COVID-19 at a time when China is making steady inroads into the continent.

The top US diplomat spoke for an hour and a half with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta at a meeting that was originally scheduled for 10 minutes. Kenyatta paid a surprise trip to Addis Ababa on Sunday in the hope of pushing peace efforts, adding to a flurry of international diplomatic activity over the conflict. Blinken also held talks with civil society leaders and asked for ideas on how to stop the "bad actors" who test democratic institutions and threaten a free media.

"We have seen over the last decade or so what some call a democratic recession," he said. "We have seen the same challenges here that we see in many parts of the world-misinformation, political violence, voter intimidat-

tion, voter bribery." President Joe Biden has vowed to pay attention to Africa and draw a distinction with his predecessor Donald Trump, who made no secret of his lack of interest in the continent. Kenya's Foreign Minister Raychelle Omamo called on Blinken to seek concrete progress, especially on security concerns.

"There are important signposts to erect so that the whole world knows that the US is indeed back and interested in the advancement of our continent," she said. In his remarks to civil society, Blinken acknowledged that threats to democracy also existed in the United States, where a mob loyal to Trump attacked the US Capitol on January 6 in a bid to overturn the election result. "The United States is hardly immune from this challenge," Blinken said. "We've seen how fragile our own democracy can be."

Ethiopia has been a close US ally but the United States has been dismayed by curbs on aid delivery into the northern Tigray region, where hundreds of thousands of people face famine-like conditions. Diplomatic efforts to try to end the war have gathered pace in the face of fears that rebel fighters who have pushed south from Tigray could march on the capital Addis Ababa. Kenyatta, who has taken a leadership role in diplomatic efforts on Ethiopia, was the first African leader invited to the White House by Biden. Kenya's last election in 2017 was marred by deadly violence, although Kenyatta and his former opponent Raila Odinga have since made peace. However, Amnesty International warned that the signs were not good for the country's next presidential and parliamentary polls in August 2022. —AFP

## Migrant crisis could last for years, Poland warns

SOKOLKA: Poland warned yesterday that the crisis on the Belarusian border could last for months or even years, a day after Polish forces used tear gas and water cannon to deter stone-throwing migrants. Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak said there had been further attempts at crossing the border during the night, in the latest escalation of a months-long standoff on the EU's eastern border.

Thousands of migrants, mainly from the Middle East, are staying on the border in what the West says is a crisis engineered by Belarus to try to divide the EU and hit back against sanctions. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and his main ally, Russian President Vladimir Putin, have rejected the accusations and criticised the EU for not taking in the migrants.

"We have to prepare for the fact that the situation on the Polish-Belarusian border will not be resolved quickly. We have to prepare for months or even years," Blaszczak told Poland's Radio Jedynka. Blaszczak said attempts to cross the border had continued during the night, adding that migrants had used the same "method of attacking the Polish border" as seen on Tuesday at the Bruzgi-Kuznica border crossing. "The public attention focused on what happened in Kuznica, while smaller groups of migrants tried to break through the Polish border in other sections, also at night," he said.

### Flying bans

The border guard service said it had detected 161 illegal crossing attempts on Tuesday, including "two forceful attempts". Polish police said nine officers, a border guard and a soldier were hurt during Tuesday's clashes - though no officers were still in hospital yesterday. Belarus and Russia condemned the use of tear gas and water cannon, which came a day after the EU and US said they were expanding sanctions against Belarus. The West has accused Belarus of luring thousands of migrants, many from Iraq and Syria, with the promise of an easy crossing into the EU and then forcing them to stay at the border.

Eastern EU members Latvia, Lithuania and Poland have all refused to take the migrants, leaving many stranded for weeks in forested borderlands. Following pressure from the EU, several airlines have said they will now stop transporting would-be migrants to Belarus. Iraq has also said it will start voluntary repatriations of its citizens from Belarus this week and the EU border agency Frontex is working with the Polish and Iraqi authorities on arranging charter flights from Poland as well.

### 'Extremely dangerous'

Lukashenko, who has crushed opposition to his rule over nearly three decades in power, discussed the crisis with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Monday. It was his first phone call with a Western leader since he suppressed mass protests against his rule last year. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov yesterday welcomed the talks saying it was "very important that contact has been made between representatives of the EU and the leadership of Belarus". But Polish government spokesman Piotr Muller the conversation was "not a good step" and appeared to be "an acceptance of his choice", referring to Lukashenko.

Aid groups say at least 11 migrants have died on both sides of the border since the crisis began in the summer and have called for a humanitarian response to the crisis. Visiting areas near the border on the Polish side, the Council of Europe human rights commissioner Dunja Mijatovic on Tuesday said the situation was "extremely dangerous". "We need to find a way to de-escalate, to make sure the focus is really to stop the suffering," she told reporters.—AFP



WASHINGTON: US First Lady Dr. Jill Biden delivers remarks at the 2021 Tribal Nations Summit at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building 21 in Washington, DC. — AFP

## In her quiet way, Jill Biden reinvents role of US first lady

WASHINGTON: Jill Biden promotes COVID vaccines and takes part in political rallies-but only when her college professor schedule allows. In her quiet way, Jill Biden is reinventing the traditional role of the First Lady of the United States. Attending a former governor's funeral last week, President Joe Biden had to apologize for his wife's absence. "The reason Jill is not with me today is she's teaching today, fulltime as a professor at Northern Virginia Community College," the president said.

The announcement in September that the first lady was resuming face-to-face instruction at her college made headlines in the American press. Never before had a presidential spouse had a professional career outside the White House. Jill Biden, now 70, married Joe Biden in 1977, when he was a widowed senator with two young boys. The couple later had a daughter together.

A member of the national teachers' union with a doctorate degree in education, Jill Biden continued teaching while her husband served as vice president under Barack Obama. Like most educators in the United States, she taught remotely during the coronavirus pandemic, before returning to in-person instruction this fall. She now teaches English and writing two days a week. When she is not in the classroom, the slim, blond-haired Biden can be seen by the president's side at private and public events, but also, more and more often, alone on stage.

### Vaccination

The first lady is traveling around the country urging Americans to get vaccinated against COVID-19 and ever since vaccines were approved for teenagers and younger kids-to also immunize their children. She has also campaigned in support of a Democratic candidate in a local election, attended the Tokyo Olympics and was seen in a cafe with Brigitte Macron, the French president's wife, as Washington was caught in a diplomatic crisis with Paris.

"She certainly has been sort of picking up the pace of her public appearances lately," said Tammy Vigil, associate professor of media science at Boston University's College of Communication. "In the modern era, it's extremely expected of first ladies that they become more and more publicly active." Jackie Kennedy sought to preserve America's cultural heritage and famously redecorated the White House. Nancy Reagan campaigned against drug use. And Michelle Obama launched a major movement promoting healthy eating and exercise among American children.

By contrast, Michelle Obama's successor Melania Trump "got into a lot of trouble because she wasn't as active as she should be in terms of public service," Vigil said. Unlike Michelle Obama, who faced openly racist and sexist attacks, Jill Biden has so far been largely spared aggression-even in today's tense political climate. That said, she still came under considerable scrutiny. Earlier this year CNN published a column on its website urging her to exhibit more "restraint" in her fashion choices, after she was seen wearing a black leather skirt and patterned black tights.—AFP



## International

# Fatigue and frustration as China presses strict zero-COVID strategy

## Many businesses on the brink of collapse

### News in brief

#### Cambodia frees 27 prisoners

**PHNOM PENH:** Cambodia has released 27 activists jailed over charges of incitement against strongman Hun Sen's government as the country prepares to host international talks. Among those released in the past 12 days were members of environment group Mother Nature Cambodia as well as outspoken union leader Rong Chhun, said Am Sam Ath, deputy director of rights group Licadho yesterday. He said courts reduced their sentences or granted them bail, but the charges against the individuals had not been completely dropped. Cambodia is due to host an online summit of Asian and European leaders next week. It also faces growing calls to improve its human rights record as it prepares to take the helm of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 2022. Am Sam Ath attributed the prisoners' release to government sensitivities to overseas criticism. —AFP

#### Bodies found 11 years after

**WELLINGTON:** Eleven years after a New Zealand mine disaster claimed 29 lives, investigators yesterday said they had found the remains of at least two of the victims but were unlikely to launch a recovery operation. The 2010 Pike River Mine disaster was one of New Zealand's worst industrial accidents, shocking the nation and prompting multiple recovery attempts and a charged criminal investigation. The disaster is believed to have been caused by a blast triggered by a methane build-up. Only two of the 31 miners on the afternoon shift were able to make their way out. Tunnel collapses have all but ended efforts to recover the bodies or gain more evidence about the disaster. But by digging a borehole, experts have now been able to gather images from the furthest reaches of the mine. Police said they had spotted two sets of human remains and a possible third. —AFP

#### Ethiopia journalist wins award

**LONDON:** Ethiopian journalist Solan Kolli on Tuesday won the Rory Peck prize for his coverage of the devastating conflict in the Tigray region of his home country. Freelancer Kolli, 32, won in the news category for a report commissioned by Agence France-Presse on massacres of civilians. "This was a truly underreported conflict," said the judges granting the award. Kolli's work "gave context and addressed the political realities on the ground," they added. AFP was one of the first independent news media in Tigray after the conflict started in November 2020, when the Ethiopian government sent troops to topple the TPLF, the regional ruling party. "His work was bold and brave with understated interviews, which put this very-hard-to-reach conflict in the spotlight," said the judges. —AFP

#### Ireland's COVID cases rise

**LONDON:** Ireland said it was asking people to work from home again while expanding its COVID-19 vaccination booster program and certification scheme, as case rates and hospitalizations rise nationwide. In a televised broadcast, the Prime Minister Micheal Martin said it was increasingly clear the country was experiencing "another surge of COVID infection" and that he needed "to act now". "Our advice is now that everyone should work from home unless it is absolutely necessary that they attend in person," he added. Martin noted Ireland's COVID passes scheme, based on vaccination or recovery from the virus, would now legally include cinemas and theatres, while bars and pubs would now be required to close by midnight. He also said vaccine boosters would be extended to everyone with an underlying condition and everyone over the age of 50. —AFP

#### Three killed in Kazakhstan

**NUR-SULTAN:** A gas cylinder exploded in a residential building in northern Kazakhstan, killing three people and leaving 10 more needing hospital treatment, emergency services in the Central Asian country said yesterday. A statement by emergency services said "three bodies were discovered" at the site of the explosion - a three-flat building in the village of Shortandi near the capital Nur-Sultan. Emergency services said that they were able to put out the fire just over two hours after the accident was called in late on Tuesday. Gas explosions and house fires are common in Kazakhstan, with critics accusing the government in the oil-rich ex-Soviet country of failing to deliver quality infrastructure, especially in the provinces. —AFP

**BEIJING:** Nearly two years into a pandemic that has seen China pursue some of the world's most stringent coronavirus measures, some grumbling has started to emerge over the strategy, particularly as other nations learn to live with the virus. The zero-COVID approach is unrelenting - with border closures, targeted lockdowns and mass testing triggered sometimes by just one case.

The cost and pain of the strategy have been felt especially acutely by the 210,000 residents of Ruili, a Chinese city on the border with Myanmar that has endured three major lockdowns and frequent mass testing - leaving many businesses on the brink of collapse. A merchant surnamed Lin said his jewelry



### Beijing facing growing domestic pressures

business was hanging by a thread, with tourists and customers staying away because of COVID restrictions. "We continue operating... but we're scraping by," Lin told AFP, refusing to give his full name for fear of reprisals.

In a widely shared television interview this month, University of Hong Kong professor Guan Yi questioned China's strategy, arguing it should not conduct mass testing "at every turn" or give out booster vaccine doses without enough data on their efficacy. While China largely succeeded in



**RUILI, Yunnan:** Photo shows police tape blocking access to a building as part of COVID-19 coronavirus measures in the city of Ruili which borders Myanmar, in China's southwestern Yunnan province. — AFP

stamping out infections during the first year of the pandemic, the Delta variant has proven more difficult to contain.

Cases have been detected in more than 40 cities in recent weeks, putting millions under lockdown and disrupting the lives of millions more - even though the numbers pale in comparison with many other countries. Weddings were cancelled and mourners told to keep funerals short, as schools were closed and flights grounded - sometimes stranding thousands of tourists. And there was outrage online over health workers killing a pet dog with a crowbar while its owners were in quarantine, with furious social media users complaining about how harshly COVID

measures have been implemented.

