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# Ghanem hits at corrupt forces as Kuwait readies for elections

## Budget deficit plunges as oil prices soar

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** Speaker of the dissolved National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday hit hard at what he described as "those who robbed our wealth" during the 1990-91 Iraqi invasion of the country. The former speaker also welcomed the dissolution of the Assembly, saying it is a golden opportunity for the Kuwaiti people to discover their true representatives.

HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Tuesday issued a decree dissolving the National Assembly hours after swearing in a new Cabinet led by new Prime Minister HH Sheikh Ahmad

Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah. Under Kuwait's constitution, new polls must be held within two months of the dissolution date.

"As we remember our martyrs on August 2 (1990 Iraqi invasion) ... we recall with bitterness those who stole our wealth during those dark days under the belief Kuwait has been wiped out forever", Ghanem wrote on Twitter. The thieves "are still spending that money to fund their tools to destroy the homeland and carry out their suspicious agenda in tarnishing the image of honest people," he added.

In another tweet, Ghanem welcomed the decree to dissolve the National Assembly. "I am confident that this is a golden opportunity for the Kuwaiti people to

discover those who truly represent them and those who cheat them", a reference to his critics. The election campaign will kick start immediately after issuing a decree fixing the date for snap polls.

Nevertheless, the opposition Progressive Movement yesterday called on the opposition groups to unify their efforts in the election by forming joint lists for reformist candidates to ensure the largest number of them win seats. In the meantime, the budget deficit for the fiscal year 2021/2022 which ended on March 31, 2022 plunged to just KD 3 billion from KD 10.7 billion shortfall posted in the previous year, according to figures by the Finance Ministry.

The sharp increase in oil revenues, mainly in the

last quarter of the previous fiscal year (January to March, 2022) was the main reason for the drop in the deficit. Oil income for the whole year jumped from an estimated KD 8.7 billion to KD 16.2 billion. Kuwait has been posting a budget deficit since the fiscal year 2015/2016 due to the sharp drop in oil prices which recovered in the past several months.

The country is expected to post a budget surplus in the current fiscal year as both prices and the level of production sharply increased. Oil Minister Mohammad Al-Fares said yesterday Kuwait's output will increase to 2.818 million barrels per day from next month, way up from around 2.3 million for the past several years.

## US warns Americans after Zawahiri killing



**KABUL:** This handout image shows the building (left) in which Al-Qaeda chief Ayman Al-Zawahiri was probably located at the time of the strike that killed him in Kabul. — AFP

**WASHINGTON:** The US State Department Tuesday warned Americans traveling abroad they face an increased risk of violence after US forces killed Al-Qaeda chief Ayman Al-Zawahiri. His death in a drone strike in Kabul over the weekend dealt the biggest blow to Al-Qaeda since the killing of Osama bin Laden in 2011, prompting US President Joe Biden to declare that "justice had been delivered."

Following the strike, the State Department Tuesday urged US citizens to "maintain a high level of vigilance and practice good situational awareness when traveling abroad." "Current information suggests that terrorist organizations continue to plan terrorist attacks against US interests in multiple regions across the globe," the department said in a statement. "These attacks may employ a wide variety of tactics including suicide operations, assassinations, kidnappings, hijackings and bombings."

A senior official in the Biden administration said the 71-year-old Egyptian jihadist was on the balcony of a three-story house in the Afghan capital when targeted with two Hellfire missiles after dawn Sunday. It was the first known over-the-horizon strike by the United States on a target in Afghanistan since Washington withdrew its forces from the country on August 31 last year, days after the Taliban swept back to power. The Taliban condemned the drone strike Tuesday, but made no mention of casualties nor did they name Zawahiri.

Weeks before the first anniversary of a retreat from Afghanistan that critics said exposed President Joe Biden's weakness, he shrugged off both COVID and detractors to announce the killing in Kabul of Al-Qaeda's leader—an operation the Democrat says shows the US remains as strong as ever. "When I ended our military mission in Afghanistan almost a year ago, I made the decision that after 20 years of war, the United States no longer needed thousands of boots on the ground in Afghanistan," Biden told the nation late Monday as he announced the death of Ayman Al-Zawahiri.

Continued on Page 6

## Oil Minister urges OPEC+ to coordinate

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister, Oil Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Dr Mohammad Al-Fares on Wednesday underscored the need for cooperation and coordination among all producers to face any challenges or impacts on the supply of oil markets.

This was in a press statement issued by the Ministry of Oil after Al-Fares headed the delegation of Kuwait to the 43rd meeting of the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee

(JMCC) of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies including Russia (OPEC+), along with the 31st ministerial meeting of OPEC+, which were held via video-conference.

OPEC+ will enter a new phase of cooperation to effectively manage the oil markets and play a greater role during the upcoming period, he said. He expressed his sincere condolences over the death of the Former Secretary General of OPEC Mohammad Barkindo - noting his time over the past years in leading the organization and the efforts he made in bringing the views of member states closer.

He congratulated the Secretary General of OPEC Haitham Al-Ghais, who assumed his duties

Continued on Page 6



Kuwait's Oil Minister Dr Mohammad Al-Fares attends the meeting via video-conference. — KUNA

## US OKs sale of missile systems to Saudi, UAE

**WASHINGTON:** The United States has announced the sale of major missile defense systems to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates worth more than \$5 billion. The approval was announced two weeks after US President Joe Biden met leaders of the two countries in Saudi Arabia on

a trip seen as crucial to strengthen frayed relations with them, and as both nations perceive a heightened threat from Iran. The State Department said Saudi Arabia would buy 300 Patriot MIM-104E missile systems, which can be used to bring down at long-range incoming ballistic and cruise missiles, as well as attacking aircraft.

The value of the missiles and attendant equipment, trainings and parts is \$3.05 billion, the department said. Saudi Arabia has faced recent rocket threats from Yemen's Houthi rebels, who have been supplied with Iranian equipment and technology. "These missiles are used to defend the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's borders against persist-

ent Houthi cross-border unmanned aerial system and ballistic missile attacks on civilian sites and critical infrastructure in Saudi Arabia," the State Department said.

Separately, the United States will sell THAAD surface-to-air missile systems to the UAE for \$2.25 billion. The UAE has also recently been targeted by Houthi rocket attacks, which have been fended off in part by defense systems run by the US military based in the country. "The proposed sale will improve the UAE's ability to meet current and future ballistic missile threats in the region, and reduce dependence on US forces," the State Department said. — AFP

## Taiwan defiant; China gears for military drills

**TAIPEI:** Taiwan struck a defiant tone Wednesday as it hosted US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, with a furious China gearing up for military exercises dangerously close to the island's shores in retaliation for the visit. Pelosi landed in Taiwan late Tuesday despite a series of increasingly stark threats from

Beijing, which views the island as its territory and warned it would consider the visit a major provocation.

China responded swiftly, announcing what it said were "necessary and just" military drills in the seas just off Taiwan's coast - some of the world's busiest waterways. "In the current struggle surrounding Pelosi's Taiwan visit, the United States are the provocateurs, China is the victim," Beijing's foreign ministry said. But Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen said the island of 23 million would not be cowed.

"Facing deliberately heightened military threats, Taiwan will not back down."

Continued on Page 6



**XIAMEN:** A man looks through a pair of binoculars in Xiamen, across Taiwan's Kinmen Islands on August 3, 2022. — AFP

## Sri Lanka faces 'great danger'

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka faces a "great danger" with fuel shortages sparked by its unprecedented economic crisis set to continue at least till the year's end, President Ranil Wickremesinghe warned Wednesday. The 73-year-old, who was propelled to power last month after his predecessor Gotabaya Rajapaksa was

forced to flee the country and resign after months of protests, said the financial meltdown had turned into a serious political crisis. "Today we are facing an unprecedented situation that our country had never faced in recent history," he said while opening a new session of parliament.

"We are in great danger." Tens of thousands of people overran Rajapaksa's official residence last month over acute shortages of food, fuel and medicines endured by Sri Lanka's 22 million people since late last year. Wickremesinghe said the only way to escape the crisis was "if we all face this challenge together as one people," and asked all parties in par-

liament to join his initiative for a "unity government". Sri Lanka was considered a prosperous middle-income country before defaulting for the first time on its foreign debt of \$51 billion in mid-April.

The country has run out of foreign exchange to finance imports with officials estimating the country urgently needs at least \$4 billion to bring in essential goods and address current shortages.

Wickremesinghe has been leading talks with the International Monetary Fund to secure a four-year bailout program. He told parliament the negotiations were progressing but did not provide a timeline for when a deal would be finalised. — AFP

## Local

# Kuwaiti doctor warns of increase in serious injuries due to traffic accidents

## Dr Khajah says his clinic receives at least five cases a day

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** According to World Health Organization, every year the lives of approximately 1.3 million people are cut short as a result of the road traffic crashes. Between 20 and 50 million more people suffer non-fatal injuries, with many incurring a disability as a result of their injury. In this context, Neurosurgeon Dr Hassan Khajah revealed that the increase in paralysis cases in Kuwait is attributed to many factors, mainly the use of the phone while driving. He noted that the age category that comes in emergency rooms in hospitals due to accidents ranges from 16 to 30 years old.

Khajah, who is a consultant in Neurosurgery, Spine, and Radiosurgery, told Kuwait Times that many serious injuries happen from wrong practices while driving, including posting on social media while behind the wheel. He added that fractures, partial or complete paralysis are among those serious injuries. He revealed that Kuwait receives scores of cases per day due to car accidents, and his clinic receives not less than five cases per day, adding that even after the surgery, the patients will not become the same as before, but rather chronic diseases will be caused.

"A person lost his whole back because he had an accident on his motorbike. He had a serious avulsion road rash when he fell from his bike and dragged along rough asphalt. We had to make a special opening for stool to leave the body. If a person comes out of the accident alive, his recovery may take months, apart from the hundreds of thousands that are paid for surgical operations, and in the end, he may suffer a permanent disability," he added.

Meanwhile, Khajah stressed that Kuwait is among the advanced countries in the field of medical technology, adding that the era of modern medical technology has enabled doctors to put an end to the suffering of patients with congenital malformations of the skull and spine. "Implanting the battery in the spinal cord costs KD 50,000 outside Kuwait. In Kuwait, the value of the device is KD 10,000," he pointed out. "The battery is a substance called Lioresal. There are pills, used as muscle relaxants, but their effect is intense. We have cases such as cerebral palsy, stroke, or brain hemorrhage. In this case, the body does not control the state of relaxation. For example, if the person groped the pen, his muscles will not allow him to drop it, which causes muscle tension, pain, and



**KUWAIT:** Neurosurgeon Dr Hassan Khajah speaks to Kuwait Times. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

damage to the joints. So, we implant a battery to relax the muscles, relieve pain and preserve the body parts in order to not damage the joints, and we aim for nursing care."

"When I traveled to Sweden, I was surprised by the presence of a whole team specialized in neurosurgery, he noted. "When I returned to Kuwait in 2004, I transferred this technology to Kuwait, and the Ministry of Health provided batteries, and within a year and a half, nearly 50 batteries were implanted in Kuwait."