Those deemed to have failed in controlling COVID are often sacked, driving local officials to increasingly drastic containment measures. One region offered thousands of dollars for information about an outbreak. Beijing is "facing growing domestic pressures to pivot to a more flexible approach", Yanzhong Huang of the Council on Foreign Relations told AFP. The desperate saga of one man highlighted the trouble some have faced because of tech malfunctions or bureaucratic lags. After an overnight work trip, the man could not get the "green code" on a health app that people require to travel and was left stranded. — AFP

## Justice delayed as Taliban build their legal system

**KANDAHAR:** A small carpeted room serves as a makeshift jail for 12 "criminals" who are awaiting Taliban justice, caught in the legal system which the Islamists are building at the heart of their new Afghan regime. None of the prisoners being held on the ground floor of the Taliban headquarters in Panjwai district in southern Afghanistan have yet seen the local judge, who is busy in another area.

Until he arrives, the Taliban fighters of the unit in Kandahar province-left to their own whims and understanding of the group's interpretation of Islamic law-represent the entirety of the justice system. "They will keep me here until I can pay back the person I owe money to," said Haj Baran, a 41-year-old businessman arrested three days earlier for an outstanding debt.

"We have a good system of judgment with the Islamic law of the Taliban," he told AFP, as a guard watched closely. After a nearly 20-year insurgency, the Taliban took power in Afghanistan in August by force. But they long ago placed their version of justice at the centre of their ideology,

and have "made the courts a means of conquering power", says Adam Bazco, a researcher who conducted a field investigation on the Taliban judicial system from 2010 to 2016.

From 2004 on, in areas the Taliban controlled, "people were turning to them because of growing discontent with the interference of Western groups in their land disputes and a judicial system that appeared increasingly corrupt and nepotistic", Bazco says. In the context of war, he explains, the severity of the Taliban punishments was welcomed by some. They were known for their harshness-but also their impartiality, speed and predictability. Three months after the Taliban seized power, however, they are still struggling to implement that system across the country.

### 'I did nothing wrong'

At the nearby central prison in the city of Kandahar, the deputy director Mansour Maulavi brandishes a length of electric cable as a whip as he shows off the fetid barracks. One wing houses 1,000 drug addicts



**PANJWAI:** A prisoner sits in a bed at the Panjwai district jail in Kandahar province. — AFP

going through forced withdrawal, he says. Now 200 "criminals" are also being held there. "It is better for Islamic law to decide" who is a criminal, says Maulavi, who used to run the region's clandestine Taliban prison. Under the previous ineffective and often corrupt system, "they didn't know." Mohammad Naeem, sitting cross-legged in the prison yard, is among those awaiting judgment.

He was arrested two months ago while at home with his wife and a 14-

year-old girl he said he wanted to marry. "The girl agreed but the parents didn't," the 35-year-old says, explaining that the parents called the Taliban to complain of sexual assault. "But I didn't touch the girl, they can do tests and check," Naeem says. If he is found guilty of having sexual relations outside marriage he risks being condemned to death by stoning. "I just want to be judged according to Islamic law, because I did nothing wrong," he says. — AFP

## Taliban appeal to US Congress to release Afghanistan assets

**WASHINGTON:** The Taliban called yesterday on US Congress members to release Afghan assets frozen after their takeover of the country, warning economic turmoil at home could lead to trouble abroad. In an open letter, Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi said the biggest challenge facing Afghanistan was financial insecurity, "and the roots of this concern lead back to the freezing of assets of our people by the American government".

Washington has seized nearly \$9.5 billion in assets belonging to the Afghan central bank, and the aid-dependent economy has effectively collapsed-with civil servants unpaid for months and the treasury unable to pay for imports. Concerned nations have pledged hundreds of millions of dollars in aid,



**KABUL:** Residents gather next to a damaged minibus after a bomb blast where two people were killed and five wounded in Kabul yesterday. — AFP

but are reluctant to commit funds unless the Taliban agree to a more inclusive government and to guarantee the rights of women and minorities.

"I present to you our compliments and would like to share a few thoughts on our bilateral relations,"

several major newspapers such as the New York Times, Washington Post and Wall Street Journal as tensions soared between the two countries. But in the wake of a virtual summit between US President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, officials from both countries said they had agreed to allow new journalist visas to be issued.

A State Department spokesman said Tuesday that discussions in recent months had led to "some initial progress" in "a few areas" of the media environment. The official said China had "committed to issue visas for a group of US reporters, provided they are eligible under all applicable laws and regulations." Beijing also promised to "permit US journalists already in the PRC (People's Republic of China) to freely depart and return, which they had previously been unable to do," the US official said.

Chinese state media said both sides had reached

Muttaqi wrote, noting that 2021 was the centenary of Washington recognizing Afghanistan's sovereignty. In measured understatement, he added: "Akin to other world countries, our bilateral relations have also experienced ups and downs."

Muttaqi said Afghanistan was enjoying stable government for the first time in over 40 years-a period that started with an invasion by the Soviet Union in 1979 and ended with the withdrawal of the last US troops on August 31. From 1996 to 2001, the Taliban ruled Afghanistan with an iron fist, brutally violating human rights in the name of Islamic law, sparking fears of a return of their abuses.

The Taliban have since returning to power gone to great lengths to convince the international community that they intend to do things differently this time-though no female ministers have been named, and girls are still barred from returning to secondary school. "Practical steps have been taken towards good governance, security and transparency," Muttaqi wrote. "No threat is posed to the region or world from Afghanistan and a pathway has been paved for positive cooperation." — AFP

an agreement, including to "reciprocally approve" the visas of new journalists. Both sides agreed to extend the validity of journalist visas to one year, after both countries had largely capped permits to three months. Asked about the agreement yesterday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters that "this hard-won achievement is in line with the interests of media on both sides, and is worth treasuring."

He added that Beijing hopes "both sides will put in place the relevant policies and measures as soon as possible." The US official added that Washington would continue to push for "expanding access and improving conditions for US and other foreign media," and for broader freedom of the press in general. The State Department believes these measures will allow US media correspondents to return to China "to continue their important work." — AFP



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2021

# Business



DUBAI: A visitor sits inside a mock-up business class cabin of Emirates airlines at the 2021 Dubai Airshow in the Gulf emirate, yesterday. — AFP

## Delays to Boeing's 777X rile Emirates

‘We need all our aircraft and we cannot allow manufacturers to slow us down’

**DUBAI:** Delays to the certification of Boeing's 777X long-haul aircraft are costing billions and infuriating top customer Emirates, but the US manufacturer is banking on the model as air traffic rebounds. While still in its testing phase, the world's largest passenger jet flew for the first time outside the United States this week at a major air show in the United Arab Emirates.

The blue and white twin-engine aircraft took to the sky, demonstrating sharp turns and rapid ascents at the Dubai Airshow, the industry's first large gathering since COVID-19 clipped its wings last year. It is no coincidence that its first international flight was to Dubai, home to aviation giant Emirates which has ordered 115 of the aircraft.

The Gulf region, with orders from Qatar Airways and Abu Dhabi's Etihad carrier, accounts for two-thirds of the 320 orders placed since the aircraft's unveiling in 2013. But Boeing announced in July that it had spotted additional problems near the nose of the

plane and was working to fix them. A delay for the first deliveries of its new wide-body 777X plane is costing the company \$6.5 billion.

“Boeing has shifted the certification to July 2023 and we had a contracted delivery position for June 2020,” Emirates' president Tim Clark told reporters at the five-day event. “It's anybody's guess as to whether or not they will achieve that.” The delay has cost Emirates millions of dollars as they upgrade old aircraft to retain them longer.

“To restore our network, we need all our aircraft and we cannot allow manufacturers to slow us down,” Clark said. Boeing this week had sought to reassure its main customer on the aircraft's progress to obtain the certification for commercial use.

“We're sitting at about 600 flight tests or 1,700 hours, its performance is coming out very well,” Boeing's senior vice president of commercial sales and marketing, Ihssane Mounir, said last week before the air show.

### ‘A replacement wave’

Two crashes of Boeing's narrow-body 737 MAX aircraft, which left 346 people dead and grounded the fleet for 20 months, revealed flaws in the design and in the certification process. It returned to the skies last year after a rigorous process to be re-certified by the US Federal Aviation Administration.

“The accidents caused us to reflect on development programmes and what we do,” Boeing's vice president of commercial services, Mike Fleming, said at the air show this week. “We're taking those lessons learned on the MAX and extending those on the next development programmes.”

The 777X with folding wing tips will come in two variants, the 777-8 and the 777-9, as well as a cargo version to soon be made official. Boeing also says that the newest version planes can save 20 percent on fuel, reducing the carbon emissions which contribute to global warming.

The aircraft's entry into the market at the end of

2023 would come at a time when the industry is expected to have overcome its COVID-induced slow-down. “We tend to see a three-stage recovery, with the wide-body demand being the last to come back, returning in approximately 2024,” said Boeing's director of product marketing, Tom Sanderson, during a virtual briefing before the air show.

“We're starting to get into what we sometimes refer in industry as a replacement wave, a lot of large wide-body aircraft are going to begin to retire and we'll continue to see growth in the number of retirements well into the 2030s.”

Global air traffic has started to bounce back from the worst of its pandemic decline, though in October it was still around half the level before the global health crisis idled aircraft. But according to the International Air Transport Association, global traffic is expected to double by 2050 from its pre-pandemic levels, with Boeing saying they expect approximately 7,700 new wide-body aircraft will be needed by 2040. — AFP



WASHINGTON: This combination of pictures shows US Undersecretary of State Lael Brainard and US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell. — AFP

## Biden says will announce Fed chair in ‘four days’

**NORTH WOODSTOCK:** President Joe Biden said Tuesday he will make a hotly awaited announcement on who will head the US Federal Reserve likely by the start of next week. “You're gonna hear that in about four days,” Biden told reporters during a trip to New Hampshire. The White House has been tight lipped about Biden's intentions for the central bank's top job, a crucial position for the US and international economies as the globe tries to emerge from COVID pandemic disruption.

Some bets are on Biden reappointing Jerome Powell, a Republican who has won praise from officials in the current Democratic administration. However, Biden is also under pressure from the influential leftist wing of his party to pick Lael Brainard, whom backers believe would be tougher on banking regulation.

Regardless of whom he chooses, economists say the central bank is unlikely to shift its policies anytime soon, as a wave of inflation hampers the economy's recovery from the pandemic downturn and sends Biden's approval rating slumping.

Under Powell, the Federal Reserve has been at the center of the country's response to the pandemic, slashing its benchmark lending rate to zero and pledging to keep it there for longer than normal to help the economy regain maximum employment.—AFP

## GM factory launch ushers in Detroit's EV pickup campaign

**NEW YORK:** General Motors took a leap yesterday towards its much-touted “all-EV” future when it officially opens its first electric pickup truck factory. The auto giant will unveil Factory Zero, a 36-year old plant in Hamtramck, Michigan that has been retooled for electric vehicles (EV), commemorating the occasion with President Joe Biden.

The celebration at the Detroit-area plant comes ahead of initial commercial deliveries of the GMC Hummer Pickup, the first EV pickup by a Big 3 company as Detroit attempts to extend its dominance in the lucrative US truck market amid challenges by Tesla and newer upstarts. The EV Hummer pickup is the first of a spate of behemoths from Detroit's legacy carmakers going electric. Ford has unveiled an EV version of its top-selling F-150 pickup, while Chrysler owner Stellantis announced plans for an EV Ram pickup truck as part of a growing fleet.

It's been an accelerated push on the part of legacy companies in the wake of competition not only from Tesla, but from EV startups like Rivian that have soared recently on Wall Street. With lofty profit margins, pickups are a proven cashcow for automakers, in part because of reliable demand from businesses such as construction and energy companies, as well as government buyers now under pressure to reduce their carbon footprint.

While Detroit can bank on EV pickup sales to such organizations, just how well the vehicles will resonate with rank-and-file consumers remains less clear. “The question is, who is that electric pickup buyer?” said Michelle Krebs, a longtime analyst at Cox Automotive, who expects the Detroit giants to continue to build trucks with internal combustion engines.

“Initially it's just a sliver of the overall truck capacity,” she said of EVs. “They're not betting the firm on EV pickup trucks. They're starting out slowly.” The market's trajectory will also depend on the evolution of transportation in the United States. EVs are currently about three percent of new sales. The \$1 trillion infrastructure bill signed by Biden into law on Monday includes \$7.5 billion for new EV charging stations.

### Bread and butter

It is difficult to overstate the importance of trucks—especially pickups—to Detroit auto giants, with profit margins widening as consumers have opted to fill the vehicles with premium gadgetry and creature comforts. In the decade up to 2019, the average transaction price for full-size trucks rose more than 40 percent to nearly \$50,000, according to a report from Edmunds.