Khajah said that his name is registered in the United States of America and Scandinavia as a consultant for any case in the Gulf region, adding, "They contact me to take the first approval on the case. They have trusted me as the person in the Gulf to follow up on these cases."

Regarding the battery, he said, "Since then, we started implanting batteries and formed a unit to follow up on patients and making sure the batteries and the appropriate doses are available. When I see the patient has muscle tension, multiple sclerosis, and cerebral palsy, I operate trail implanting before transplanting the actual battery. I place a small tube



**Dr Hassan Khajah poses in his clinic.**

in his back, peak effect for eight hours, and during that, if I find him ready for transplant, I give him 100 micrograms and program the battery to inject this percentage within the 24 hours. The Ministry of Health provided the needed ampoules for KD 220-250, while the battery needs four ampoules. The battery should be changed every five to six years."

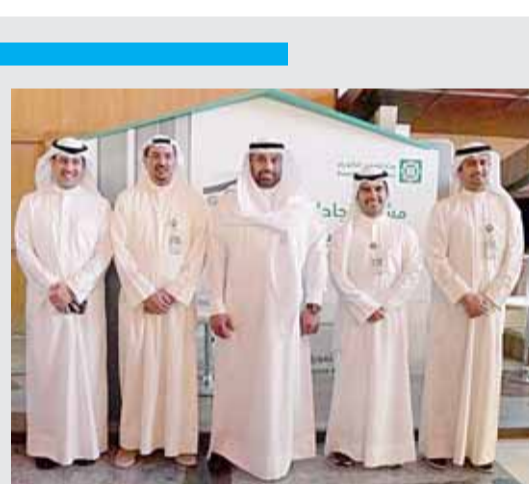
"Gamma Knife" is a device Dr Khajah managed to bring to Kuwait to treat tumors, vascular malformations, and other abnormalities in the brain, explaining that the machine is used for surgical operations on brain tumors without a scalpel, just operating the surgery by radiation. He revealed that Kuwait is the only country in the Gulf that provides it, saying that it

was an important technology in neurosurgery because brain and nerve devices are expensive, and even the surgeon must be knowledgeable and must rely on himself without the help of others.

"The operations' methods have changed in the past 20 years," he said. "The methods have become easier, save half the time, and the success rate is better. Medicine must be developed, and development does not require attending abroad forums; the information can be accessed even through YouTube."

Khajah told Kuwait Times that some operations for removing tumor of the base of the brain take 48 hours. "The most difficult operation for me was in Jahra Hospital at midnight. A policeman was involved in a car accident, and was left with a severe head injury. I was alone, and the success rate was half a percent. The operation was very dangerous, and I had to remove half of the skull to preserve the patient's life, and there was bleeding everywhere. His surviving was a miracle," he added.

### Use of phone while driving main cause of accidents



## KFH participates in Kuwait University job fair

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has participated in the Human Investment and Job Opportunities fair held at Abdullah Al-Jaber theater at Kuwait University. The bank was represented by its HR team through KFH's pavilion where several employment applications were received. All students and graduates' inquiries were answered including those interested in part time jobs.

KFH's participation in the fair prolonged for four days under the title 'You Success Starts at KFH' to attract young national talents. KFH has been always utilizing its capabilities to support youth at all society levels. KFH's participation in this fair is an extension of several participations which KFH made during the year by collaborating with either Kuwait University or private universities and schools.

In his turn, Group Chief Human Resources Officer, Zeyad Al-Omar, emphasized that KFH is keen on enhancing partnership with Kuwait University and all academic institutions as part of its interest in students, education, and support of national talents.

Omar appreciated the role which Kuwait University plays in the qualification and empowerment of national manpower to work in the private sector. He highlighted the significance of participating in Job Fairs to attract national top graduates and talents. Also, he emphasized the significance of the enhancement and development of all communication channels between universities and KFH in different initiatives that would achieve an added value for both parties.

Omar added that KFH has achieved several accomplishments in the field of students' support and cooperation with government and private educational institutions, thus reiterating that KFH shall continue this trend and provide the best to support qualification and occupational development of students and youth.



## Zain staff contributes to blood donation efforts

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, recently held an internal blood drive campaign for its employees. The campaign was held at the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh in continuation of Zain's strategic partnership with the Central Blood Bank of Kuwait. Zain regularly organizes this initiative in line with its Corporate

Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy towards the health sector. The company actively partners with major health organizations in the country, including the Central Blood Bank and Ministry of Health, to affirm its contribution to the local health sector. The campaign aims at encouraging Zain employees to donate blood and save the lives of those who are in most need of blood transfusion.

As always, Zain's blood drive campaign witnessed immense positive participation from employees who continued to donate blood throughout the entire day with the presence of the Central Blood Bank's medical staff. Zain strives to contribute to the community through its numerous corporate social responsibility initiatives and is pleased with

the success this particular activity achieved.

The company is keen to organize internal blood drive campaigns for employees in collaboration with the Central Blood Bank to encourage employees to donate blood and save lives, further reinforcing the company's productive role in social and health activities, especially those that contribute with saving people that are in urgent need of blood like people with rare blood types.

Zain's solid Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy primarily focuses on the wellbeing of the entire nation. For this reason, the company has maintained its support of numerous initiatives that spread awareness and help make a difference to people's everyday lives.

## Calls to cut expats' cars older than 10 years in Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's government has received a recommendation to cut down the number of cars owned by expatriates which are older than 10 years, in an attempt to address the traffic jams' problem in the country. A study carried out by a technical committee assigned to find solutions to the traffic problems has concluded that there are thousands of vehicles aged between 10 and 20 years which cause pollution, increase risks of road accidents, contribute to the traffic jams' problem and put added pressure on subsidized fuel consumption.

Sources familiar with the study told Kuwait Times the panel members believe that a majority of those cars are owned by marginal, low-wage expatriate laborers; a segment of Kuwait's labor market which the government already intends to reduce as part of its efforts to solve the demographic imbalance

problem. "The study says banning old cars most likely won't lead to mass exodus of skilled labor, who earn a decent income that enable them to own newer models," said the sources.

Furthermore, the recommendation goes in line with demands made by the Environment Public Authority earlier, which had called for a solution to the pollution problem caused by old vehicles in Kuwait. "Kuwait's hot weather causes more harm to aged vehicles in comparison with countries with milder climates."

These recommendations, according to sources, have been made several times before, but excuses such as the lack of metro stations and railway have halted the process. "However, those excuses aren't viable anymore as public transportation and taxi services have become more available and companies can transport their employees in groups," the sources argued. While these recommendations might interrupt the flow of the replaceable parts market, it might on the other hand revitalize the markets of newer cars, according to the sources.

Putting this recommendation in effect can yield several benefits, such as reducing traffic jams and pollution, while at the same time saving public funds by cutting down consumption of subsidized



**KUWAIT:** This file photo shows heavy traffic on a main highway in Kuwait. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

fuel, the sources further explained.

Other recommendations featured in the study include limiting the number of vehicles expatriates can own, or banning expats from owning more than one vehicle. "This recommendation was also based on an Interior Ministry review which revealed serious violations committed by expats who sold or rented vehicles without proper licenses and paying necessary state fees," the sources noted.

Local

# Kuwaiti watchdog demands incorporating international law in making local rulings

## Kuwait Society for Human Rights' report makes recommendations on various topics

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Society for Human Rights (KSHR) released a report on Tuesday in which it discussed the most significant observations and recommendations in the country to enhance awareness of international human rights conventions, and defend individuals whose rights are violated. The report was submitted to the Human Rights Committee for the adoption of the list of issues for Kuwait during its 136th session, which will be in October.

The report highlighted nine issues: KSHR finds that the Kuwaiti judiciary relies in most of its rulings on the local laws, excluding international agreements ratified by the State of Kuwait, affirming that the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights should be within the framework of national legislation.

KSHR urged the Committee to ask the Kuwaiti government to explain the procedures recently taken to activate the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in courts and within the administrative actions, and to provide the steps that it has taken to intensify the training programs and courses aimed at raising the awareness of judges, the members of Public Prosecution and judicial officials about the international human rights law.



### Women in Kuwait still suffer from discrimination

(15/1959) and its amendments, and what is the government's vision for those who are not entitled to hold Kuwaiti citizenship.

In addition, KSHR asked the government to clarify the reasons behind the Central Agency's renewing the security identifications that the Bedoons hold only after they sign a document stating that they hold the citizenship of other countries, and they sign written acknowledgments to waive any claim to Kuwaiti citizenship, and to clarify the consequences of refusing to sign a permit of subordination to another country and waiving the right to demand the Kuwaiti citizenship. Also, KSHR asked about the government's intention regarding the possibility of creating an effective mechanism other than the Central Agency for the remedy of the Bedoons' situation.

### Discrimination against women

Meanwhile, KSHR saw that women in Kuwait suffer from discrimination in several laws and regulations, and there is low participation of women in politics and in public, adding that there are a lot of women who are being abused despite Kuwait's adoption of Law No. (16)

of 2020 concerning protection from domestic violence.

KSHR asked the Human Committee to request to the Kuwaiti government to clarify the procedures taken towards amending laws that still discriminate against women and provide information on awareness campaigns and actions taken regarding women's civil and political rights to encourage their participation in the political and public life, in addition to indicating the measures taken to overcome the entrenched discriminatory stereotype against women in society, and clarifying reasons behind not activating the work of the shelters, the mechanism used to receive complaints from abused women and provide updated data on reported cases.

Concerning torture cases, KSHR appealed for the Committee to request to the Kuwaiti government to provide information on cases of torture and the reason behind their increase recently and



to indicate the mechanism followed to receive complaints against security men at the Monitoring and Inspection Department within the Ministry of Interior.

### Administrative deportation

As for administrative deportation, the Society for Human Rights saw that deporting people needed to be studied and activating the role of the judiciary, calling the government to provide statistics regarding the number of administrative deportees during the years 2019-2020-2021, and the number of detainees held for more than 30 days in the deportation center.

Human Trafficking in Kuwait is considered a huge issue; KSHR affirmed that the Kuwaiti government did not meet the minimum standards for combating human trafficking, requesting to be provided with information on the progress made in the national referral system, the number of awareness and training programs, mechanisms and oversight measures on foreign labor recruitment companies, and statistics on the number of reported cases of human trafficking crimes.

Regarding the domestic workers, KSHR revealed that there is an increase in the number of complaints received from home workers and employers via the hotline, asking the government to provide information on efforts to repeal the sponsorship system, and on the progress made in the possibility of amending Law No. 68/2015 by adding an article, in addition, to explaining the measures taken against the recruitment agencies that did not adhere to the regulations and laws, and what are the steps taken to harmonize Domestic Workers Law No. 68 of 2015 in line with the international standards.

Over the past years, freedom of opinion and expression has declined, KSHR notes, adding that there is a wide space for interpreting what may constitute a crime when expressing opinion. KSHR also appealed to the Human Committee to get information on the steps taken to review all laws that contain provisions restricting the freedom of opinion and expression right, aiming to make them consistent with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as same as the issue of freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

## Govt, residents urged to encourage local farmers

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** President of the Kuwait Union of Farmers Abdullah Al-Damak told Kuwait Times that the Council of Ministers has passed a law obligating cooperative societies to purchase at least 75 percent of Kuwait agricultural products directly from farmers. Damak pointed out that this ministerial decision indicates the government's awareness of the importance of supporting Kuwait's farmers, especially with the acute shortage of workers in the agricultural sector.

Damak stated that large numbers of agricultural workers are needed to raise the production rate. "The next season, local products will be available in abundance in the markets after raising the percentage of agricultural labor in order to increase production. We expect this season to be different for the previous ones that were affected by several factors - especially the COVID-19 pandemic," he said.

Damak called on all parties including cooperative societies, the private sector and the government to support and promote Kuwait products. "Farmers have lost a lot over the years, and were unable to cover their costs. The problem is that - there are lots of imported products. The amount of produc-

tion is considered good - but not much. Local farmers need support in order to increase production. We urge government to open more marketing outlets in residential areas, especially the new areas such as Al-Mutlaa, South Al-Abdullah, West Abdullah Al-Mubarak, South Sabah Al-Ahmad and all other areas," he added.



Abdullah Al-Damak

Regarding the demand for local Kuwaiti products, Kuwait Times interviewed a number of consumers in cooperative societies and asked them about their preferences. Om Yousef said "the prices of local agricultural products are good and appropriate, but the prices of imported fruits are very high and exaggerated. We are forced to buy the imported ones in the absence of the local varieties. We hope to have more local products in the markets."

Umm Hamed said, "the imported products are much more expensive than the local one, but the quality differs. However, local fruits are very few in the markets, so we have to buy the imported ones at high prices." Omar, an employee at a co-op, said that the imported products are of better quality than the local ones. "The packaging is better and distinctive in a way that preserves the product for longer time. As for the customers, they prefer the local product, especially since its price is cheaper than the imported ones."

## Kuwait will never forget UN role during liberation: Envoy

**NEW YORK:** The State of Kuwait will never forget the role of the United Nations and the UN Security Council (UNSC) during the liberation of Kuwait from the invasion of Kuwait, said its new permanent representative on Wednesday. Tareq Al-Banai made the remark in a statement to KUNA following his meeting with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to whom he presented his credentials as Kuwait's new permanent representative at the UN. The Kuwaiti diplomat cited the UNSC's landmark resolution 660 adopted on August 2, 1990, condemning the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and supporting Kuwait until its legitimacy was reinstated and the country was liberated. In this context, Banai underlined the significant role played by the UN in promoting international law and international humanitarian law, along with other international and legal mechanisms purposed to deter any aggression and ensure self-defense. He also stressed the importance of the goals and principles of the UN Charter that regulates relations between states, especially respecting the sovereignty of countries and prohibiting Member States from using force directed against the territorial integrity or political independence of another state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations. The Kuwaiti diplomat vowed that he would continue efforts to promote the close partnership



NEW YORK: Kuwait's new permanent representative at the UN Tareq Al-Banai (left) and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres. —KUNA

between the State of Kuwait and the UN and to upgrade it to broader vistas in all fields. He added that during the meeting he had conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah to the UN secretary general. Meanwhile, the UN chief lauded the close relationship between Kuwait and the UN, and appreciated Kuwait's support for the organization in various fields, mainly peace, security, humanitarian activities and development. Guterres asked the Kuwaiti diplomat to convey his greetings to His Highness the Amir and the political leadership. —KUNA

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## Local

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## News in brief

## GCC eyes deeper cooperation with Turkmenistan

**KUWAIT:** Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf affirmed Wednesday importance of reinforcing cooperation with the Republic of Turkmenistan to serve the common interests. This came after Hajraf's meeting with Turkmenistan's Deputy Foreign Minister, Rasit Meredowm, in which the two signed a Memorandum of Understanding bolstering cooperation in fields of economics, trade exchange, energy security, water and food security, achieving stability and supporting sustainable development. An official negotiations session was held between the two officials where they handled a number of regional and international issues in addition to the various and diverse opportunities of cooperation.

## GCC Management, Manpower Committee concludes meeting

**KUWAIT:** The GCC Management and Manpower Committee concluded its 14th meeting in Kuwait on Wednesday, where the participants touched on GCC military cooperation. In a statement, the Ministry of Defense said that these meetings come within the aspects of cooperation to exchange visions and experiences and military coordination between the GCC countries. The meeting was chaired by the Kuwaiti Assistant Chief of General Staff of the Administration and Manpower Authority, Major General Dr Khaled Al-Kandari, it added. Meanwhile, Kandari said that these meetings aim to unify and develop the concepts of management and manpower in the GCC countries. He also went on thanking the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council for the efforts made to arrange such meetings.

## Kuwait crude oil plunges to \$105.62 pb

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait crude oil plunged \$3.08 during Tuesday's trading sessions to reach \$105.62 per barrel (pb), compared with \$108.70 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Wednesday. Brent futures edged 51 cents higher to reach \$100.54 pb and West Texas Intermediate (WTI) gained 53 cents to \$94.42 pb.

## Fire controlled in basement of Sharq building

**KUWAIT:** Fire squads controlled fire at dawn Wednesday in the basement of a building in Sharq, Media and Public Relations department of the Kuwaiti Fire Force announced. The Central operations department has sent fire squads from Al-Hallali, Kuwait City, search and rescue fire stations, as well as, supporting units to handle the incident and evacuate the nine-storey building of its residents, KFF said. The Public Relations department added that the fire squads began to fight the fire that was in a 2,000-square-meter basement, and they were able to control it without any injuries. Investigations are underway to know the reason behind the incident and take the necessary precau-



## Photo of the day



**KUWAIT:** This file photo shows Kuwait's flag raised in Kuwait City. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

## Kuwait exports first low-sulfur, low-aromatic gasoline shipment

## KNPC exports excess production after meeting local demand



**KUWAIT:** The first low-sulfur, low-aromatic gasoline shipment. —KUNA photos



The ship carrying the first low-sulfur, low-aromatic gasoline shipment.

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait exported the first shipment of low-sulfur, low-aromatic gasoline (car fuel) which meets international environment standards, Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) announced Wednesday.

The 35,000-ton shipment, produced at Mina Al-Ahmadi Refinery, was exported in cooperation and coordination with Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's (KPC) International Marketing sector, KNPC's Deputy CEO for Administrative and Commercial Affairs and Official Spokesman Ahed Al-Khurayif said. KNPC's Clean Fuel Project helps produce environmental-

friendly fuel, he added, and the company succeeded in meeting local market's demands and exported excess production. There is a growing international demand for car fuel due to recent global crises, said Khurayif, prompting KPC's International Marketing to seek new markets in Southeast Asia and Europe, generating other sources of income that contributed to national economy.

KNPC, noted Khurayif, succeeded in overcoming many obstacles and challenges related to safe operation of Clean Fuel Project, which would boost Kuwait's regional and international position in clean energy. —KUNA



Produced by  
Clean Fuel  
Project



KNPC's Official Spokesman  
Ahed Al-Khurayif



## Dasman Diabetes Institute organizes annual student research posters day

**KUWAIT:** Dasman Diabetes Institute, which was established by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, concluded this year's summer training program, a program organized annually by the institute for students of medical specialties in its various fields. The institute organized a day to display scientific posters summarizing the research conducted by students during their training period under the supervision of specialists from the institute. This

scientific day was attended by Dr Qais Al-Duwairi, Director General of the Institute, Dr Ebaa Al-Ozairi, CMO of the Medical Sector, Dr Faisal Al Refai, COO of the Operation Sector, in addition to many researchers and doctors of the institute. Professor Fahad Al-Mulla, CSO of the Research Sector at the institute, closely supervised this event.

On the sidelines of this scientific day, Dr Duwairi stated that he is proud of what the students presented during this training program, adding that it provides practical opportunities for students to be trained in an integrated and advanced work environment at the institute, specifying that this year has witnessed various research projects and initiatives on diabetes. Dr Duwairi said that the aim of this training program, which extends over a period

of months, is to establish and provide the participating students with the necessary skills and practical knowledge in the research and scientific aspects, and to help them enhance their research capabilities. The students were enrolled in various projects to explore, develop and refine their scientific abilities, under the guidance of senior members of the scientific team at the Institute and with the support of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences. Dr Duwairi concluded that Dasman Diabetes Institute, which was established by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, is pleased to provide the appropriate environment for developing the skills of researchers of the new generation in this field, wishing them success.



Hustling in Lagos to 'survive in hell'

## 'We have nothing': Iraqi protesters voice anger, hope

# ASEAN urge restraint after Pelosi visit

## 'Those who play with fire will not come to a good end'

### Pelosi's visit: A serious violation in int'l relations

In disregard of China's strong opposition and serious representations, Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi visited China's Taiwan region. This move seriously violates the one-China principle, maliciously infringes on China's sovereignty and blatantly engages in political provocations, which has aroused strong indignation among the Chinese people. The Chinese people will never accept such moves, and all peace-loving countries that stood up for justice in the world will also sniff at such unwarranted provocation.

There is but one China in the world, Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, and the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China. This has been clearly recognized by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 of 1971. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, 181 countries have established diplomatic relations with China on the basis of the one-China principle. The one-China principle is a universal consensus of the international community and a basic norm in international relations, the political foundation for China's relations with other countries, the core of China's core interests, and a red line and bottom line that cannot be crossed.

The Taiwan question is the most important and most sensitive issue at the very heart of China-US relations. The Taiwan Strait is facing a new round of tensions and severe challenges, and the fundamental cause is the repeated moves by the Taiwan authorities and the United States to change the status quo. The Taiwan authorities have kept seeking US support for their independence agenda. They refuse to recognize the 1992 Consensus, go all out to push forward "de-sinicization", and promote "incremental independence". The US has made solemn commitments on the Taiwan question, but in fact, it has been stepping up its official exchanges with Taiwan, and emboldening "Taiwan independence" separatist activities, attempting to use Taiwan to contain China, which seriously undermines peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. These moves, like playing with fire, are extremely dangerous. Those who play with fire will perish by it. The US side's act in bad faith on the Taiwan question is despicable and will only further bankrupt the United States' national credibility. The US has shown the world what a bully it is. This will only make people of all countries see more clearly that the United States is the biggest destroyer of peace today.

The position of the Chinese government and people on the Taiwan question is consistent, and resolutely safeguarding China's national sovereignty and territorial integrity is the firm will of the more than 1.4 billion Chinese people. China must be reunified, and will surely be reunified. This is an irresistible historical trend. Any attempt to obstruct China's complete reunification and great national rejuvenation is doomed to fail. The Chinese government and the Chinese people have taken and will continue to take resolute and forceful measures to firmly safeguard China's sovereignty, security and development interests.

Kuwait is the first Gulf Arab country to establish diplomatic relations with China. Since 1971, the Kuwaiti government has clearly adhered to the one-China principle, which has been highly appreciated by the Chinese government and people. We believe that with the support of friendly and just countries, including Kuwait, the one-China principle will surely be upheld, international relations norms such as non-interference in internal affairs will surely be proclaimed, and justice will eventually prevail over power politics.