Pickups comprised one-fifth of the US market in 2020, a number expected to fall in 2021 due to the semiconductor chip shortage. “They've really been the bread-and-butter for the Detroit auto companies,” said Jessica Caldwell, executive director of Insights. “So they really can't afford to have someone swoop in and as the market produces electric vehicles, put them out of business.”

Listing at \$112,000, the initial Hummer pickups are more than twice the price of current best-selling pickups and expected to be a niche product. Other EV pickups coming soon will also sell for far less. In rebooting the Hummer, a hulking vehicle detested by environmentalists after its 1990s launch as a symbol of American excess, GM aims to scramble assumptions about its corporate identity and what makes an EV an EV.

Rather than its climate-friendly qualities, GM's marketing around the Hummer emphasizes the “Supertruck's” off-road prowess, sleek interior design and state-of-the-art driver-assistance technology. The tank-like exterior hearkens back to old Hummer's massive silhouette, but designers also emphasized the blue lighting effects when the vehicle is charging and the auto's spiffy jet black and gray color combination that are “more high fashion than traditional truck,” said Rich Scheer, director of design for the GMC vehicle.

Scheer characterized the traditional pickup buyer as a “pretty conservative group,” but predicted such consumers would “fall in love” with the way the trucks handle. Buyers will mostly want assurance about issues such as range anxiety and how long a charge will last, Scheer said. Using the vehicles for towing or other heavy duty will require more frequent charging.

GM initially estimated the vehicle could go up to 350 miles or more on a single charge, but hasn't released a final figure. The company has not disclosed total orders, though company officials say the first edition of the vehicle is completely sold out and years worth of Hummer production is planned. — AFP



## ECB slowing vaccine tempo as risk to financial stability

**FRANKFURT:** Low vaccination rates in some parts of the world are a future risk to financial stability, the European Central Bank said in a report yesterday, while the recovery from the pandemic has eased pressure on the economy.

The economic rebound from the coronavirus in the eurozone had “reduced many of our worst fears about economic scarring,” ECB vice-president Luis de Guindos said in a statement. But the “risks stemming from the pandemic have not disappeared entirely, not least because vaccination progress has remained slow in many areas of the world,” de Guindos said in the foreword to the ECB's Financial Stability Review.

Widespread vaccination in Europe, where 64.9 percent of the population has received two doses of the vaccine, had also reduced the continent's exposure to more shocks from the virus into 2022. Yet uncertainty about the future course of the pandemic and the limits it might place on economic activity meant it remained “one of the main risks to economic growth”, the report said. At the same time, global supply bottlenecks and a sharp rise in energy prices on the continent had created new stresses for firms, producing a more sustained rise in prices that could “weigh on the economic recovery”, according to the report.

The ECB also noted the risk of “pockets of exuberance” in credit, asset and housing, making the markets vulnerable to a correction, and the “high debt levels in the corporate and public sectors as a legacy of the pandemic”. — AFP



## Business

# UK inflation spikes to ten year high on energy costs

## Rising consumer prices ramp up cost of living

**LONDON:** British inflation spiked close to a ten-year high in October on increased energy bills and resurgent post-lockdown demand, data showed yesterday, sparking talk of a pre-Christmas interest rate hike.

The annual rate jumped to 4.2 percent, the highest level since November 2011, the Office for National Statistics said.

That followed 3.1 percent in September and was more than double the Bank of England's 2.0-percent target. In reaction, the pound jumped against the euro and dollar as traders priced in a December interest rate hike from the BoE.

The data "now makes it odds-on that all the pre-Christmas headlines will be of the Bank of England steals Christmas variety, if they do bite the bullet and belatedly nudge rates higher", said CMC Markets analyst Michael Hewson.

### 'Odds on' rate hike

Rising consumer prices ramp up the cost of living, especially when wages fail to keep pace. The data "makes for uncomfortable reading and goes to show the punishing effects of higher energy and food prices on family finances," said Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell.

"It almost certainly means the Bank of England will raise interest rates soon, potentially as soon as next month," he added. Inflation leapt on higher prices for domestic electricity and gas, as well as motor fuel which faced shortages, the ONS said. Second-hand car prices are surging as a world-wide semiconductor shortage dents new vehicle production.

A global supply crunch across various sectors and the soaring cost of raw materials are also fuelling inflationary pressures. "Costs of goods produced by factories and the price of raw materials have also risen substantially and are now at their highest rates for at least 10 years," said ONS chief economist Grant Fitzner.

The BoE had this month kept its key interest rate at a record-low 0.1 percent, but flagged a likely hike in the coming months to dampen inflation. As countries reopen from pandemic lockdowns, businesses are struggling to meet demand for goods and services, sending prices soaring. Markets had expected the BoE to raise its main rate in November for the first time in more than three years.

### Central banks at odds

The BoE decision to sit tight contrasted with the US Federal Reserve, which is tightening monetary policy as growth recovers and inflation spike

US inflation had rocketed to a 30-year high of 6.2 percent in October.

Meanwhile the European Central Bank is sticking to easy money for now. ECB President Christine Lagarde on Monday said she would not "venture" into speculation over interest rate rises in 2023 amid pressure for the bank to define its response to high inflation.

But BoE Governor Andrew Bailey on Monday expressed growing unease over spiking prices. "I'm very uneasy about the inflation situation — I want to be very clear on that," Bailey told a committee of lawmakers.



**LONDON:** File photo shows a sign displays the price per litre of petrol and diesel fuels, outside a filling station in Lower Kingswood. British inflation spiked close to a decade-high in October partly on higher energy bills and resurgent post-lockdown demand. —AFP

"It is not of course where we wanted to be, to have inflation above target," he added. "Confirmation that inflation is moving further away

from its target may seal the Bank of England's resolve to raise rates in December," said KPMG UK economist Yael Selfin. —AFP

## UK PM faces backlash over rail plan

**LONDON:** British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is facing a backlash after reports that his government will today scale back a new high-speed railway line in northern England. Voters in the traditionally Labour-supporting region switched in their droves to Johnson's Conservatives at the last general election in 2019, giving him a landslide win.

As well as Johnson's promises on delivering Brexit, they were also swayed by promises of new infrastructure, including better east-west transport links. But British media on Tuesday said Transport Secretary Grant Shapps will announce that a planned section of the HS2 line between central England and Leeds will no longer go ahead.

Ballooning costs have been blamed as the Treasury looks to tighten its belt after having to shelve out billions in public money for support during the coronavirus pandemic. In a warning from the former so-called "Red Wall" seats in the north, several regional dailies carried the same front page, parodying the film "Trainspotting".

"Deliver what you promised," titles from The Chronicle in Newcastle, northeast England, to the Manchester Evening News, in the northwest, said. "Choose the North. Choose jobs. Choose to finally keep your rail promises." Johnson's spokesman told reporters the government remained "fully committed to strengthening the rail links in our cities, across the Midlands and the North."

Improving transport links was "an absolute priority" and a way to deliver Johnson's pledge to "level up" economic disparities between the north and London and the southeast.

### 'Serious betrayal'

But MPs and senior public figures from northern constituencies warned that anything less than a full implementation of the government's pledge would be badly received, risking Johnson a loss in crucial support. "If levelling up is a serious policy, the government has to deliver NPR (Northern Powerhouse Rail)," said the Labour mayor of the Liverpool city region, Steve Rotherham.

Not to do so would be a "serious betrayal", he added. Johnson was still committed to the project last month, promising at his Conservative party annual conference: "We will do Northern Powerhouse Rail, we will link up the cities of the Midlands and the North."

The Department for Transport refused to comment on speculation about the contents of today's Integrated Rail Plan. Even without the Midlands to Leeds section of the upgrade, HS2 is controversial, not least because of its spiralling cost, currently estimated at more than £100 billion (\$134 billion, 118 billion euros).

Environmental campaigners have mounted regular protests at construction sites, arguing it will have little impact on government emissions targets, and destroy swathes of countryside. Other critics maintain the money would be better spent improving connectivity between densely populated northern cities, rather than a modest cut in journey times to London. HSI links London with the Channel Tunnel that connects the UK to France. — AFP

## Yellen warns US could again hit debt limit

**WASHINGTON:** The US government may run out of money by December 15, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen warned Tuesday in a letter encouraging lawmakers to raise the country's debt limit to avoid a default.

Democrats and Republicans in Washington have squabbled in recent months over raising the legal limit on how much debt the United States can accumulate. In October, they came within days of hitting the ceiling before agreeing to a \$480 billion stop-gap hike, which Yellen said would keep the government running until December 3.

In a letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the Treasury secretary extended her prediction for when the deadline would be hit by about two



Janet Yellen

weeks. But she warned: "there are scenarios in which Treasury would be left with insufficient remaining resources to continue to finance the operations of the US government beyond this date."

and weeks," Capital Economics analyst Jason Tuvey said in a research note.

### Focus on elections

The central bank has lowered its policy rate by 300 basis to 16 percent since August. This means that Turkey has a negative real interest rate—a policy that devalues lira assets and gives additional incentive for people to buy foreign currencies and gold.

The lira has been put under further pressure by concerns that the US Federal Reserve may raise interest rates sooner than expected to fight a spike in inflation. This makes dollar holdings more attractive and drains investments away from emerging markets.

But analysts blame most of Turkey's problems on unconventional economic policies that put the focus on economic growth at the price of high inflation and a depreciating currency. Such measures help can help exporters and big businesses—but hurt ordinary citizens who see prices shoot up for daily goods.

Yet even big businesses have started to express alarm that Turkey may be spiralling toward a currency crisis that puts pressure on banks because they have billions in dollar-denominated debt coming due in the next few months.

Finance Minister Lutfi Elvan told a business forum on Tuesday that the government was still focused on achieving price stability and stemming

from higher gasoline prices. "They're up dramatically versus a year ago," McMillon said on a conference call with analysts, predicting they would eventually fall. "Hopefully that's a gradual process and hopefully gas prices come down."

Neil Saunders, managing director at Global Data, said elevated consumer savings should mitigate the hit to consumption in 2021. "Looking further ahead, if inflation is not tamed, we see it becoming more of a brake on underlying or real growth," he said. "This is a particular risk if the weather turns colder and bills for household heating and fuel soar."

### 'Blockbuster holiday season'

The Commerce Department said retail sales rose 1.7 percent in October from September's upwardly revised rate, above expectations as a range of companies reported increasing business. Non-store retailers, such as e-commerce platforms, saw sales gain four percent, while electronics and appliance stores reported a 3.8 percent increase. Department stores and building materials sellers also saw increases, while sales at bars and restaurants were flat last month.

While the University of Michigan said last week that its consumer sentiment index had dropped to a 10-year low, Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics said the retail sales

"To ensure the full faith and credit of the United States, it is critical that Congress raise or suspend the debt limit as soon as possible," Yellen wrote. The latest imbroglio comes in the midst of long-running negotiations over Democratic President Joe Biden's "Build Back Better" plan to invest \$1.85 trillion in American social service and education.

The Republican minority in Congress opposes the measure, and has said it will not agree to debt ceiling increases to pay for it, although much of the debt the US government takes on funds outlays approved by prior Democratic and Republican administrations. In October, they argued that Democrats who lead the House and Senate should raise the limit unilaterally, before eventually dropping their blockade to allow passage of the temporary increase.

The United States has never defaulted on its debt and its Treasury bonds play a major role in the global financial system, but economists warn a failure to raise the ceiling would cause a massive financial crisis. — AFP



**ANKARA:** Turkish lira suffered one of its biggest falls of the year.

the lira's losses. But emerging market economist Timothy Ash said Erdogan-whose approval ratings are near the lowest point of his 19-year rule—has decided that economic expansion at any cost will help him win re-election in polls scheduled for 2023.

"It's an interesting call that the Erdogan team think growth and jobs rather than beating down on inflation will win them the next election," Ash wrote in a note to clients. —AFP

data show "what people do is much more important than what they say." "We expect a blockbuster holiday season as people make up for lost time and begin to run down some of the \$2.5 trillion in accumulated excess savings since the pandemic began," he predicted.

### 'Hedged' for inflation

At Walmart, net income for the quarter ending October 31 dropped to \$3.1 billion, down 39.5 percent from the year-ago period due to a loss connected to paying down debt. Revenues rose 4.3 percent to \$140.5 billion behind a robust 9.2 percent jump in comparable sales at US Walmart stores.

Confronted with backlogs at US ports, Walmart has been among the giant retailers to charter their own ships and route them to smaller ports. Inventories at Walmart's US business are up 17 percent compared with two years ago, the company said in a presentation Tuesday.