(Zhang Jianwei, Ambassador of China to Kuwait)

PHNOM PENH: Southeast Asian nations Wednesday urged restraint over Taiwan after US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to the island prompted an enraged China to vow "punishment". Pelosi's dramatic trip to Taipei, defying stark threats by China, overshadowed a meeting of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) foreign ministers in Phnom Penh, which had been expected to focus on the bloody crisis engulfing Myanmar.

ASEAN spokesman Kung Phoak, Cambodia's deputy foreign minister, said ministers at the closed-door talks-meeting face to face for the first time since the pandemic-had expressed concern over "growing tension in the Taiwan Strait."

"We hope that all sides will try their best to deescalate the tension there, avoid actions that may contribute to the escalation of tension and engage in dialogue," Kung Phoak told reporters. Malaysia and Thailand echoed the calls for calm, with Malaysian Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah urging all sides to tread "very carefully".

Thai foreign ministry spokesman Taneek Sangrat said the kingdom called for "utmost restraint" and warned against "any actions that would aggravate tensions". Attention will now turn to Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his American counterpart Antony Blinken who will join ASEAN and other ministers for regional security talks on Thursday and Friday.

On Wednesday Wang slammed the trip by Pelosi-the highest-profile elected US official to visit Taiwan in 25 years-as a violation of Chinese sovereignty. "Those who play with fire will not come to a good end, and those who offend China will be punished," he warned in an interview in Phnom Penh with Chinese state media.

China considers self-governing Taiwan a part of its territory to one day be reclaimed, by force if necessary. The 10-member ASEAN bloc is split between countries with close ties to China, such as Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos, and others that are warier of Beijing and its growing international assertiveness. But no ASEAN country formally recognises Taiwan and none have shown an appetite for backing Taipei against the communist giant.



PHNOM PENH: Thailand's Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai (L) shakes hands with Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen (2R) in front of Vietnam's Foreign Minister Bui Thanh Son (C) and Indonesia's Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi (R) after the opening ceremony for the 55th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers Meeting in Phnom Penh. —AFP

### Myanmar execution warning

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, opening the meeting as chair of ASEAN, condemned Myanmar for executing four prisoners last month in defiance of widespread international pleas for clemency. Myanmar was plunged into violent turmoil when the military seized power last year, ousting Aun San Suu Kyi's civilian government. The death toll from the subsequent junta crackdown has passed 2,100, according to local monitors.

ASEAN, long derided as a toothless talking shop that gives political cover to repressive regimes, has spearheaded thus far fruitless efforts to restore peace and voiced anger at the hangings. Hun Sen said the bloc was "disappointed and disturbed" by the executions and warned that further use of capital punishment would mean a "rethink" of the five-point

peace plan agreed to last year with Myanmar.

The plan calls for an immediate end to violence and dialogue between the junta and coup opponents. Malaysia, which has been leading a push to get tough on Myanmar, is demanding concrete progress on the framework ahead of an ASEAN summit later this year. Foreign Minister Saifuddin said last month's executions were "like a slap". "They are making a mockery of the five-point consensus, there is no respect to the ASEAN leaders, there is no respect to the ASEAN chair," he told reporters. Myanmar itself was not represented at the meeting after the other members said they would not accept a junta minister and the generals refused to send another official instead. In a highly visible snub to the regime, a place was set for the Myanmar delegation at the negotiating table, complete with flag, and the chair left empty. —AFP

## UK boy's parents appeal to keep his life support

LONDON: The parents of a 12-year-old UK boy on Wednesday appealed to European judges to maintain his life support, in another high-profile medical ethics case for Britain. Archie Battersbee was due to have his life support at the Royal London Hospital ended at 11:00 am (1000 GMT) on Wednesday.

But his parents are seeking a last-ditch ruling from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) to keep him alive. "As directed by the courts, we will work with the family to prepare for the withdrawal of treatment, but we will make no changes to Archie's care until the outstanding legal issues are resolved," said Alistair Chesser, chief medical officer for the hospital's governing trust. Archie's mother Hollie Dance found her son unconscious at home in April with signs he had placed a ligature over his head, possibly after taking part in an online asphyxiation challenge. His parents want to take Archie abroad for treatment.

"If this country can't treat him or is not willing to treat him, where's the harm in allowing him to go to another country?" Dance told reporters outside the hospital. "I will continue to fight right until the bitter end. Is that the way forward in this country then, we're allowed to execute children because they've got disabilities? What next?" she added. The Strasbourg-based ECHR told AFP that a decision was expected later Wednesday. UK courts ruled that ending life-preserving treatment for Archie was in his best interests as doctors believe he is brain-stem dead. He is currently being kept alive through a series of medical interventions, including ventilation and drug treatments.

Archie had been due to have his life support ended Monday afternoon after his parents failed in a domestic legal bid to halt the move. But the Court of Appeal granted them a hearing on Monday after the government urged judges to consider his parents' application to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The UN committee had asked for treatment to continue while it considered the case. The appeal judges ruled that the UN request was not enforceable and refused permission to appeal to the Supreme Court, but granted a delay until Tuesday.

Instead, his parents filed an application directly with the Supreme Court to consider the UN application. Tuesday's deadline came and went as the top court looked at the case. The Supreme Court judges said they had "great sympathy" with Archie's parents, but rejected their appeal saying there was "no prospect of any meaningful recovery".

The hospital's planned withdrawal of treatment was again extended after the ECHR bid was filed. The case is the latest in a series that have pitted parents against Britain's court and healthcare systems.

After a highly-charged battle between the hospital and his parents, 23-month-old Alfie Evans died in April 2018 when doctors in Liverpool, in northwestern England, withdrew life support. His parents, who had the support of Pope Francis, wanted to take him to a clinic in Rome but lost a final court appeal just days before he died. —AFP

## Obituary

It is with deep sorry we inform you of the passing of our beloved **Victor D'Souza** on 1 Aug 22.



He has touched the life of his family and friends in many beautiful ways. We will cherish his memories forever. May his soul Rest In Peace.

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## International

# 'We have nothing': Iraqi protesters voice anger, hope

## 'I'm rebelling to free my country from the fangs of the corrupt'

**BAGHDAD:** Thousands of Iraqi protesters have occupied the parliament in Baghdad's Green Zone for the past five days, the latest political turmoil to strike the war-scarred country. The mass sit-in is led by followers of powerful Shiite Muslim preacher and political kingmaker Moqtada Sadr, who is facing off against a rival, Iran-backed Shiite faction called the Coordination Framework.

The at times carnival-like protests have seen demonstrators repeat the Sadrist rhetoric but also

Green Zone government district. "I'm rebelling to free my country from the fangs of the corrupt," said the Islamic studies high school teacher, who also wants Iraq to adopt a new constitution and a presidential system.

He spoke proudly of his movement—"we the Sadrists"—and its previous breaches of the Green Zone, prime minister's office and legislative chamber. "I've joined them all and I'm proud of it," he said, stressing the "revolutionary ideology" of the camp around firebrand cleric Sadr who once led an anti-US militia and who has millions of devoted followers.

Oklah acknowledged "the difficulty of the struggle for reform" in Iraq. But he stressed his conviction that Sadr enjoys "divine protection" and commands a "loyal popular base, which is like the arm with which he strikes at the dens of the corrupt".

### The mother of seven

Leaning back in a chair inside the legislative chamber, Umm Ali, 47, has come to demonstrate with her husband, brothers and nephews. She vowed they would stay "until the Sayyed tells us to withdraw," using the honorary title of Sadr, whose black turban marks him as a descendant of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH).

A portrait of Moqtada sat in the lap of the mother of six girls and one boy. "He is the only one with integrity," said the woman, who lives in Baghdad's working-class Sadr City district, named after the preacher's late father who was a revered cleric.

Her goal, she said, is to "recover the country. The whole country has been stolen." She said her husband has been disabled since he was wounded in a 2009 bombing in Baghdad. "He was a civil servant, he was just getting out of work," she said. "Since then we have received no compensation." She said her son started working after primary school to help feed the family.



**BAGHDAD:** Supporters of Iraqi cleric Moqtada Sadr, protesting against a rival bloc's nomination for prime minister, raise a banner bearing the name of one of the tribal clans (Masoud Clan) at their sit-in inside Iraq's parliament headquarters. — AFP

"There is no work for young people," she said. "Even those with higher degrees become porters or day labourers. Is this what they deserve?"

### The tuk-tuk driver

Wearing shorts, flip-flops and sunglasses, Rassul Achour, 20, has used his three-wheeled motorcycle taxi to shuttle protesters in the blistering summer heat. He charges only about 30 US cents for the tuk-tuk ride and says "it's symbolic, just for the petrol".

On a normal day his tuk-tuk earns him just over \$10, just enough to scrape by with his wife and their one-year-old daughter. Life is a struggle he said, with daily power cuts, potholed streets and a night-time tuk-tuk ban that makes his job harder.

Pointing to other young protesters, he said: "All these young people don't have jobs. We want jobs." Achour said he would be ready for any job, even with the military: "Let them give me a job and send me anywhere, even to the border with Syria." — AFP

were denounced by the Scottish National Party (SNP), which is pressing for a second referendum on independence.

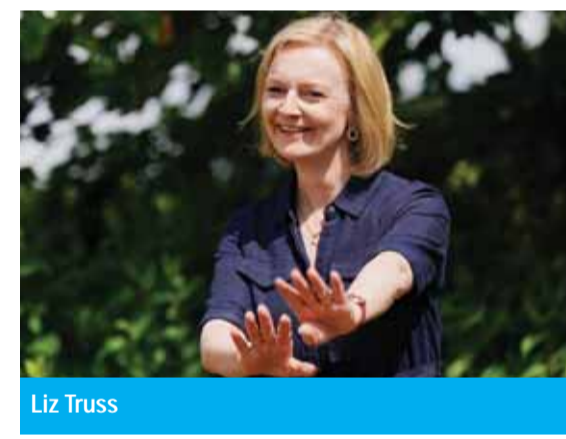
John Swinney, Sturgeon's deputy as first minister of Scotland, called the remarks "obnoxious" and contrasted the roughly 200,000 Tory members with the 2.4 million votes the SNP won in elections last year. "Nicola Sturgeon has far more democratic legitimacy than Liz Truss is going to have if she becomes the prime minister," he told BBC television.

"And I think Liz Truss has absolutely no right or foundation to make these remarks," Swinney said, arguing her "silly, intemperate intervention" had made the case itself for Scotland to go its own way. Sunak has also ruled out another referendum, after Scots voted narrowly in 2014 to stay in the UK.

Last week, Sunak called it "the wrong priority at the worst possible moment". But the SNP argues that Brexit has transformed the constitutional debate, and wants to hold a second plebiscite in October 2023.

The Supreme Court in London plans to hold hearings on October 11-12 this year on whether that would be legal without approval from the UK government. "Keeping the UK together means confronting nationalism and beating them at the ballot box. Only I have a plan to do this," Sunak said, after winning the endorsement of 10 Scottish Conservative colleagues.

Truss, however, already has the backing of big hitters in Johnson's outgoing cabinet after initially



Liz Truss

building a strong poll lead on her promises of immediate tax cuts to address a cost-of-living crisis in Britain. Both candidates have been issuing daily pledges of policy changes in a bid to turn a page on the Johnson government and address Britons' economic fears. They have also been trying to curry favour with right-wingers in the Tory rank and file. Truss outlined the creation of "regional pay boards" outside London for public-sector pay, rather than a uniform rate set nationally, as part of a plan to wage "war on Whitehall waste".

The plan could save £8.8 billion (\$10.75 billion) a year if it covered "all public-sector workers in the long term", her campaign said late Monday. — AFP



"He is the only one with integrity"

express anger at a dysfunctional political system, poor public services and the weak economy of the oil-rich but corruption-plagued country.

Nearly two decades after a US-led invasion toppled Saddam Hussein, and 10 months on from the latest elections, the impasse has left Iraq without a new prime minister or president. AFP spoke to demonstrators, several of whom did not want to be fully identified, about why they have joined the mass protest camp.

### The school teacher

Ali Mohammed Oklah, 43, left behind his wife and three children to drive for four hours from Iraq's mostly Shiite south to the legislature in the usually ultra-secure

## Beirut blast victim's parents wage lonely battle for justice

**BEIRUT:** Paul and Tracy Naggear have lived in grief since the massive explosion that tore through the Lebanese capital in 2020 killed their three-year-old daughter, and their anger boils over the stalled investigation.

The August 4 mega-blast, blamed on a fire that ignited tonnes of ammonium nitrate fertiliser haphazardly stored for years at Beirut harbour, was one of the largest non-nuclear detonations ever recorded. It destroyed thousands of homes, including the couple's apartment which overlooked the harbour-side. Their daughter Alexandra was one of the youngest among the more than 200 people killed.

Failed attempts to hold accountable the state officials whose negligence is widely blamed for Lebanon's worst peacetime disaster have made Alexandra's death even more bitter.

"Our sadness is not the same, it keeps growing, because as time goes on, we miss Alexandra and feel her absence," said Tracy, 36. "Although we can learn to live with sadness, there is an anguish and anger that continues to grow" in the absence of justice, she told AFP in the lead-up to the tragedy's second anniversary on Thursday. — AFP

## UK PM hopeful Truss poll favourite

**LONDON:** Polls Tuesday showed Conservative Liz Truss ahead in the race to become Britain's next prime minister, even as she came under fierce fire in Scotland and was forced into a policy U-turn. As Tory members begin voting for a new party leader by post and online this week, a new survey said the foreign secretary had extended her lead over her main rival, former finance minister Rishi Sunak.

The YouGov poll for The Times found that 60 percent of party members surveyed over five days said they would vote for her, against 26 percent who preferred the ex-chancellor of the exchequer. It came after another poll reported by The Times earlier Tuesday said her lead had narrowed from more than 20 points to just five: 48 percent to 43 percent.

The result of the election, to decide who will replace Prime Minister Boris Johnson, is due on September 5. Earlier on Tuesday, Truss was accused of insulting the government in Edinburgh after she alleged First Minister Nicola Sturgeon was an "attention seeker" for agitating for Scottish independence, and suggested people should "ignore her".

The provocative remarks, delivered at a Tory member hustings in southwest England late Monday,

2.818 million bpd. The Kuwaiti delegation to the two meetings included the OPEC Governor Mohammad Al-Shatti and the National Representative of Kuwait to OPEC Sheikh Abdullah Sabah Salem Hamoud Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, the OPEC+ oil cartel agreed to a small increase in production Wednesday, likely disappointing US President Joe Biden who lobbied for a big hike to tame soaring energy prices on a recent trip to Saudi Arabia. The cartel led by Saudi Arabia and Russia decided to raise production by 100,000 barrels per day for September, much lower than previous increases, according to a statement issued after a ministerial videoconference.

Oil prices had fallen earlier this week but they rose more than one percent on news of the OPEC+ decision, with the main international contract, Brent, climbing back above \$100 per barrel.

"The smallest increase in OPEC+ history will do little to help the ongoing global energy crisis," Edward Moya, analyst at OANDA trading platform, told AFP. — Agencies

protest student leader Wu'er Kaixi. "We are in high agreement that Taiwan is in the frontline (of democracy)," Wu'er said. "Both the United States and Taiwan governments need to... conduct more in defending human rights." Pelosi's delegation left Taiwan on Wednesday evening en route to South Korea, her next stop in an Asia tour that has included stops in Singapore and Malaysia. She will wrap up her trip in Japan.

After her departure, Taiwan's defense ministry announced late Wednesday that 27 Chinese warplanes had entered the island's air defense identification zone (ADIZ). Over the last two years, Beijing has ramped up military incursions into Taiwan's ADIZ - which is not the same as the island's territorial airspace, but includes a far greater area.

The ministry published a map that showed 16 Su-30s and 6 J-11s had crossed the so-called "median line" of the Taiwan Strait - an unofficial boundary in the narrow waterway, which separates the island from the mainland and straddles vital shipping lanes. Chinese jets also crossed over the so-called "median line" during two high-level visits by US officials in 2020 during Donald Trump's presidency. Nevertheless, that is still a relatively rare occurrence. — AFP

## US warns Americans after Zawahiri...

Continued from Page 1

"I made a promise to the American people that we'd continue to conduct effective counterterrorism operations... We've done just that." Announcing jihadist leader deaths has become a ritual-both somber and highly political-for presidents ever since the attacks of September 11, 2001. Barack Obama's 2011 revelation of the daring operation to kill Osama bin Laden in his home in Pakistan electrified the nation.

On hearing Obama, a skilled orator, people poured into the streets, chanting "USA!" Donald Trump took a different approach in 2019, using gory language to deliver news of a raid to kill Islamic State group leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi in Syria-and to bolster his own strong man image. "He died like a dog," Trump said.

For Biden, the setting was inauspicious. Isolating from a case of rebound COVID-19, battered in the polls and facing the anniversary this month of the traumatic August 2021 exit of US troops from Kabul, the Democrat is in a weak position. In a nod to COVID ventilation measures, his speech was delivered from the noisy balcony of the Blue Room. As he touted American resilience, Washington police sirens wailed in the background.

Yet the timing of the speech could not have been better for a president seeking to change the narrative. While steering clear of triumphalism, Biden noted that Zawahiri had been on the wanted list "for years under presidents (George W) Bush, Obama and Trump." The implication-that the country is safe in Biden's hands-was clear. "No matter how long it takes, no matter where you hide, if you are a threat to our people, the United States will find you and take you out," Biden said.

### Afghan strategy debate

Critics on the right and left see last year's US withdrawal from Kabul as a show of ineptitude that, in addition to being a humiliating spectacle, will make Afghanistan a hotbed of anti-American Islamic

groups, similar to the time of 9/11. Biden argues he had the courage to pull the plug on a failed war conducted by three previous presidents and that there simply was never going to be a neat ending to the debacle.

Dismissing skeptics, he also promised that American "over the horizon" capabilities meant there'd be no more need to risk US lives on the ground. Now with the Zawahiri killing, Biden has a golden opportunity to say that he's been proved right. Afghanistan "can't be a launching pad against the United States," Biden said in his speech. "This operation is a clear demonstration that we will, we can, and we'll always make good on the solemn pledge."

### Downsides

There was instant praise from even unlikely quarters, with the anchor on the often hostile Fox News' evening broadcast calling it "President Biden's bin Laden moment" and "a huge, huge win for the US." Some experts, however, caution against the White House spin. James Jeffrey, a former US ambassador to Iraq and now chair of the Wilson Center think tank's Middle East Program, applauded the demonstration of "excellent intelligence, an operational strike capability and decisiveness."

However, that expertise does not outweigh the "chaos" of last year's Afghan withdrawal, which Jeffrey blamed on poor coordination and Biden's "handicapping" of staff through his refusal to accept there could be any downsides to pulling out-or to plan for them. Nathan Sales, another former diplomat who works at the Atlantic Council, said Zawahiri's mere presence in Kabul was a failure for the United States, suggesting "as feared, the Taliban is once more granting safe haven to the leaders of Al-Qaeda."

And it's too early to say whether one spectacular drone strike "can be replicated against other terrorist targets," he said. "Until we know more, we should resist the urge to see the strike as a vindication of 'over the horizon' counterterrorism." Biden, however, is so far getting overall good marks. Among those cheering Tuesday was Bill McRaven, who as then-commander of US special operations oversaw the bin Laden raid. "What the US has shown is that we can in fact do over the horizon targeting on certain high value individuals," he told CNN. — AFP

## Oil Minister urges OPEC+...

Continued from Page 1

yesterday, wishing him success on the upcoming period in supporting and encouraging cooperation among member states, as well as unifying efforts to create more stability in the oil markets. He commended the role of OPEC+ in contributing to the stability of markets and the security of supply effectively, stressing that OPEC+ is a major element in the market that must be preserved for the benefit of all.

Al-Fares reiterated Kuwait's full commitment to the agreed production quotas, commending the OPEC+ decision to increase supplies on September by 100,000 barrels per day, becoming a positive indicator of market support, as Kuwait's share for September will be at

## Taiwan defiant; China gears for...

Continued from Page 1

We will... continue to hold the line of defense for democracy," Tsai said at an event with Pelosi in Taipei. She also thanked the 82-year-old US lawmaker for "taking concrete actions to show your staunch support for Taiwan at this critical moment". China tries to keep Taiwan isolated on the world stage and opposes countries having official exchanges with Taipei.

Pelosi, second in line to the presidency, is the highest-profile elected US official to visit Taiwan in 25 years. "Today, our delegation... came to Taiwan to make unequivocally clear we will not abandon our commitment to Taiwan," she said at the event with Tsai. She added her group had come "in peace to the region".

Before leaving Taiwan, Pelosi also met with several dissidents who have previously been in the crosshairs of China's wrath — including Tiananmen

## International

# Russia backs Myanmar junta's efforts to 'stabilise' country, hold elections

## Polls to take place when conflict-wracked country is stable and peaceful

**YANGON:** Russia backs the Myanmar junta's efforts to "stabilise" the crisis-wracked country and hold elections next year, its foreign minister said in talks with top generals on Wednesday, according to Russian state media. The Southeast Asian nation has been in turmoil since the putsch last year, with the junta accused by rights groups of committing war crimes as it struggles to crush resistance to its rule. Isolated internationally and with Western governments imposing sanctions, the military government has sought to deepen ties with major ally and arms supplier Russia-whose invasion of Ukraine it has said was "justified".

"We are in solidarity with the efforts [by the junta] aimed at stabilising the situation in the country," Sergei Lavrov said during talks in Myanmar's capital Naypyidaw, according to the TASS news agency. "Next year, you will hold legislative elections and we wish you success," Lavrov added, referring to proposed August 2023 elections that opponents of the coup have said will be neither free nor fair.