The biggest retailer in the world acknowledged the higher costs connected with global shipping and supply chain pressures, saying it has reduced markdowns on goods to lessen the hit to profit. But McMillon told analysts the company is not passing all of its cost inflation to its products, and that the company remains committed to a business model that emphasizes affordability. — AFP

## Turkey's troubled lira accelerates record slide

**ISTANBUL:** The Turkish lira suffered one of its biggest falls of the year on Tuesday and hit new historic lows to cement its status as the year's worst-performing emerging market currency. The lira fell by nearly four percent to 10.36 to the dollar before clawing back some of its losses ahead of a meeting on Thursday at which the central bank is expected to lower interest rates for the third successive month.

Turkey's nominally-independent bank has bowed to incessant pressure from President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to drive down the cost of doing business in order to stimulate growth. This push has put Turkey's economy on course to expand by roughly 10 percent this year.

But it has also seen the official annual inflation rate reach almost 20 percent and the lira lose more than a quarter of its value against the dollar this year. "There is a growing risk that the central bank's continued obedience to pressure from President Erdogan for interest rate cuts results in sharp and disorderly falls in the currency over the coming days

## US shoppers undaunted by inflation

**NEW YORK:** Stronger-than-expected retail sales data and earnings from big-box chains painted a heady picture of US consumers on Tuesday despite global supply chain snarls that have fueled inflation and created shortages.

The Commerce Department reported retail sales in October scored their biggest month-on-month jump since March. Earlier, both Home Depot and Walmart released results that topped expectations, with the latter offering reassurances it expects sufficient inventories for the festive season and emphasizing a cautious approach in passing on higher costs to consumers.

Together, the government data and earnings suggest that many consumers are still well situated thanks to a strong employment market and government support payments sent out earlier in the pandemic. But inflation is a rising worry.

"We haven't seen this kind of inflation in the US for quite some time," said Walmart Chief Executive Doug McMillon, flagging in particular the drag



## Business

# China's millennial 'new farmers' opt to live off the land

## Young Chinese uninspired by modern society's long work hours

SHANGHAI: Hu Siqin had a promising career in Shanghai with a Fortune 500 company and more than enough money, but something was missing under the bright lights of the big city, a sense of what she calls "roots". So the 33-year-old chucked it all in to lay down literal roots as part of a nascent back-to-the-farm movement in which young Chinese professionals are quitting the rat race for the simple joys of an organic, agrarian lifestyle.

"People like me don't feel that material comforts stimulate us, and deep down we remain unsatisfied," said Hu. "So we've started thinking, what is the purpose of our lives? What am I living for?" In many ways, it's a homecoming. Before the 20th century China was a primarily agrarian country for thousands of years, most of its vast population scratching out a life from the soil.

The ruling Communist Party, however, has for decades officially encouraged urbanization and migration to growing cities to help lift millions out of rural poverty and build a more modern, consumer-oriented economy. But with a measure of national prosperity now reached, attitudes are reversing among some people. Millions of young Chinese are increasingly uninspired by modern society's long work hours and meagre pay, urban congestion and high living costs, and parental pressure for success and grandchildren-spawning a succession of viral online memes encapsulating millennial despair.

### Empty inside

Hu, who has worked in marketing and supply chains for French companies like personal-care giant L'Oréal and sports retailer Decathlon, said that in her career she "appeared happy on the outside, but felt empty

inside." She now sows organic, pesticide- and fertilizer-free sweet potatoes, long beans and other crops on rented plots of land with like-minded friends on Chongming, a large, primarily agricultural island on Shanghai's outskirts.

Hu, a petite dynamo with a shovel, can barely contain her delight as she pops sweet potatoes out of the soil and samples sorghum plants that tower over her. "So sweet!" she exclaims, biting into a stalk of the grain. According to the government, around 20 million people have joined what it terms a "new farmer" movement, some of whom have millions of social media followers as they post on their lifestyles.

China's government has recognized the potential advantage of an influx of tech- and business-savvy millennials bringing new ideas and enthusiasm to an ag sector still largely dominated by longtime peasant farmers, and has pledged financial and policy supports. The movement also ties into efforts by fast-growing start-ups like Pinduoduo, whose platforms help small farmers tap into a swelling Chinese market for freshly delivered produce.

### Another path

For "new farmers" like Liang Funa, 34, its about enjoying a healthy, peaceful and more sustainable life. The former ad executive felt burnt-out due to excessive work hours and a deeply unhealthy lifestyle. "Our generation is under huge pressure, and people who stay in cities can't see many other choices," he said. "The people around them talk constantly about buying a house or a car or getting married, like these are the only measures of success and there are no other roads available."

Liang, who moved to Chongming three years ago,



SHANGHAI: This photo taken on October 28, 2021 shows farmers Liang Funa (R) and Hu Siqin getting dressed for farm work in Chongming island in Shanghai. Millions of young Chinese are increasingly uninspired by modern society's long work hours and meagre pay, urban congestion and high living costs, and parental pressure for success and grandchildren — spawning a succession of viral online memes encapsulating millennial despair. — AFP

has had to rapidly learn horticulture—his farmer neighbors and internet websites help—while dabbling in side work online for extra income. But his life is now relatively stress-free, and Liang has realized just how few consumer goods he really needs. And by eating only his own organic vegetables, he feels healthier, mitigating the need for trips to the doctor. Convincing parents to accept this life choice is another matter.

Hu's parents are baffled, accusing her of "going backwards" in life. But she is unconcerned, and is now negotiating a long-term lease on a farmstead of her own in rural Zhejiang province near Shanghai. She hopes to sow her first crop in the spring. "I jumped out of my comfort zone and went to an unfamiliar and uncertain place, and it has been very profound," she said.— AFP

## Huawei opens largest health lab in Dongguan to media

DONGGUAN: Huawei's Consumer Business Group opened their largest HUAWEI Health Lab to date to the media. The new 4,680 sq m facility in Songshan Lake, Dongguan, China representing a 200 million yuan R&D investment project will support more than 80 types of testing requests for R&D personnel in fields such as professional research, ecosystem co-development, and health and fitness scenario incubation, ultimately supporting the research, incubation and testing of Huawei's smart wearable products.

Huawei currently runs multiple Health Labs to study health-related technology, including Xi'an lab which focuses on innovative use cases for health and fitness technologies. The Songshan Lake Health Lab is intended become a world class health and fitness technology R&D institute dedicated to product R&D, standards R&D, certification, exhibitions, and industry incubation activities.

Huawei's smart wearable and health business has brought many innovative, science-based health and fitness products and services to consumers in recent years.

### HUAWEI Health Lab hosted media open day

Huawei showcased its past research results in the health and fitness field at a media open day to provide a more detailed explanation of how the lab will meet its functional and research responsibilities. One showcase included the 3 million yuan plateau simulation laboratory which replicates high-altitude environments up to 6,000 meters above sea level to test how oxygen saturation affects the human body. The lab contains the facilities necessary for researchers to measure the changes in the human body under different altitudes and climate conditions and obtain accurate high-altitude data for analysis.

The lab also has a professional optical motion capture system, which includes 28 high-speed infrared cameras supporting a peak sampling rate of 10,000 Hz, allowing it to record a wide range of subjects, including moving bullets, with millimeter-level accuracy. By studying the movement of the human body along with attitude data, Huawei hopes to develop new and innovative features for its smart wearable products.

The exercise physiology research area of the lab also comes equipped with cardiopulmonary function and metabolism meters, heart rate belts, and high-performance treadmills that researchers can use to monitor as VO2 max, calorie consumption, and workout heart rate. To date, the laboratory has already captured about 192,500 km of running data this year, equivalent to four and a half laps around the earth's equator.

Huawei's smart wearable products support more than



100 workout modes thanks to these labs, including rock-climbing, swimming, table tennis, golf, and multi-functional sports.

### Health and fitness incubation area

The new HUAWEI Health Lab will also serve as an incubator for scenario-oriented experiences and service packages that consumers can directly enjoy, including micro-physical examination, home fitness, and digital sports. In the lab's micro-physical examination area, users can use Huawei wearable products to measure physical indicators such as blood pressure and SpO2 monitoring. In the indoor fitness area, users can start tracking their exercise by connecting Huawei smartwatch, a HUAWEI Vision TV, and other third party equipment. In the digital sports area, users can compete with friends while using rowing machines and spinning bikes. The HUAWEI Health App now also offers 11 types of training courses including running, cycling, yoga, fitness, skipping, and more.

Huawei has invested heavily into research in digital health and fitness technologies and active partnerships with related industry authorities and ecosystem partners. At present, more than 5 million users have joined the HUAWEI Research Program, and over 320 million users have benefited from Huawei's health and fitness services. There are currently over 83 million global average monthly active users of the HUAWEI Health App.

Huawei's privacy protection policies have stated that privacy is a basic consumer right. As such, the company blocks third parties from accessing user data without the user's explicit consent and requires all of its ecosystem partners adhere to a strict privacy and security regime.



## NBK holds career day in cooperation with MGRP

KUWAIT: As part of its constant commitment to support young national cadres and qualify them for the labor market, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), organized a career day for recruitment of national labor in the private sector, in cooperation with Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP), at the headquarters of Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) in Rigga. The event was attended by Emad Al-Ablani, GM - Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait.

On this occasion, Gadeer Al-Kooheji, Recruitment Manager, Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait said: "NBK's participation in this event underscores its policy of supporting national cadres to achieve their career ambitions. In addition, this event is regarded as an important platform for the bank to have a closer look at national talents which it seeks to solicit for joining its professional team."

Al-Kooheji noted that NBK Group Human Resources staff conducted interviews and responded to all inquiries raised by the students who filled out recruitment applications for job vacancies, in line with



Gadeer Al-Kooheji

the bank's commitment to encourage those graduates to join the banking sector.

She pointed out that during the career day, NBK recruited 20% of total applicants in different departments, stressing that the bank is looking for innovative talents having the passion and motivation for career progression.

NBK takes pride in being the largest national labor employer in the private sector in Kuwait with a national labor ratio of 74.3%, as part of its effort to deliver on its historical role and social responsibility by soliciting and recruiting national talent, she added.

Al-Kooheji emphasized that NBK supports its young cadres to assume leading positions in the bank, which makes NBK the employer of choice for national fresh graduates, as well as those looking for a promising career path, given NBK's distinguished resources and programs that are on par with international standards, which help up skill young talent. NBK's efforts in soliciting national talents go in line with its development and training plans aimed to invest in national cadres and prepare a promising banking generation. The bank is also keen to offer a series of training courses and professional academic programs, being one of the leading banking institutions in Kuwait in organizing training programs for youth.

## Creating a carbon-neutral society leaving nobody behind is the key to mobility for all

DUBAI: Leading scientists across the globe agree that urgent action is necessary to reduce the impact of climate change. The development of sustainable and practical mobility solutions is essential to safeguard our planet for future generations, according to Kei Fujita, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation.

In recent years, it has become abundantly clear that climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing the future of mankind. A recently issued United Nations report warned that our world is on a path to exceed the target set by world leaders as part of 2015's historic Paris Agreement to hold temperature increases to well below 2.0°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C. So, what can we as a species do to avoid this calamity? One of the most important answers to the climate conundrum lies with carbon neutrality. When it comes to global warming, there is greater public awareness than ever before. Yet, perhaps fewer people are familiar with the concept - and huge potential impact - of achieving carbon neutrality. The vast majority of scientists agree that climate change is a result of increased greenhouse gas emissions since the dawn of the industrial revolution.

Of these gasses, one of the most harmful to the environment is carbon dioxide (CO2).

Essentially, becoming carbon neutral means reducing the amount of CO emissions put into the atmosphere to the same level as the volume of CO removed from the atmosphere, which occurs through a number of processes as part of the delicate balance of nature. Globally, transportation is thought to be responsible for around one-fifth of CO emissions, with road travel accounting for three-quarters of this total. With this in



mind, much energy has been focused on developing new technologies and innovations to power cleaner, greener mobility solutions.

As world leaders gathered in Glasgow for the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), it is clear that action on climate change is no longer a choice, but a necessity. The scale of action required calls for a united effort and cooperation across the globe. Here in the Middle East, encouraging steps are being taken by governments to usher in a new era of sustainability.

Last month, the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Kingdom of Bahrain announced a series of initiatives and investment plans to address the climate issue and to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by mid-century. These endeavors align with Toyota's own sustainability goals and plans to reduce CO2 emissions throughout its operations.