On Monday junta chief Min Aung Hlaing—who trav-



**NAYPYIDAW, Myanmar:** Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov shaking hands with Myanmar Min Aung Hlaing, Senior General and Chairman of the State Administration Council in Naypyidaw. — AFP

Lavrov is scheduled to travel on to an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) foreign ministers' meeting in Cambodia from which the junta's top diplomat has been excluded. The bloc joined a chorus of international outrage last week after the junta announced it had executed four prisoners, including a former lawmaker and a democracy activist, in the country's first use of capital punishment in decades.

### 'Disappointed and disturbed'

ASEAN has been growing increasingly frustrated at Myanmar's lack of progress on a five-point peace plan agreed last year. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen—the current ASEAN chair—on Wednesday warned Myanmar against further hangings.

He said the regional bloc was "disappointed and disturbed" by last month's executions, and that the further use of capital punishment would mean a "rethink" of the

five-point peace plan. Isolated on the international stage, the junta has turned increasingly to allies including China and Russia. Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing was in Moscow on a "private" visit in July and reportedly met with officials from Moscow's space agency Roscosmos and nuclear agencies. In Naypyidaw, Lavrov said Roscosmos would build "new infrastructure" in Myanmar in cooperation with the junta.

The army has justified its power grab by alleging massive fraud during the 2020 elections, in which Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) trounced a military-backed party. Last year, it cancelled the results of the polls, saying it had uncovered more than 11 million instances of voter fraud.

International observers said the voting was largely free and fair. More than 2,100 people have been killed in a military crackdown on dissent, according to a local monitor. — AFP

## S Lanka arrests protest leader Joseph Stalin

**COLOMBO:** A top Sri Lankan trade union leader in the forefront of protests which led to the ousting of Gotabaya Rajapaksa from the presidency was arrested Wednesday, witnesses and officials said. Joseph Stalin, the secretary of the Sri Lanka Teachers' Union, becomes the senior most activist to be arrested in a crackdown against protesters forced Rajapaksa to flee last month. "He is being arrested for holding a demonstration in May in violation of a court order," police told reporters at Stalin's union office in Colombo as he was being detained. Scores of others have already been remanded in custody by police on charges of damage to public property during months of protests which peaked with the storming of Rajapaksa's palace on July 9.

Tens of thousands of people incensed by the island nation's economic crisis stormed Rajapaksa's palace and his seafaring office-forcing him to flee the country and later resign. Rajapaksa's successor, Ranil Wickremesinghe, has drawn a distinction between "protesters" and "rioters" and vowed tough action against "any trouble maker." Police also arrested another protester who had raided the liquor cabinet of the deposed leader, downed a beer and took off with a presidential mug. The 43-year-old man's arrest comes after he shared a photo of himself on Facebook at Colombo's Presidential Palace, a police official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The man was arrested earlier this week for alleged unlawful entry into a state building and retaining stolen property. "He will be brought to Colombo to stand trial," the official said. The palace was occupied for about 10 days before it was handed back to the authorities. Last week, police arrested another trade union activist from the Colombo port for removing two official flags from the palace and using them as a bedsheet and a sarong. He was identified from the videos he had shared on social media.

Sri Lanka's 22 million people have endured months of lengthy blackouts, record inflation and shortages of food, fuel and petrol. Rajapaksa had been blamed by protesters for mismanaging the nation's finances and public anger had simmered for months before the mass demonstrations that forced his ouster.—AFP

## New HK chief among world's highest paid politicians

**HONG KONG:** Hong Kong's new leader John Lee received a salary bump that would make him among the world's highest-paid politicians, according to figures provided by his office Wednesday, even as the financial hub's economy undergoes a downturn.

The government announced this week that its economy has tipped into a technical recession, after being battered by the pandemic, mounting interest rates and weakened global trade. Despite the city's dip in fortunes, the chief executive will still be comfortably compensated, according to figures provided by his office.

The former secretary chief, who assumed office in July, is paid HK\$452,200 (\$58,000) a month, and will

## First Ukrainian grain shipment checks in Turkey

**ISTANBUL:** A Russian and Ukrainian team on Wednesday completed a high-stakes inspection of the first shipment of grain from Ukraine since the Kremlin's invasion five months ago helped spark a global food crisis. The checks aboard the Sierra Leone-flagged Razoni in Istanbul were being watched closely for signs of how well the first agreement signed by Moscow and Kyiv since Russia invaded its pro-Western neighbour can hold. A deal brokered by Turkey and the United Nations last month lifted a Russian naval blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea cities and set terms for millions of tonnes of wheat and other grain to start flowing from Ukraine's filled silos and ports.

Ukraine exports roughly half of the sunflower oil used on the world market and is one of the world's main suppliers of grain. An almost complete halt to its exports helped push up global food prices and make imports prohibitively expensive in some of the poorest countries in the world.

The Razoni is due to deliver more than 26,000 tonnes of maize to Lebanon—a crisis-wracked country that imports more than 80 percent of its wheat from Ukraine and Russia. The ship sailed through a specially designated corridor in the mine-infested waters of the Black Sea before reaching the northern edge of the Bosphorus Strait on Tuesday. A team of 20 inspectors from the two warring parties and the UN and Turkey strapped on orange helmets and boarded the ship early Wednesday for a check that officials said lasted less than 90 minutes.



**ISTANBUL:** Sierra Leone-flagged cargo vessel Razoni sails along the Bosphorus Strait past Istanbul. A team of Russian and Ukrainian officials inspected the first shipment of grain exported from Ukraine since Moscow's invasion. — AFP

### Arms depot

The 186-metre (610-foot) long vessel is now due to sail down the Bosphorus Strait in the heart of Istanbul before moving on to the Marmara and Aegean seas. The UN secretary general's spokesman, Stéphane Dujarric, said he hoped for "more outbound movement" from Ukraine on Wednesday.

Kyiv says at least 16 more grain ships are waiting to depart. But it also accuses Russia of stealing Ukrainian grain in territories seized by Kremlin forces and then shipping it to allied countries such as Syria. But Turkish hopes that the grain deal could help build trust and lead to ceasefire talks have so far proved futile.

Russia has continued to pound southern Ukrainian cities near the Black Sea with missiles and pressed on with its grinding ground assault across the east. Officials in Mykolaiv said no one was killed Wednesday in shelling on one of the southern city's supermarkets that came just days after the region's grain mogul and his wife died in a targeted strike on their house.

Moscow said on Wednesday that it had destroyed another foreign arms depot in western Ukraine—a region the furthest removed from the fighting. Kyiv has launched mandatory evacuations from the eastern Donetsk region—now bearing the brunt of Russia's offensive—because the government does not expect to be able to provide it with heat in the cold winter months.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has urged the estimated 200,000 remaining residents of the Donetsk region to leave. Kyiv's forces have been pressing a counter-offensive to drive out the Russians from the southern Kherson region near the Kremlin-annexed Crimea peninsula.—AFP

receive an entertainment allowance of over \$10,000 as well, his office told AFP Wednesday. His salary is a step-up from that of his predecessor Carrie Lam, who used to earn around \$54,000 a month.

This means Lee earns more than US President Joe Biden—whose annual salary is \$400,000—and is second only to Singaporean leader Lee Hsien Loong, who nets around \$1.6 million a year.

The 64-year-old was chosen for Hong Kong's top job earlier this year after running unopposed, with his campaign receiving around \$1.4 million in donations.

Like Lam, he is also subject to sanctions by the United States for his role in China's ongoing crackdown on freedoms in the city.

Lam once revealed she had "piles of cash" at home as she was denied banking services due to the US sanctions. It is unclear whether Lee receives his salary in cash. But he has on multiple occasions denounced the American sanctions as "bullying" and said he paid them no attention. The Chinese city regularly tops the chart as one of the most expensive cities to live in, with world-beating levels of wealth inequality. — AFP

## Militias have sprung up to battle the army

elled to Moscow last month—said polls could only take place when the conflict-wracked country was "stable and peaceful". The putsch has sparked renewed fighting with established ethnic rebel groups in border areas, while dozens of civilian "People's Defence Force" militias have also sprung up to battle the military.

Russia—along with ally China—has been accused by rights groups and a UN expert of arming the military with weapons used to attack civilians. Lavrov and junta chief Min Aung Hlaing also discussed opening new consulates "to promote an increase in travel" between their two countries, TASS said.

The junta has yet to comment on Lavrov's visit.



**LAGOS:** Hustlers wait for customers outside a night club at Ikoyi Lagos. — AFP

## Hustling in Lagos to 'survive in hell'

**LAGOS:** It's midnight. Luxury cars arrive outside Cocoon, a nightclub in Lagos, Nigeria's largest and most vibrant city. In minutes, dozens of people surround the vehicles, hoping to make a buck. In the wealthy Ikoyi neighbourhood, the flow of people chasing money never stops. All survive on informal jobs they find daily on the streets.

For a handful of dollars, they help people park in front of expensive restaurants, bars and clubs, and help manage traffic during the day. In the megacity of some 20 million people, for the poorest a good day is when you have enough to eat. A bad day is when you don't—and those days are increasingly frequent as high fuel and food costs bite into earnings.

"In Nigeria, it's simple. Either you hustle or you die. So even 100 naira (25 cents), we take it," says Musa Omar, standing opposite the Cocoon nightclub. Africa's most populous country has some 80 million people living below the national poverty line, earning less than 1.90 dollars a day. And in rural Nigeria, millions live in areas where insecurity is rife, making living conditions even harsher. Many are now being pushed to a tipping point, after cost of living and food prices increased following the coronavirus pandemic and then again after Russia declared war in Ukraine.

Nigeria's official year-on-year inflation is now 18 percent, with food inflation at 20 percent—a five-year high. In Lagos, hustlers—people living and working by the day—can be seen at every corner. They embody one of the city's mottos often seen painted in colourful letters on trucks: "No food for lazy man."

The street is like a river, and they hope desperately to catch a passing fish. "I'm willing to work anywhere, to do anything, to make a decent living," said Omar, 36. "Before, it was not like this... prices have gone up, everything is expensive and everybody is suffering."

### God, only 'hope'

Every day, thousands of people, mostly young, trickle into the cities and in particular Lagos, hoping to capture a small fraction of the immense wealth concentrated in the hands of a select few. It's the case of Kasheem Sadiq who left Kaduna, in the north, after

the death of his baby son, Yusuf, who "got sick". "I had to find 9,000 naira (about \$20) to pay the treatment but I couldn't because price of food is up. And there is no job anywhere," said the 44-year-old, standing under the only functioning light of a dark street of Lagos.

Now working in Lagos, he says he earns about 2,500 naira (\$6) a day—almost three times more than what half of the population earns—but, "every night, I'm crying, away from my family," he said. It's now 2.20 am outside the Cocoon nightclub. Someone in a Porsche is trying to park while a group of hustlers guide the driver so that he doesn't crash the luxury car in a ditch full of trash. "The rich are getting so rich and nobody cares about the poor," says Abdul Musa, 35, who seems to be the hustlers' informal chief. "Only God can help us."

### Drugs, prostitution

From Benue, in the east, Musa has been working the streets of Ikoyi for the past five years. He says he sleeps in a stable at night with donkeys. "I don't want to have children," he says. In this country, "we are surviving in hell."

Five am Clubbers are streaming out, heading back to their cars. It's late, or early, but someone shouting the following three syllables is enough to arouse the crowd: "Bu-ha-ri", in reference to President Muhammadu Buhari.

The 79-year-old former army general is stepping down next year after his two terms in office allowed by the constitution. For many including for those waiting outside Cocoon, the government is "corrupt" and "does nothing for the people". Anita Obasi, the only woman in the group of hustlers, is looking at the stream of cars driving away, smoking a joint. In Nigeria, drugs are widely consumed among the street hustlers as a way to escape reality.

Wearing a black cap, the 24-year-old smiles. She says smoking "eases the pain away". For the past two years, she has been working as a prostitute, charging the equivalent of \$9 a client or \$11 when she travels to them. After two decades of growth, Nigeria entered a recession in 2016, after a fall in oil prices. The economy was just starting to recover in 2020 when the pandemic hit. And the war in Ukraine has made everything much worse. Obasi lives in constant anguish: Will she be able to feed her daughter at the end of the day? "I try thinking about the bright side of things, but everything around me is going down." — AFP

# Business

THURSDAY, AUGUST 4, 2022

## Scholz opens door to extend nuclear plants as Russia blocks gas turbine

### Germany scrambling for energy sources amid shortage of gas supplies

**BERLIN:** German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Wednesday raised the possibility of keeping nuclear plants going as he accused Russia of blocking the delivery of a key turbine to throttle gas supplies to Europe.

The continent's biggest economy has been scrambling for energy sources to fill a gap left by a reduction in gas supplies from Moscow. Standing next to the turbine, Scholz said that extending the lifetime of Germany's three remaining nuclear power plants "can make sense". The power stations, which are set to be taken off the grid at the end of the year, were "relevant exclusively for electricity production, and only for a small part of it," Scholz said.

In total, the nuclear fleet accounts for six percent of Germany's electricity output. The government has said it will wait the outcome of a new "stress test" of the national electric grid before determining whether to stick with the long-planned phaseout.

#### Nuclear switch

Former Chancellor Angela Merkel spectacularly decided to ditch atomic energy in 2011 following the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan. Extending the lifetime of the plants has set off a heated debate in Germany, where nuclear power has been a source of controversy stretching back before Merkel's move.

The question has split the governing coalition, with Scholz's Social Democrats and the Greens hitherto skeptical, and the FDP favoring an extension. Germany has already moved to restart moth-balled coal power plants to guard against an energy shortfall.

The first of these was already "supplying electricity to the network", Scholz said Wednesday,

adding that Germany had to prepare for a "difficult time". The squeeze comes as Russia dwindles supplies of gas, which Germany has long relied on to power industry and heat homes.

Russian energy giant Gazprom has chalked up limited supplies to technical issues. The delayed return of a turbine from Canada, where the unit was being serviced, was behind the initial reduction in deliveries via the Nord Stream 1 gas pipeline in June, according to Gazprom. Supplies via the energy link were further reduced to around 20 percent of capacity in late July, after Gazprom halted the operation of one of the last two operating turbines due to the "technical condition of the engine".

#### Turbine trouble

Berlin has dismissed Gazprom's justifications for the reduction to supply, seeing instead a "political" move in response to the West's support for Ukraine. The turbine which was transferred from Canada to Germany was "available and working", Scholz said Wednesday.

"There is no reason why this delivery cannot happen," he said, adding that it had received "all the approvals" needed for export from Germany to Russia. Pipeline operators only had to say "they want to have the turbine and provide the necessary customs information for transport to Russia", Scholz said.

But Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov insisted that Gazprom was still waiting for documents confirming the unit was "not affected by sanctions". It was however "technologically possible" in the opinion of Russian President Vladimir Putin to continue deliveries via the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, Peskov said.



**MUELHEIM AN DER RUHR, Germany:** German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (second left) and Christian Bruch (left), President and CEO of Siemens Energy, listen to Siemens' leading engineering manager Gerd Uwe Schmiedel (right) as he gives explanations in front of a turbine of the Nord Stream 1 pipeline during a visit on August 3, 2022 at the plant of Siemens Energy in Muelheim an der Ruhr, western Germany, where the engine is stored after maintenance work in Canada. —AFP

The second pipeline, which runs parallel to Nord Stream 1, stands completed but was blocked by the German government in the run up to the invasion of Ukraine. Former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, who signed off on the pipeline while in office, told German magazine Stern it was "the easiest solution"

to use Nord Stream 2 instead.

But Scholz has rejected the call, saying Nord Stream 1 provided sufficient capacity for gas flows. Moscow's move to limit supplies sent a "difficult message" to the world by creating doubt over Russia's commitment to its agreements, he added. —AFP

## Turkish inflation stabilizes in July at under 80%

**ISTANBUL:** Turkey's annual inflation rate stabilized in July at just under 80 percent, official data showed on Wednesday, helping support President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's pledges that runaway price increases would soon stop. The official annual rate of consumer price increases reached 79.6 percent in July compared to 78.6 percent in June.

Turkey plunged into a fresh economic crisis when Erdogan set off on an unusual economic experiment nearly a year ago that attempted to bring down chronically high inflation by slashing interest rates.

Conventional economic theory, accepted by world governments, states that lower interest rates drive growth and push up prices by building up demand.

Turkey now has a real interest rate that factors in inflation of negative 64.4 percent—the lowest in the world by a substantial margin. This means that Turks have a strong incentive to spend as much as they can before their liras lose even more value.

But Erdogan has repeatedly urged "patience" and vowed that prices would start falling again at the start of next year. "A price stabilization trend has already started," Erdogan said two days before the latest inflation report was released.

"We hope that inflation will enter a significant downward trend in the first months of the new year." The central bank now forecasts the inflation rate to ease back down to roughly 40 percent by the time Erdogan is due to face a difficult re-election next July.

#### Doubt in data

Opposition leaders and many Turks no longer



**ANKARA:** People shop at a fish market in Ankara. Turkey's annual inflation rate stabilized in July at just under 80 percent, official data showed on Wednesday.

trust official government data. The annual inflation rate reported this week in Istanbul—headed by a popular opposition party figure—was roughly 100 percent. "Turkey's official inflation and Istanbul's inflation have historically moved in tandem," the Turkish central bank's former chief economist Hakan Kara tweeted.

"The difference, which has reached 19.5 percentage points in the last four months, is remarkable."

But a respected monthly study released by independent economists from Turkey's ENAG research institute also showed prices stabilizing—although at a much higher rate than the one reported by the state statistics agency. ENAG said the official annual rate of consumer price increases reached 176 percent in July compared to 174 percent in June.

The government's July report showed price

increases being led by a 119-percent jump in the cost of transportation. This helps back government arguments that inflation is being driven by external factors such as soaring energy prices caused by Russia's standoff with the West over its invasion in Ukraine.

Food and non-alcoholic prices rose by 95 percent because of the sharp depreciation of the lira that makes imports more expensive. The Turkish currency has lost more than half its value against the dollar in the past 12 months. It now trades at nearly 18 to the dollar compared to the 3.5 mark at which it stood in 2018. Erdogan's popularity has suffered badly in the second decade of his rule as a result. A poll of polls released this week showed him losing in a runoff against any of the top five potential challengers to his rule. —AFP

## BMW profits drop as China lockdowns knock production

**BERLIN:** German auto manufacturer BMW said Wednesday its profits dipped in the second quarter as supply bottlenecks and Chinese lockdowns knocked production.

The carmaker's profits for the period between April and June fell to three billion euros (\$3.1 billion) from 4.8 billion euros in the same period last year.

BMW CEO Oliver Zipse recognized "unfavorable conditions" but said in a statement the Munich-based group had shown "a high degree of resilience".

"Ongoing semiconductor supply issues and supply chain disruptions following COVID lockdowns in China", a key market for automakers, held back production in the first half of the year, BMW said in a statement. BMW shipped just over

563,000 units in the second quarter of 2022, a drop of 19.8 percent.

Like other premium carmakers, the limits to production meant that BMW leaned more heavily on its top-of-the-range models with bigger margins. The group benefited from this better "product mix" and higher prices for its vehicles, which partially offset the fall in the number of vehicles sold, BMW said.

BMW said economic conditions would "remain difficult" in the second half of the year, with the war in Ukraine also disrupting supply and weighing on the industry.

Unit sales in the second half would be "solidly higher", BMW said, but would "not fully compensate for lost volume" in the first half, meaning deliveries of its vehicles would now be "slightly below" the level of last year. Strong demand and recent tight supply meant BMW had an "above-average order book".

But high inflation on the back of soaring energy prices would cool the economy and see BMW's order backlog "normalize towards the end of the year". BMW's predictions did not take into account the impact that a cut to Russian gas supplies to Europe could have on its production locally. —AFP



**BERLIN:** German auto manufacturer BMW said Wednesday its profits dipped in the second quarter as supply bottlenecks and Chinese lockdowns knocked production.

## Saudi Arabia sets up new investment promotion authority

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia has established a new investment promotion authority in a bid to boost growth for the Arab world's largest economy. The Saudi Investment Promotion Authority (SIPA) was launched at the directive of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who is the president of the Council of Economic and Development Affairs, the Ministry of Investment stated on Wednesday.

"The establishment of SIPA will enable an integrated approach to investment between government agencies while enhancing all activities and services related to investment promotion to support partnerships between local and foreign investors," Khalid Al-Falih, Minister of Investment for Saudi Arabia, said. The move comes as Saudi Arabia, OPEC's top oil exporter, continues to focus on attracting investment into the country to diversify its economy away from oil.

In October, Prince Mohammed launched the National Investment Strategy, which seeks to attract \$103.47 billion in foreign direct investments annually, according to the state-run Saudi Press Agency. The kingdom also expects to increase its domestic investment also under the new strategy.

"The launch of SIPA is made possible by the kingdom's first National Investment Strategy, which seeks to unleash the potential of the kingdom's strong market fundamentals and the breadth and depth of opportunities created by Vision 2030," the Ministry of Investment said.

"The strategy aims to increase investment to 30 per cent of GDP and catalyze the growth of emerging sectors in the economy."

In the first quarter of this year, the kingdom signed investment deals worth more than \$4bn in sectors including entrepreneurship, advanced manufacturing, defense, information and communications technology, petrochemicals and conversion industries. Among the big deals announced during the quarter was the \$3.4bn investment by US-based Lucid Motors to set up an electric vehicle factory in Saudi Arabia with a production capacity of 155,000 units a year. Saudi Arabia also signed 13 investment agreements on the sidelines of US President Joe Biden's visit to the kingdom last month.