Toyota's vision is to create mobility for all. In a diverse and uncertain world, we strive to raise the quality and availability of mobility and ensure that no one is left behind. We wish to create new possibilities for all humankind and support a sustainable relationship with our planet. This is why we have made it our mission to minimize our environmental impact by achieving carbon neutrality not only in terms of vehicle emissions, but throughout our entire operations.

This is not a new direction adopted to align with the mood of the times. Toyota has been committed to developing diverse eco-friendly vehicles since 1997, when we introduced the Prius - the world's first mass-

produced Hybrid Electric Vehicle (HEV). Since then, Toyota has sold over 17 million electrified vehicles globally, contributing to a 20 percent reduction in CO2 and helping safeguard the wellbeing of the earth and its inhabitants.

While we are proud of these achievements, our journey to carbon neutrality is far from over. More still needs to be done, which is why Toyota is targeting combined sales of 10 million units globally for its expanding electrified vehicle range by 2030. We are also developing hydrogen-fueled combustion engine technology through our participation in motorsports and exploring the opportunities presented by E-fuel. Manufactured using hydrogen from renewable energy, this synthetic fuel has strong potential to be used as a "Carbon Neutral" fuel for gasoline and diesel combustion engine vehicles, including the ones that are already on the road. At Toyota, we believe there are many paths to reach the goal of carbon neutrality. Just as the mobility landscapes are different from country to country, so too are the pathways to achieving sustainability.

As innovation continues to shape the global mobility sector, we must embrace the latest breakthroughs to create products and services that offer people more ways to move safely, responsibly, and in harmony with the environment. By doing so, we can overcome the single greatest challenge facing humanity and unlock a world of sustainable mobility for all - a goal that must be achieved to protect the future of our planet for generations to come.





Jordanian men ride horses as tourists ride an electric cart, during their trip to Jordan's famed ancient city of Petra, some 230km (143 miles) south of the capital Amman. —AFP photos



Tourists ride an electric cart, during their trip to Jordan's famed ancient city of Petra.



Tourists ride camels during their trip to Jordan's famed ancient city of Petra.

# E-BUGGIES REPLACE HORSE CARTS AT JORDAN'S PETRA

Horses and mules have long drawn tourist carriages through Jordan's ancient city of Petra, but animal rights concerns are driving a project to start replacing them with electric vehicles. A small fleet of 10 rechargeable e-carts now take visitors through the rose-coloured Siq or gorge leading to the famed capital of the Nabateans, which dates back to the first century BC. "There is no pollution or smoke" and the change has "reduced the cases of animal mistreatment," said Suleiman Farajat, head of the Petra Development and Tourism Regional Authority. The golf buggy-style vehicles have less impact because "sometimes the carriage wheels hit the sides of the Siq ... the horse dung caused a bad smell in the place, and cleaning it was not easy."

"It was an unpleasant experience for the tourists, the horses and us," said Farajat. Animal rights group PETA, which had criticized the use of the often scrawny and overworked draft animals, has described the project as a "major first step to protect working animals". The group hailed the "game-changing vehicles" and added that it hopes to work with officials "toward the day when there will be only animal-free transportation at Petra". For now the Petra authority says it will keep some of the horses "to preserve the character of the place, as it is a world heritage site".



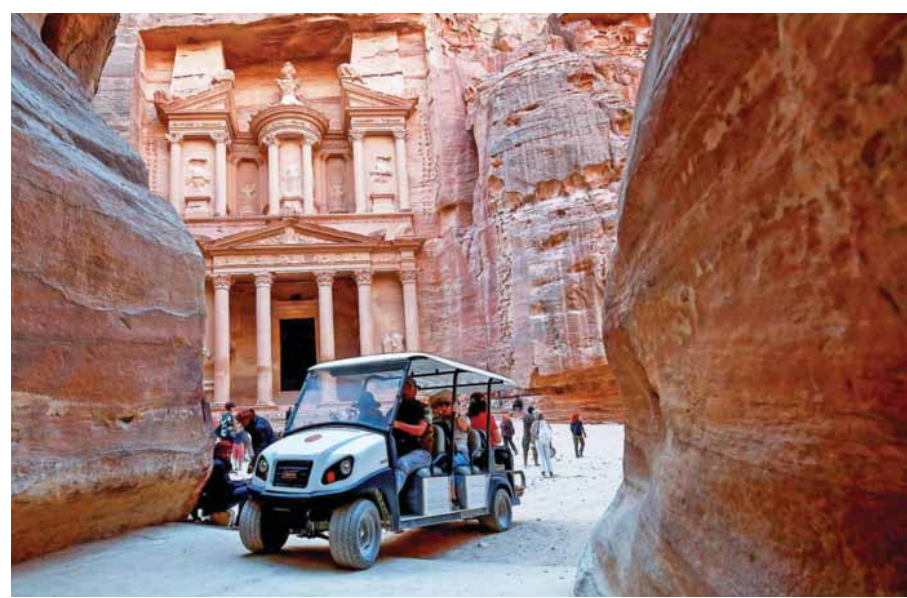
Tourists ride horses during their trip to Jordan's famed ancient city of Petra.

## 'This amazing place'

The change has however also been hailed for another reason—helping to make the UNESCO World Heritage Site far more accessible to elderly and disabled visitors. Austrian tourist Rudy, 43, who uses a wheelchair, said he had repeatedly postponed a visit because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and was now "very happy" to have made the trip. "Disabled people but also people who have difficulty walking for a long distance

... now have a chance to see this amazing place."

A US tourist named Angie, 60, agreed: "It seems a little bit out of character to have these in a beautiful place like this. But at our age, it was nice to come back in an electric cart." Jordan's tourism industry is recovering from the blow of COVID-19, having previously relied on it for more than 10 percent of its GDP. The pandemic slashed revenues from \$5.8 billion in 2019 to \$1 billion last year.



Tourists ride an electric cart, during their trip to Jordan's famed ancient city of Petra.

Petra, Jordan's most famous tourism site, provides a living for hundreds of families. The move to replace 12 horse-drawn carriages with 10 e-carts was agreed with the horse owners' association.

Foreign tourists pay 25 dinars (\$35) and Jordanians 15 dinars for the round trip from the visitor center to the archaeological site. The association receives 75 percent of the income, while 25 percent goes to the authority, said Farajat. The head of the association, Mohammad

Amarat, said those operating the electric carts earn more than 300 Jordanian dinars (about \$423) per month. One benefit is that the carts can carry five passengers, compared to just two in the horse-drawn carriages. He prefers the new vehicles because previously the horses "were tired, their income was less, and the journey time was longer". —AFP



## This December Dick Whittington at Al-Hmely Theatre

Staged in Kuwait celebrates its 10th anniversary by bringing pantomime back to Kuwait this December. Only five performances under the name of Dick Whittington, a panto for the entire family, will take place exclusively at the Al-Hmely Theatre in Jabriya on December 9 till 11, 2021.

Annual pantomimes are a tradition in Kuwait and have been showering our stages with talented actors, outrageous



costumes and magnificent sets since 1953. Panto brings laughs and giggles and treats for the entire family to enjoy. Children, parents and grandparents can all come together and enjoy the best of British theatre right here in the heart of

Kuwait. New to pantomime? Welcome to the magic! We call it Panto for short, and it is a magical form of entertainment that encompasses drama, music, dance and physical comedy all wrapped around a fairy-tale story. It is a piece of theatre that

interactively engages an audience and fun for the entire family. This year we are putting on a traditional British pantomime production of Dick Whittington! We are fortunate to have the support of Aspire, Pinkberry and SHAKE SHACK, valuable sponsors whose contributions make it possible to bring panto to you this year. Dick Whittington is the purrrfect pantomime adventure that follows our hero to seek his fame, fortune and happiness in London Town.

With help from the magical Fairy Bowbells and his trusty feline friend Tommy, what could possibly go wrong? The whole production is a community venture, created by community volunteers under the Staged in Kuwait banner. We are so excited to be back out of the COVID-19 shutdown and ready to rock the stages with family entertainment once again. For those of you concerned, we will still adhere to the health and safety regulations put in place by the ministry of health.

Also, we are wheel chair accessible and have various tiers of tickets so everyone can afford to come! Staged in Kuwait's Founder and Artistic Director, Tim Waddell, also the director of Dick Whittington, is delighted with this year's enthusiasm and commitment from the volunteers, cast and crew adding "What a delight it is to bring the community back together after this long hiatus. The magic of Panto is created by the community and it is this spirit of merriment and joy that makes it great." Staged in Kuwait is ever growing and expanding; our doors are open to the community and we welcome all kinds of hands-on cooperation from back stage to front of house duties. SIK is a place where you can learn, grow, give back to the community and feel safe. You are invited to get in touch anytime by visiting our website and registering. We are looking forward to celebrating the magic with you this December.





## Lifestyle | Features



Aerial view of camels inside a corral next to a household in the outskirts of the city of Hargeisa, Somaliland. — AFP photos



A camel, belonging to the herd of Ali Abdi Elmi, walks in the outskirts of the city of Hargeisa.



Ali Abdi Elmi milks one of his camels.

# Milk, meat and might: In Somalia, 'the camel is king'

The nomad was thirsty, and the journey into the Somali desert would be long and taxing. Turning to one of his beloved camels, Ali Abdi Elmi squeezed fresh milk into a wooden urn, and took a deep drink. "I have five children, and we all depend on camel milk to survive," said Elmi, passing the pot to one of his sons, who took a swig of the rich brew. For many Somalis, the camel is a gift from the gods: a source of milk and meat, a beast of burden in the desert and-as climate change spurs extreme weather in the Horn of Africa-insurance in times of crisis.

An animal of haughty and cantankerous repute, in Somalia the camel is celebrated in songs and folklore, a symbol of status and prosperity, and exchanged in marriages or to settle feuds. In this overwhelmingly rural society of 15 million, the rearing of camels and other livestock underpins an economy devastated by war and natural disaster that ranks among the world's very poorest. The livestock industry is the main contributor to economic growth in Somalia and in normal years accounts for 80 percent of exports, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Camels are far outnumbered by sheep and goats, which wander Hargeisa in



Camels, belonging to the herd of Ali Abdi Elmi, feed themselves in the outskirts of the city of Hargeisa.

northern Somalia with their owner's phone numbers scrawled on their sides, should they get lost and need returning. But at seven million beasts, there are more camels in Somalia than almost anywhere else, and they don't just confer respect on their owners-they fetch much higher prices. "We don't have crude oil in this country. Camels are our crude oil," said Abdi Rashid, a trader clad in aviator sunglasses

and tan safari suit at Hargeisa's biggest livestock market.

### Cultural icon

An impressive specimen can carry a \$1,000 (860 euros) price tag, said Khosar Abdi Hussein, who oversees the market where camel milk is sold fresh and even camel urine-believed to have health benefits-is bottled. A sale is made by locking hands under the checkered shawls carried by herders. The number of knuckles tapped and fingers grasped determines the price-a tradition to ensure negotiations are kept private. The transaction is completed by a mobile money transfer, a modern touch to an ancient way of doing business.

"Camels are important to Somali culture because one is always considered wealthy, or can rise in social status, by the number of camels they have," said Hussein, who stressed that he had nine of his own. But in Somalia, where nearly seven out of 10 live in poverty according to the World Bank, few can afford one camel, let alone many. Elmi is among the two-thirds of Somalis dependent on livestock, and though he isn't making lucrative deals at the city market, his camels are a godsend in other ways. Camels still produce milk during drought, sating nomads who can go



Ali Abdi Elmi drinks from a cup filled with camel milk.

a month in the dry lands consuming nothing else. "The milk is good for us, because camels graze from trees with medicinal properties that help combat diseases," said Elmi, a wiry 40-year-old with skin leathured by the sun.

In lean times, he can still buy essentials for his family by selling milk to vendors in Hargeisa, where fresh bottles are available daily on the streets. In a real pinch, a camel can be slaughtered and its meat sold in town, where it is a local delicacy.

### Harsh life

The pastoral life is a difficult one, made more so by increasingly erratic rainfall over the Horn of Africa, a region US scientists

say is drying faster now than at any other time in the past 2,000 years. Nomads are being forced to travel greater distances to find water and grazing land for their prized beasts, whose reputation as 'ships of the desert' is being sorely tested by a changing climate. Thousands of camels and other livestock drowned when Cyclone Gati-the strongest tropical storm to ever make land-fall in Somalia-turned deserts into seas in late 2020.

Two years earlier, a prolonged drought thinned herds in some parts of the country by 60 percent, the FAO said. The loss of livestock invariably spells hunger in Somalia, and destitute herders have fled to cities by the millions in recent years as life on the land has become unsustainable. In the northern region of Somaliland, local authorities want to resettle people along its Gulf of Aden coastline-an inconceivable prospect for some hardy desert folk. "I don't see our way of life changing anytime soon," said Khosar Farrah, a grizzled 68-year-old who has been herding camels for half a century. Hussein, too, couldn't picture nomads taking up fishing in a hurry: "Here, the camel is king," he said, chuckling.—AFP



Ali Abdi Elmi walks with his herd of camels in the outskirts of the city of Hargeisa.

## Sumatran baby elephant dies after trunk snared in poacher trap

A critically endangered Sumatran baby elephant has died after losing half of its trunk in a poacher's trap, Indonesian conservation officials said. The one-year-old calf succumbed to a severe infection, two days after it was found by villagers in Aceh Jaya and despite subsequent efforts to save its life by amputating the rest of its injured trunk. "We couldn't save it because the injury was severe and infected," Agus Arianto, head of the Aceh Natural Resources Conservation Agency, said Tuesday. "We did our best to help it." Rampant deforestation has reduced the elephants' habitat and brought them into increasing conflict with humans, while their tusks are prized in the illegal wildlife trade. There have been several incidents involving pachyderm deaths over the past few years, including one in July when a Sumatran elephant was found decapitated with its tusks ripped off. —AFP



## Give the dog a phone: Device could ease pain for lonely mutts

Does your chihuahua crave a chinwag or the Yorkie want to yak, the greyhound needs to gossip and the corgi loves a chat? Lonely dogs could soon be able to call their absent owners using a new device invented by animal-tech scientists in Britain and Finland, they said yesterday. The DogPhone works when the pet shakes a ball fitted with an accelerometer, which triggers a nearby laptop to make a video call to the owner's device. It was invented by the University of Glasgow's Ilyena Hirschy-Douglas, with help from her Labrador Zack, and colleagues from Aalto University in Finland.

After Hirschy-Douglas showed "lab assistant" Zack how to make a call using the ball, he was given the toy to play with for 16 days. Despite being hounded with some accidental calls, Zack used the prototype device to contact his owner and show off his toys. Hirschy-Douglas, a specialist in animal-computer interaction, responded by showing the pet her office, a restaurant and a street busker, causing Zack to approach the screen.

"Of course, we can't know for sure that Zack was aware of the causal link between picking up the ball and making a call, or even that some of the interactions which seemed accidental were actually unintended on his part," she said. "However, it's clear that on some occasions he was definitely interested in what he was seeing, and that he displayed some of the same behaviors he shows when we are physically together." The team hopes the DogPhone, which is undergoing further testing, could help ease separation anxiety suffered by "pandemic puppies" who became used to constant human contact during lockdowns. — AFP



## Sports

# Dutch reach World Cup, Turkey, Ukraine into playoffs

## Ten European teams book ticket to Qatar 2022; 12 battle in playoffs

**PARIS:** The Netherlands clinched the final automatic place in European qualifying for the 2022 World Cup as late goals from Steven Bergwijn and Memphis Depay sealed a 2-0 win over Norway on Tuesday, with Turkey and Ukraine grabbing playoff spots.

The Dutch, with injured coach Louis van Gaal watching from the stands in Rotterdam, only needed a point to top Group G and came through a nervy encounter to finish two points clear of second-placed Turkey, who pipped Norway to a playoff spot.

Tottenham winger Bergwijn smashed Arnaut Danjuma's cross into the top corner with six minutes left at De Kuip. Barcelona's Depay then made it two a minute into injury time as he slotted home Bergwijn's pass to seal the Netherlands a return to the tournament after missing out on Russia in 2018.

The victory was played behind closed doors after a partial lockdown was re-introduced last week due to an increase in cases of COVID-19. "Of course there are many things that could be improved, but the result was the most important. We are going to Qatar," Oranje captain Virgil van Dijk told broadcasters

NOS. "I was very sorry that the national coach was there from a distance and the fans were not there at all. We're going to celebrate well inside (the stadium). I can't wait for the World Cup."

In Podgorica, Montenegro forward Fatos Beqiraj opened the scoring after just four minutes to put Turkey in danger of missing out on a top-two finish. The visitors responded on 22 minutes as



### Playoffs draw set for Nov 26

Galatasaray attacker Kerem Akturkoglu finished acrobatically at the back post before Feyenoord youngster Orkun Kokcu added a second to secure a 2-1 win.

"There are very tough opponents in the playoffs," Turkey's Abdulkadir Omur said after assisting Akturkoglu's equalizer.

"We want to give the best fight there and go to the World Cup. I am very happy and proud in this shirt. I do everything I can."

#### 'Nervy' Wales

The Netherlands join Belgium, England, Germany, Denmark, France, Croatia, Switzerland, Spain and Serbia to have qualified directly from Europe. In the playoffs, Turkey are alongside Euro 2020 winners Italy, Portugal, Scotland, Russia, Sweden, Poland, Wales, North Macedonia, Ukraine, the Czech Republic and Austria, with the draw on November 26 for the games in March.

Elsewhere, in Group E, Wales secured a home game in the playoffs after a 1-1 draw in Cardiff against Belgium without injured captain Gareth Bale. "It's so important to get a home draw — look at the teams that have come in second, the likes of Portugal and Italy — it's been a bit nervy!" Wales goalscorer Kieffer Moore told Sky Sports. "But nights like this, I'd back us to take on anyone."

In Group D, Finland missed out on the playoffs as Karim Benzema and Kylian Mbappe scored in World Cup holders France's 2-0 win in Helsinki. The



**ROTTERDAM:** Netherlands' forward Steven Bergwijn (center) celebrates with teammates after scoring his team's first goal during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 qualifying round Group G football against Norway at the Feijenoord stadium in Rotterdam on Tuesday. — AFP

pair became the first France players to score in four successive Les Bleus games since David Trezeguet in 2003. Ukraine took the playoff spot after beat-

ing Bosnia and Herzegovina by the same scoreline thanks to Oleksandr Zinchenko and Artem Dovbyk's second-half efforts in Zenica. — AFP

## China hold Australia but face uphill task to reach World Cup

**SHARJAH:** China are on the brink of suffering more World Cup heartache despite clinching an impressive 1-1 draw with Australia on Tuesday in qualifying for next year's football showpiece in Qatar. A 38th-minute strike by Mitchell Duke appeared to have condemned the global Olympic and economic powerhouse to their fourth defeat in six matches in Group B, but a Wu Lei penalty late on helped them gain a morale-boosting point at the Sharjah Stadium in the United Arab Emirates. But the Chinese are above only Vietnam with just five points and now face the near-impossible task of clawing their way back in a group that also includes Asian football giants Saudi Arabia and Japan.

Only the top two countries from each of the two groups will book an automatic ticket for the 2022 World Cup, with the possibility of a fifth securing a spot through a play-off involving the third-placed teams. China have qualified for the finals of the World Cup only once, in 2002, where they bowed out in the group stage after losing all their three matches.

But since then they have struggled at the global stage despite their oft-stated footballing ambitions, having spent billions of dollars to develop their domestic structure and luring an array of international stars to play in their leagues. For Australia, it was their third straight draw on Tuesday and with Japan beating Oman in a late match, they are now third in the standings with plenty at stake in the remaining fixtures.

#### Saudi almost there

Earlier, Saudi Arabia edged out plucky Vietnam



**HANOI:** Saudi Arabia's players celebrate after winning as Vietnam's players look on, in the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 qualifying round Group B football match between Saudi Arabia and Vietnam at My Dinh National Stadium in Hanoi on Tuesday. — AFP

1-0 in Hanoi for their fifth win in six matches to go four points clear of Japan and put one foot in the finals. Saleh Al-Shehri scored the only goal of the match with a 31st-minute header, with the ball just crossing the line despite Vietnamese goalkeeper Bui Tan Truong's efforts to stop it.

Shehri was also guilty of missing a golden opportunity as early as the fourth minute when he headed wide from close range at the My Dinh National Stadium. The result means Herve Renard's men stay well on course to qualify for the World Cup for the sixth time, with the possibility of making it as the group winners. Japan also gave their hopes a shot in the arm with a narrow 1-0 win over

Oman that put them above Australia into second place with 12 points.

Meanwhile, South Korea eased past Iraq 3-0 and the UAE edged Lebanon 1-0 in Group A where leaders Iran took firm control with a 3-0 drubbing of Syria. Lee Jae-sung put the Koreans ahead in Doha in the 33rd minute before Tottenham star Son Heung-min and Jeong Woo-yeong put the outcome beyond doubt. Sardar Azmoun, Ehsan Hajsafi and Ali Gholizadeh scored for Iran who now have 16 points from six games. South Korea are second on 14 with the UAE occupying third spot on six with their only win in the final phase of qualifying so far. — AFP

## South Africa claim 'blatant bias' in Ghana World Cup qualifier

**JOHANNESBURG:** South Africa yesterday pushed its demand for a replay of a 2022 World Cup qualifier against Ghana, producing an analysis that it said showed blatant bias by the referees. "FIFA has a responsibility to protect the integrity of all of its competitions," South African Football Association president Danny Jordaan told a news conference. South Africa lost a Group G decider 1-0 in Ghana, who converted a disputed penalty after Daniel Amartey appeared to dive. The loss knocked South Africa out of the qualifying race for next year's World Cup in Qatar.

SAFA asked retired referee Ace Ncobo to review video recordings of the match. He said his analysis showed 90.9 percent of incorrect decisions went against South Africa. "We agree this is not about the penalty," Ncobo said. "Let's not speak about 'SAFA appeal penalty'. This submission is not about the penalty."

"My independent conclusion is that the referee in this match was blatantly biased against South Africa," he added. Bafana Bafana's head coach Hugo Broos said this case went beyond routine frustrations with referees in the heat of the moment during a match. "Here, after the game, I was more convinced that the referee was against us," he said.

TV replays showed Ghana defender Amartey apparently diving during the Group G decider on Sunday, leading to a penalty Andre Ayew converted for a 1-0 win and first place. Ghana and South Africa finished level on points and goal difference and the Black Stars won the section because they scored seven goals, one more than Bafana Bafana (The Boys), over six matches. — AFP

## Southgate expects no issues over new England contract

**LONDON:** England manager Gareth Southgate says there should be no complications with his negotiations over a new contract. Southgate's side booked their place at next year's World Cup in Qatar with a 10-0 thrashing of San Marino on Monday. Reports over recent weeks suggested Southgate is set to sign an extension to his current contract with the Football Association, which runs out at the end of the World Cup. Southgate had refused to be drawn on the situation while England were focused on securing their qualification. But after their biggest ever victory in a competitive fixture, he admitted he sees no reason why his reign will not be extended until at least Euro 2024.

"When you work with staff like I work with and with a group of players who are as receptive and have the talent that we have then that's clearly very enjoyable," Southgate said. "So there's been no other reason for not sitting down other than the fact that we felt it was right to concentrate on the European Championship and to get this qualification done. Now it's an appropriate time to be able to sit with (FA technical director) John (McDermott) and (chief executive) Mark Bullingham and go through everything - but I'm not expecting for that to be complicated at all."

England are still waiting for a first major trophy since the 1966 World Cup, but Southgate has them trending in the right direction after a memorable 2021. Having led England to the final of Euro 2020 in July and the World Cup semi-finals in 2018, Southgate's men will be genuine contenders in Qatar. But England's World Cup challenge will be complicated by a lack of preparation time. The Premier League

announced last week it will pause the season after the weekend of November 12-13, with the World Cup kicking off just over a week later. Whereas most pre-tournament camps would allow time for several warm-up fixtures, the scheduling means Southgate is not expecting to play a friendly before the World Cup.

"Ahead of the tournament, I'm not sure what that's going to look like for anybody but I would think it's really unlikely that teams are going to be able to play a friendly," Southgate said. "If you think about the Premier League teams playing on a Saturday or Sunday then you'd need three or four days before you'd play and I think you normally have to be in the country five days ahead of a major tournament anyway. So it's going to be the teams that adapt best and we've got some experience of that with the Nations League and the European Championship where we had so many players involved in the Champions League finals, so at least we have been through that experience." — AFP



Gareth Southgate

## Ekambi takes Cameroon to playoffs

**JOHANNESBURG:** Karl Toko Ekambi was the toast of Cameroon on Tuesday as his first-half goal delivered a 1-0 win over Ivory Coast and a place in the African playoffs for the 2022 World Cup. The 29-year-old Lyon forward struck on 21 minutes to decide a clash of giants with Cameroon having qualified for the World Cup seven times — an African record — and Ivory Coast on three occasions.

Ivory Coast entered the Group D decider in Yaounde with a one-point advantage and needing a draw to remain first. But Cameroon, who have been playing catch-up since losing in Abidjan in September, emerged victorious less than two months before hosting the Africa Cup of Nations.

African champions Algeria, Nigeria and Tunisia also won sections to fill the other three places up for grabs on the final day of group matches. The Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Mali, Morocco and Senegal had earlier secured the other six playoffs places.

A seeded draw, likely to be based on FIFA world rankings, will divide the 10 survivors into five pairings, with the winners of the two-legged ties representing Africa at the World Cup in Qatar. There will be huge pressure on the qualifiers to impress at the global football showpiece after Africa fared disastrously at the 2018 tournament in Russia, with all five teams eliminated after the first round.

Algeria stretched an unbeaten run to 33 matches — a record for an African national team — with Manchester City winger Riyad Mahrez among the scorers in a 2-2 Group A draw against Burkina Faso. His goal was cancelled out by Zakaria Sanogo before half-time and Issoufou Dayo converted an 83rd-minute penalty to set up a tense finish in Blida after Sofiane Feghouli had put Algeria ahead a second time. Algeria, who are seeking a fifth World Cup appearance, topped the table with 14 points, Burkina Faso accumulated 12, Niger seven and minnows Djibouti none.

#### Osimhen strikes early

Nigeria were another country to progress despite fail-



**YAOUNDE:** Cameroon's Karl Toko Ekambi (left) controls the ball during the FIFA 2022 Qatar World Cup qualifying football match between Cameroon and Ivory Coast at Stade Omnisport Ahmadou Ahidjo in Yaounde on Tuesday. — AFP

ing to take maximum points at home as they drew 1-1 with Cape Verde in Group C. In-form Napoli forward Victor Osimhen had the Super Eagles in front within one minute of the kick-off in Lagos, but Ianique 'Stopira' Tavares levelled five minutes later.

The result triggered more social media calls for six-time World Cup qualifiers Nigeria to sack German coach Gernot Rohr after an unimpressive campaign. Nigeria suffered a stunning matchday 3 loss to the Central African Republic — a first home defeat in World Cup qualifying since 1981 — and were overly reliant on Osimhen for goals. The Super Eagles finished with 13 points, followed by Cape Verde on 11 while Liberia (six) and the Central African Republic (four) were never serious contenders. Tunisia recovered from a first loss in Group B last week — away to Equatorial Guinea — by hammering Zambia 3-1 in Rades to top the table. Goals from Aissa Laidouni, Mohamed Drager and Ali Maaloul before half-time ensured the Carthage Eagles stayed on course to qualify a sixth time. Equatorial Guinea came a creditable second, two points behind Tunisia, thanks to a 1-1 draw against Mauritania in Nouakchott, where Saul Coco cancelled out a lead Aboubakar Kamara gave the hosts. — AFP



Sports

# Argentina qualify for 2022 World Cup after Brazil draw

## Bolivia, Peru closing in, Colombia hanging on

**MONTEVIDEO:** Argentina qualified for next year's World Cup in Qatar as a point in their 0-0 draw with Brazil on Tuesday proved enough after defeats for Chile and Uruguay. The reigning Copa America champions came into the match against their archrivals knowing that a win might not be enough to secure their ticket, but a draw could be. And Chile's 2-0 defeat at home to Ecuador, coupled with Uruguay's 3-0 loss to Bolivia, sent Argentina through.



### Huge blow to Uruguay's hopes

It caps a fine year for Argentina and Lionel Messi, who won their 15th Copa America in July with a 1-0 final victory over Brazil at Rio de Janeiro's iconic Maracana stadium. "If we analyze this year, it was beautiful. What we've been through with the fans ... everything was complete," said Rodrigo De Paul.

Argentina welcomed back six-time Ballon d'Or winner Messi to their starting line-up while star forward Neymar missed out for Brazil. But Messi was unable to inspire his team in a match of few chances, against opponents who booked their ticket to Qatar today with a 1-0 win over Colombia. Brazil remain top of the qualifying group, six points clear of Argentina, who took their unbeaten run to 27 matches. "We played very well in every match this year. We're already qualified for the World Cup," said Brazil's Fred. "Today we failed in the final third but the most important thing is coming away without a goal against."

Brazil wasted a two-on-two break when Fred's pass forced Vinicius Junior wide, and his first touch ran out

of play. It summed up a match that never caught fire and in which almost nothing came off from either side.

Quick-thinking Matheus Cunha tried to score the goal of the qualification campaign when attempting to chip Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez from inside his own half, but his effort sailed over the cross-bar. Argentina came alive in the last five minutes of the half as De Paul managed the hosts' first shot on target, although Alisson Becker dealt with it comfortably in the Brazil goal. Brazil had only managed one shot on target themselves in the first 45 minutes, and that was a weak effort by Fred.

The major talking point was how Argentina center-back Nicolas Otamendi escaped a red card for elbowing Raphinha in the face, drawing blood. According to reports, Raphinha needed five stitches at half-time.

Much-maligned Manchester United midfielder Fred almost became the unlikely hero in the second period when he came closest yet to breaking the deadlock, clipping the top of the bar with Martinez beaten. But there was little else to get excited about, with neither goalkeeper seriously tested. Even a late effort from Messi after jinking past Fred was straight at Alisson.

### Bolivia, Peru close in

Twice world champions Uruguay's hopes suffered a huge blow as they were thrashed at 10-man Bolivia, leaving them seventh in the 10-team group, although only a point off the last automatic qualification place.

A brace from Juan Carlos Arce and another from Marcelo Martins gave Bolivia a comfortable victory that keeps their qualification hopes alive. Even the dismissal of Carmelo Algaranaz 15 minutes from the end, with the score 2-0, did not ruin Bolivia's night. A third win in four matches left Bolivia just two points behind Colombia in fourth.

Colombia are hanging on by their fingernails to the final qualification berth after a fifth straight game without a goal — four of which ended 0-0. Colombia could not force a winner at home to Paraguay, even



**SAN JUAN:** Argentina's Lionel Messi (center) drives the ball past Brazil's Fred (L) and Eder Militao during their South American qualification football match for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 at the San Juan del Bicentenario stadium in San Juan, Argentina, on Tuesday. — AFP

though the visitors had Adrian Cubas sent off six minutes from time.

Peru's second win in a row, 2-1 away to rock-bottom Venezuela, put them level on points with Colombia in the intercontinental play-off spot. Gianluca Lapadula and Christian Cueva goals either side of a Darwin Machis strike for Venezuela gave

Peru a crucial win.

Goals from Pervis Estupinan and Moises Caicedo condemned Chile to defeat, and dropped them from fourth to sixth. They also had Arturo Vidal sent-off in the first half for a high boot. Ecuador sit third, six points ahead of Peru in fifth with just four matches left. - AFP



## Burgan Bank renews platinum sponsorship of showjumping tour

**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank announced its platinum sponsorship of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation's (KEF) inaugural showjumping tour. The bank's support of KEF's competition reflects its ongoing strategic support to sports activities and initiatives that aim to enhance the progress of the sports culture in Kuwait; as part of the bank's expansive, community-focused social responsibility program.

The Tour extends across the entire equestrian season from November 2021 until April 2022. It features the participation of more than 300 showjumpers representing many public and private equestrian clubs from across Kuwait. In total, eight competitions are set to be held in three clubs, namely the Hunting and Equestrian Club, Kuwait Riding Center and Messilah Equestrian Club.

Kholoud Al-Feeli, Group Head of Corporate Communications at Burgan Bank, spoke about this sponsorship saying: "At Burgan Bank, we are proud to

support the Kuwait Equestrian Federation and equestrian sports in general, given this sport's strong cultural identity and its deeply-rooted heritage in Kuwait. This sponsorship also confirms the Bank's keen efforts to encourage all sports activities and promote a more vibrant sports culture in Kuwait, especially amongst young people as it is a lifestyle that promotes mental and physical health."

"The Kuwait Equestrian Federation's tour marks a major milestone in the return to normal life in Kuwait following the lifting of pandemic restrictions that had suspended and disrupted major sports events. Burgan Bank's support for this tour reflects our commitment to being a real community partner, delivering beyond our banking services. We believe it is our role and social responsibility to actively encourage community development and push for progress and positive change in everything that we do to benefit Kuwait's society today and more importantly, in the future," added Feeli.

Burgan Bank continues to focus on collaborating with organizations and institutions working in key development and sustainability areas including environment, sports, education and health, to help drive national social development and achieve real change and positive impact within the community. The bank has long been a firm believer in the important role the sports sector plays and has been a passionate supporter and champion of Kuwaiti athletes and teams across all fields.

## Canada eye World Cup dream as Mexico freeze

**LOS ANGELES:** Canada took a giant stride towards their first World Cup finals appearance in 36 years on Tuesday after beating Mexico 2-1 to vault to the top of the CONCACAF qualifying standings. Two goals either side of half-time from Turkey-based forward Cyle Larin fired the Canadians to a victory, which leaves them one point clear of the United States with 16 points from eight games.

Hector Herrera's 90th-minute goal for Mexico set up a frenzied finish at Edmonton's Commonwealth Stadium, where snow had been cleared from the pitch shortly before kick-off as temperatures plunged to minus 9 degrees Celsius (15.8 degrees Fahrenheit).

The final whistle was met with a mass confrontation involving players from both sides as tempers flared. The result means Canada are now firmly on course to qualify for next year's finals in Qatar. Canada's only other World Cup appearance came at the Mexico finals in 1986. Canada's win saw them leapfrog over the United States for top spot in CONCACAF's eight-team final round of qualifying. The USA were held to a 1-1 draw against Jamaica earlier Tuesday after a spectacular equaliser from West Ham striker Michail Antonio secured a share of the points for the Reggae Boyz.

Antonio's 22nd-minute long-range effort cancelled out a superb individual goal by US forward Timothy Weah at Kingston's Independence Park. Weah, the 21-year-old son of former Liberia legend George Weah, fired the US ahead after 11 minutes.

The Lille forward played a clever one-two with striker Ricardo Pepi before surging into the Jamaican penalty area. Jamaica's Bobby Reid looked to have the danger covered, but Weah showed great strength to win possession before angling a deft

shot across goal and in off the far post.

It was a fitting reward for a bright start by the US, who also went close on 16 minutes when Pepi's shot was blocked before Brenden Aaronson's follow-up effort was well-saved by Jamaica goalkeeper Andre Blake.

### Antonio rocket

But the complexion of the game changed in Jamaica's favor on 22 minutes when Antonio conjured a goal out of nowhere. Nothing appeared to be on when Antonio picked up the ball in midfield. But the striker cut inside the covering Tyler Adams and then unleashed a ferocious 30-yard effort which flew past US goalkeeper Zack Steffen and into the top corner.

The goal infused Jamaica with confidence, although the Reggae Boyz were fortunate to finish the first half with 11 men on the pitch after some rugged defending. Je-Vaughn Watson was booked as early as the eighth minute for a foul on the USA's Gianluca Busio.

Javain Brown was also lucky to stay on the pitch for a wild challenge on Adams in the 40th minute that the US midfielder did well to hurdle. The second half followed a similar pattern, with neither side managing to take control of the contest.

The US received a huge let-off in the 53rd minute when a deflected cross fell into the path of Jamaica forward Reid just three yards out. Somehow, however, the Fulham player scooped his shot over the bar and the US survived.

US coach Berhalter introduced Christian Pulisic after 66 minutes, but the Chelsea star was unable to break the deadlock. The US received a let-off in the 84th minute when Damion Lowe headed into the net from a corner, only to see the goal disallowed for a shove on US defender Walker Zimmerman.

With Canada and the US occupying the top two places in the CONCACAF table, Mexico dropped to third with 14 points from eight games. Panama moved into fourth spot with a 2-1 win over El Salvador, while Costa Rica are fifth after a 2-1 win over Honduras. — AFP

# Classifieds

## Hospitals & Clinics

<b>Sabah Hospital</b>	<b>24812000</b>	<b>Kaifan</b>	<b>24849807</b>
<b>Amiri Hospital</b>	<b>22450005</b>	<b>Shamiya</b>	<b>24848913</b>
<b>Maternity Hospital</b>	<b>24843100</b>	<b>Shuwaikh</b>	<b>24814507</b>
<b>Mubarak Al-Kabir</b>		<b>Abdullah Salem</b>	<b>22549134</b>
<b>Hospital</b>	<b>25312700</b>	<b>Nuzha</b>	<b>22526804</b>
<b>Chest Hospital</b>	<b>24849400</b>	<b>Industrial Shuwaikh</b>	<b>24814764</b>
<b>Farwaniya Hospital</b>	<b>24892010</b>	<b>Qadsiya</b>	<b>22515088</b>
<b>Adan Hospital</b>	<b>23940620</b>		<b>Dasmah</b>
<b>Ibn Sina Hospital</b>	<b>24840300</b>	<b>22532265</b>	
<b>Al-Razi Hospital</b>	<b>24846000</b>	<b>Bneid Al-Gar</b>	<b>22531908</b>
<b>Physiotherapy Hospital</b>	<b>24874330/9</b>	<b>Shaab</b>	<b>22518752</b>
		<b>Qibla</b>	<b>22459381</b>
		<b>Ayoun Al-Qibla</b>	<b>22451082</b>
		<b>Mirqab</b>	<b>22456536</b>
		<b>Sharq</b>	<b>22465401</b>
		<b>Salmiya</b>	<b>25746401</b>

## Clinics

<b>Kaizen center</b>	<b>25716707</b>
<b>Rawda</b>	<b>22517733</b>
<b>Adaliya</b>	<b>22517144</b>
<b>Khaldiya</b>	<b>24848075</b>

## CHANGE OF NAME

**I, SUHANI AVINASH** D/o FRANCIS AARON SOLOMON, holder of Indian Passport No. T6756529 and Civil ID No. 285110105681 has changed my name from SUHANI AVINASH TO SUHANI SOLOMON. Hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of SUHANI SOLOMON. **(C 0976) 18-11-2021**

**BAVAJI SHAKE** S/o SABBEER SHAKE I want to change surname to BAVAJI SHAIK, holding Passport No. K6911748, Civil ID No. 291061602059. **(C 0974) 17-11-2021**

**I, IRSAD KHAN JAMIL KHAN** S/o JAMIL KHAN JALIL KHAN holder of Indian Passport No. K7040594 & Civil ID No. 272101902029 has changed my name from IRSAD KHAN JAMIL KHAN to IRSHAD JAMIL KHAN hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of IRSHAD JAMIL KHAN. **(C 0972)**

**I, Uzma** a am holding Indian Passport K6931388, D/o Nazir Ahmad Bhat PR/o Soura, Srinagar J&K 190011 India hereby declare that henceforth my name in the passport is read as Uzma Nazir as per parentage /Surname which I want to be changed to Uzma Jan as per my documents thus, I am changing my name from Uzma Nazir to Uzma Jan. **(C 0973) 16-11-2021**

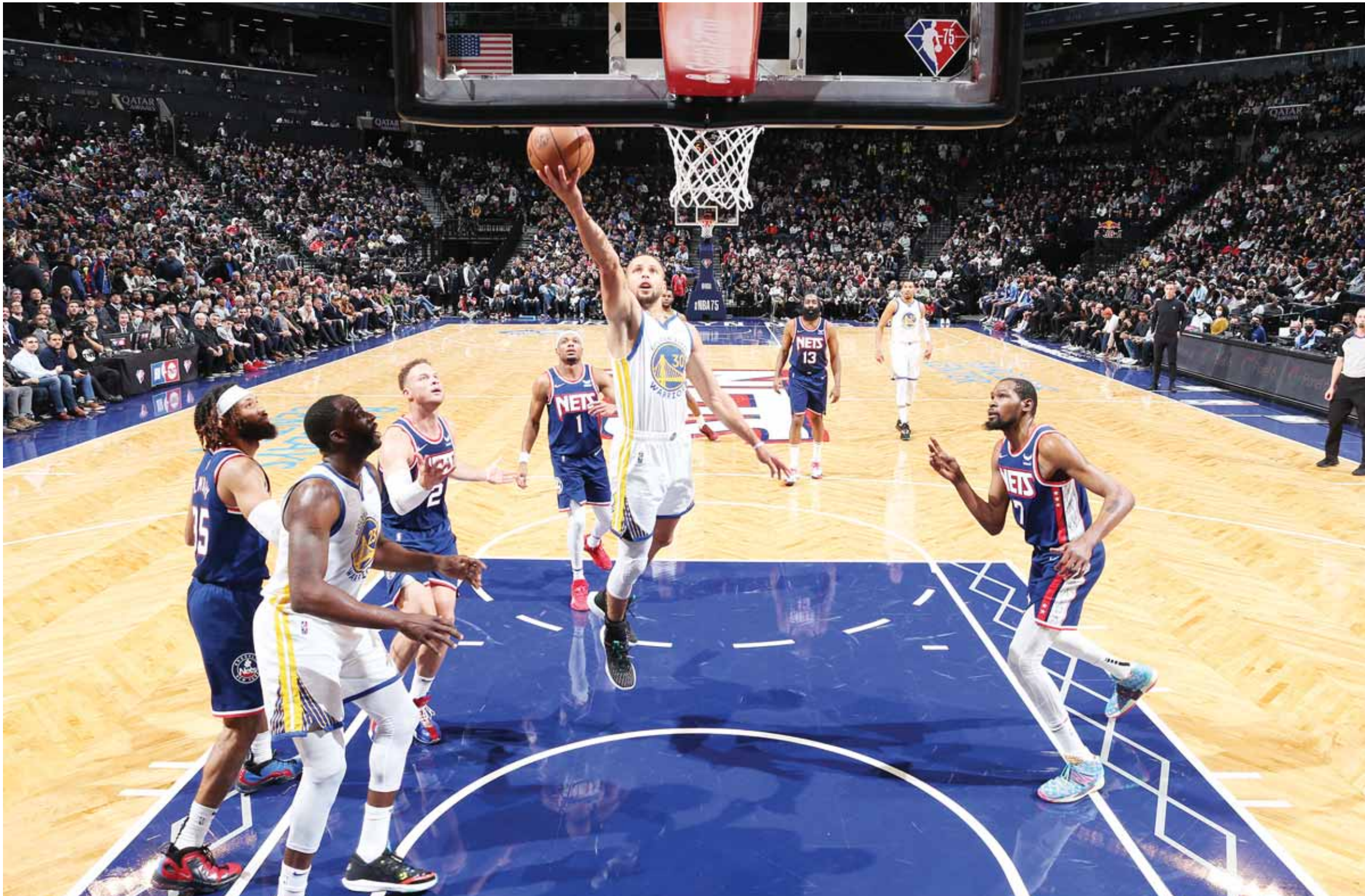


**NOTICE**  
October 24, 2021

Mr. Luke John Dias, son of Mr. Wilfred Alex Dias, resident of Victory Villa, H No 68 Borda, Margao, Goa and Ms. Darlynn Lara Amara, daughter of Mr. Dersek Nicholas Amara, resident of 7 8 West Coast Apts, I C Colony, 3rd Cross Road, Borivali, W Mumbai both Indian nationals presently residing in Kuwait, have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in) / letters / telephonic calls (00965 - 22550171, 00965 - 22533125).

*Kareem*  
(K.S Rathore) First Secretary (CA)  
and Marriage Officer.  
Embassy of India, Kuwait





BROOKLYN: Stephen Curry #30 of the Golden State Warriors drives to the basket during the game against the Brooklyn Nets on Tuesday at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York. — AFP

## Curry fires Warriors as Nets routed

### Dubs put offensive, defensive masterclass in key NBA clash

**NEW YORK:** Stephen Curry produced a three-point masterclass as the Golden State Warriors thrashed the Brooklyn Nets 117-99 to underscore their championship credentials on Tuesday. Curry led the scoring with 37 points — 27 of them from outside the arc — to give the Warriors an emphatic win on the road over the Nets and former Golden State teammate Kevin Durant.

It was a superb all-round effort from the Warriors, who combined potent offense with a steely defensive display marshalled by Draymond Green. Andrew Wiggins added 19 points and Jordan Poole 17 for the Warriors, who took the lead late in the first half and never relinquished it.

The Dubs' defense also had a big night, combining for eight blocks and four steals to keep the Nets offense at bay. James Harden led the Brooklyn scoring with 24 points while Durant finished with 19 points. Bruce Brown added 14.

The win cemented Golden State's lead at the top

of the Western Conference with a 12-2 record, and suggested that Steve Kerr's side are genuine championship contenders once more after missing out on the playoffs for the past two seasons.

“We’re a good team and we’re off to a great start,” Curry said afterwards. “We’re building our identity and our chemistry. It’s a great defensive team that can also put the ball in the basket obviously.” Curry was also pleased with the Warriors’ performance following a 106-102 loss to Charlotte on Sunday.

“This was a nice bounce back game for us,” he said. “It’s great for our young guys to see what it means to bring this type of effort every single night.

Coming off a tough loss, how do you bounce back, how do you respond? Tonight we showed it.”

#### ‘Championship DNA’

Curry said the Warriors are also playing with a “chip on our shoulder” after difficult campaigns last season and in 2019-2020 hampered by injuries to key personnel as well as the departure of Durant to Brooklyn.

“Coming in healthy this year we wanted to set our own narrative and our own agenda, which was playing Warrior basketball,” he said. “We have so many talented guys that haven’t even been available yet so it’s going to be a great year

for us to keep building. We have that chip on our shoulder — come out every single night because we have championship DNA but it’s been two years since we’ve been able to prove it.”

Brooklyn head coach Steve Nash meanwhile believes his team still have work to do if they are to challenge for an NBA title this season. The Nets have been beaten by a slew of heavyweight opponents this year, with Tuesday’s loss following defeats to Milwaukee, Chicago and Miami.

“I just don’t think we’re in that category yet, we got a lot of work to do,” Nash said. “We’re trying to improve as a group, get better. Hopefully we can find a way to overcome some of our deficiencies by the end of the year. I think the guys have been great as far as buying in to what we want to do defensively. I think tonight it was a great lesson for us that we got to double down on some of our principles when the going gets tough.” — AFP

## Lakers’ Staples Center to be renamed in reported \$700m deal

**LOS ANGELES:** The Los Angeles Lakers’ famed home, the Staples Center, is to be renamed next month in a deal worth a reported \$700 million with Singapore-based cryptocurrency platform Crypto.com, a statement said Tuesday. As of Christmas Day, the venue will be known as the Crypto.com Arena, a Staples Center statement said. It is the first time the 20,000-seat venue has undergone a name change since it opened in 1999.

Crypto.com is a company dedicated to promoting the use of cryptocurrencies such as bitcoin on a wider scale. The company’s chief executive, Kris Marszalek, told the Financial Times the Staples Center deal

— which spans 20 years — would eventually be seen as “the moment that cryptocurrency kind of crossed the cosmos into the mainstream.”

“There may be some initial resistance to the idea of (the name) change, I think that’s quite natural,” he was quoted as saying. “But we are ready to work with the local community and prove to them that this is a change for the better and help build a better future for LA and the fans.”

The Staples Center is owned by Anschutz Entertainment Group. AEG chief executive Dan Beckerman described the naming rights deal as a “match made in heaven” in comments to the Los



LOS ANGELES: In this file photo taken on March 14, 2021 people take photos in front of the Staples Center where the 63rd Annual Grammy Awards took place in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

Angeles Times. While the rebranding would take effect on December 25, signage at the venue would only change in June 2022.

While the Staples Center is synonymous with the Lakers, the arena is also home to the

Los Angeles Clippers, the WNBA’s Los Angeles Sparks and the National Hockey League’s Los Angeles Kings. It is one of the best-known entertainment venues in the US alongside New York’s Madison Square Garden. — AFP

## NBA to stage first preseason games in UAE

**LOS ANGELES:** The NBA will stage preseason games in the United Arab Emirates next year for the first time, the league said in a statement on Tuesday. The league said two exhibition games will take place in Abu Dhabi in October 2022, with teams involved to be confirmed at a later date.

“Hosting NBA and NBA 2K League games and events in Abu Dhabi builds on our commitment to growing basketball around the world,” NBA deputy commissioner and chief operating officer Mark Tatum said in a statement. The games are part of a multi-year agreement between the NBA and Abu Dhabi’s Department of Culture and Tourism.

“Through this partnership, we will bring the authentic NBA

experience to fans in the UAE and support basketball development in the region by providing more opportunities for young boys and girls to learn and play the game,” Tatum added. The NBA has a long history of staging pre-season and regular season games outside North America.

The first official overseas game took place in 1978. Since then, games have been staged throughout Europe and Asia, with Japan hosting the first overseas regular season games in 1990, and China regularly staging games up until 2019. Relations between the NBA and China ruptured in October 2019 after former Houston Rockets chief Daryl Morey posted a tweet expressing solidarity with protesters in Hong Kong. — AFP