The agreements covered sectors including energy, aerospace, defense, textiles, manufacturing, education and tourism, the Ministry of Investment said at the time. The kingdom's economy in the first quarter of 2022 experienced the highest rate of growth in the last 10 years amid increased activity in the oil sector, government data showed. The country's economy is forecast to grow 7.6 per cent in 2022 and 3.7 per cent in 2023, after expanding 3.2 per cent last year, according to the International Monetary Fund. —Agencies



Business



**DOMBOSHAW, Zimbabwe:** Danai Bvochora, a poultry farmer, arranges eggs at her market stall after transporting them on her renewable energy electrical tricycle which is designed for a rural off road environment such as her home in Domboshawa. — AFP photos



**Danai Bvochora (left),** a poultry farmer and her friend Frasia Gotosa clean and pack eggs into crates as she prepares to go to market on her renewable energy electrical tricycle which is designed for a rural off road environment such as her home in Domboshawa.

# Solar electric tricycles give Zimbabwean women a lift

## European Union-funded project assists small-scale farmers in Zimbabwe

**HARARE:** For years, selling eggs was a joyless business for Danai Bvochora, as most of the money she made went to cover minibus fares to the market in a rural area of Zimbabwe. That was until an earth-brown solar-powered electric tricycle changed her life. “We used to carry loads on our heads before. The tricycle has lessened the burden,” said the 47-year-old from Domboshava, about 40 kilometer (25 miles) north of Zimbabwe’s capital, Harare.

She carefully loads eggs onto the tricycle’s trailer before embarking on a bumpy eight-kilometer journey to the market. “We even use it to go to church and worship,” Bvochora said, explaining a single trip to buy chicken feed from a local business centre used to cost her \$12.

But charging her new solar-powered vehicle sets her back only \$2.50 every two weeks, and the mother of two is now making a profit. Bvochora is among groups of women in Domboshava, a district renowned

for its picturesque hills and giant boulders, who received a tricycle last year as part of a European Union-funded project to assist small-scale farmers.

Assembled by Harare-based social enterprise Mobility for Africa, the three-wheelers were first introduced in Zimbabwe in 2019 to help women develop their businesses, said the company’s director Shantha Bloemen. Transport has historically been inadequate in sparsely populated rural areas of Zimbabwe, where women often have to walk long distances carrying heavy loads on their heads to trade products—which sometimes spoil on the way in the heat.

### Electric push

Yet the idea of addressing that with electric three-wheelers raised a few eyebrows at first, said American-born Bloemen, who is a permanent resident in Zimbabwe and lived in the country in the 1990s when she worked for UNICEF. “It was very lonely

when we started,” Bloemen said, explaining her team had to work hard to prove to funders that the idea was viable. “No one was talking about electric mobility in Africa let alone for rural women.”

Three years later, the social enterprise is planning to more than triple its current fleet of 88 motorized vehicles by the end of 2022. It operates three solar-powered stations, where drivers can come to swap their lithium battery for a fully charged one when running low on energy—and foots the bill when something breaks. Zimbabwe has for more than two decades faced tough economic conditions, with rural areas particularly hard hit. The country’s economy is mainly driven by the informal sector, to which Domboshava women farmers such as these belong.

While some of the three-wheelers—nicknamed “Hamba” or “go” in the local Ndebele language—were bought by the EU and then gifted to locals, others are rented out for \$5 a day. Phyllis Chifamba, a 37-year-

old mother of four, uses her rented vehicle as a taxi. Her clients include sick people going to a clinic, pregnant women going for medical checks, and villagers and farm dwellers going to do their shopping and other errands.

“I am able to provide food for my family and pay school fees for my children with the money I make from using the Hamba,” she said. Mobility for Africa said it was planning to expand operations to other areas. “African women are the most entrepreneurial, most productive but no one takes them seriously,” said Bloemen. “If we solve the transport problems, rural economies will work. Small farmers will get more produce to the market.” Beneficiary Frasia Gotosa said her small business has improved since she has been driving to the market as her vegetables no longer rot while waiting for the bus or pushing a wheelbarrow. “Now I get to the market while my produce is still fresh,” she said. — AFP



## Non-oil business activity in Saudi, UAE improves

**RIYADH/ABU DHABI:** Business activity in the non-oil private sector economies of Saudi Arabia and the UAE continued to improve in July, with a strong increase in output, new orders and employment despite a rise in inflationary pressures. The headline seasonally adjusted S&P Global Saudi Arabia Purchasing Managers’ Index posted 56.3 in July, slightly lower than 57 in June, but signaled a robust improvement in business conditions for the 23rd month in a row. A reading above the neutral level of 50 indicates growth while one below it points to a contraction. “The Saudi Arabia PMI remained firmly in growth territory in July. New business continued to rise substantially, helped by recovering demand and strengthening export sales,” David Owen, an economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence, said. “Output expanded sharply and employment numbers rose at the fastest pace since September 2019, following a period of weakness in labor markets since the COVID-19 pandemic began.”

Although the expansion in the kingdom’s non-oil businesses activity was slightly softer than at the end of the second quarter, five times as many companies saw an increase in activity month-on-month compared with those that recorded a decline. Businesses surveyed attributed the expansion mainly to higher sales, new projects and stronger marketing. New work intake in the kingdom also rose markedly in July, with the latest upturn being the second-quickest in eight months. Improving market conditions at home and strengthening new export orders that rose at the sharpest pace since November helped the growth momentum at the beginning of the third quarter.

With new orders increasing rapidly, businesses were encouraged to raise employment levels further in July, extending the current period of growth to four months. The pace of job creation in the kingdom was the quickest since September 2019. Backlogs of work also decreased at the start of the third quarter, with the sharpest rate of decline in just over two years. Efforts to complete unfinished orders were helped by a rise in buying activity, as businesses expanded inventories to cope with stronger demand.

Demand continued to pick up across the non-oil

sector amid optimism for future economic growth. Business confidence in July remained one of the strongest seen since the pandemic began.

Saudi Arabia’s economy grew by 11.8 per cent in the second quarter of 2022, with oil-related economic activity in the kingdom rising 23.1 per cent annually. Non-oil economic activity climbed 5.4 per cent during the period, supporting the growth of the Arab world’s largest economy, according to flash estimates released by the kingdom’s General Authority for Statistics last week. The International Monetary Fund estimates that the Saudi economy will expand by 7.4 per cent this year, driven by higher oil revenue, a projected improvement in the country’s non-oil gross domestic product and its efforts to diversify the economy.—AFP

## France warns winter gas cuts possible

**PARIS:** The French government warned Wednesday that companies might have to reduce energy use this winter even with the country’s natural gas reserves at full capacity, as Russia continues to reduce its gas exports to Europe. “The main players, government agencies and businesses, must reduce their consumption” of gas as well as electricity, because “the two systems are linked,” Energy Minister Agnes Pannier-Runacher told CNews television.

Moscow has slashed its exports to Europe in response to punishing Western sanctions over the invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces, forcing countries to scramble for alternatives.

Even though France is less reliant on Russian supplies than other EU countries, generating around three-quarters of its electricity from nuclear power plants, its industrial sector still relies on gas and millions of people use it to heat their homes. Winter shortfalls will be a risk even though France is racing to top up its gas reserves. “Right now our strategic gas reserves are at 80 percent capacity... which means we will reach our goal of 100 percent before November 1,” Pannier-Runacher said.

## Dutch farmer protests reap populist support

**BARNEVELD, Netherlands:** Dutch farmers’ rowdy protests against government climate plans have caused a stir at home and abroad, with populists worldwide jumping on the bandwagon and even former US president Donald Trump backing them.

“We take all the support that we can get,” says Jaap Kok, a 62-year-old cattle farmer standing in a meadow full of cows near Barneveld in the central Netherlands’ farming belt. The farmers have wreaked havoc for weeks, dumping manure and garbage on highways, blockading supermarket warehouses with tractors and rallying noisily outside politicians’ houses.

They oppose plans to cut emissions of nitrogen in the Netherlands—the world’s second-biggest agricultural exporter after the United States—by reducing livestock and closing some farms.

While a small group has been blamed for much of the unrest, there have also been large protests involving thousands of tractors. With the protests garnering global headlines, right-wing figures have been quick to voice support. As well as Trump, they include French far-right leader Marine Le Pen, and Dutch far-right politicians Geert Wilders and Thierry Baudet. “I would have preferred that the support came from the left but from the right is fine too,” said Kok, whose own farm risks closure. “Farmers are always the scapegoat.”

### ‘Very angry’

The tiny Netherlands produces huge amounts of food thanks to industrialized farming—but at the cost of being one of Europe’s largest greenhouse gas emitters. That is especially true of nitrogen, with much of this blamed on ammonia-based fertilizer and cattle-produced manure. Agriculture is responsible for 16 percent of all Dutch emissions.

Nitrogenous gases play an important role in global climate change. Nitrous oxide is a particularly potent greenhouse gas as it is over 300 times more effective at trapping heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide. The Netherlands’ flat landscape sitting just above sea level makes it vulnerable to extreme weather. In July the

Netherlands recorded its third-highest temperature since records began — 39.4C in the southern city of Maastricht. Nitrogen-containing substances are also blamed for damage to plant and animal habitats.

Following a 2019 court ruling that the Netherlands was not doing enough to protect its natural areas from nitrogen pollution, the Dutch government said in June that the only way to meet climate goals by 2030 was “radical” cuts to farming.

This would involve a reduction in particular of around 30 percent to the Netherlands’ herd of some four million cows. The government has offered some 25 billion euros to help farmers adapt—but has also warned that some closures are possible. “The farmers are very angry,” said Jos Ubels, vice president of the Farmers Defence Force (FDF), one of the groups coordinating the demonstrations. “In history, every time there is a problem with a minority they have to shout really hard to be heard, so this is what we are doing.” Ubels said his group was not responsible for the roadblocks, saying that it was “just organized by local farmers—they are very angry because they are played with.” Prime Minister Mark Rutte recently called the protests “life-threatening”, yet there is a groundswell of support.

### ‘Climate tyranny’

Upside-down Dutch flags—a symbol of the farmers’ movement—can be seen hanging from many houses, lampposts and road bridges. The Farmer-Citizen Movement (BBB), a centre-right party founded in 2019, would increase its current one seat in parliament to 19 according to latest opinion polls.

But their campaign is also going global. The FDF’s Ubels was in Warsaw last week for talks with Agriculture Minister Henryk Kowalczyk, of Poland’s right-wing Law and Justice Party-led populist government. “I will support the position of Dutch farmers in maintaining production... and I hope that their government will change its mind,” Kowalczyk said in a statement. Trump’s backing has also been a boost.

“Farmers in the Netherlands of all places are courageously opposing the climate tyranny of the Dutch government,” Trump told a rally in Florida in July.

In the Netherlands, a recent farmers’ demo in Amsterdam brought also drew many conspiracy theorists and COVID-skeptics. British comedian-turned-YouTuber Russell Brand recently told his 5.8 million followers that the Dutch farm plan was part of the “Great Reset”—a conspiracy theory alleging that world leaders orchestrated the pandemic.—AFP



**BORNERBROEK, Netherlands:** In this file photo, farmers drive their tractors on the A35 motorway as they protest against the government’s nitrogen emissions cutting plans, causing delays due to the slow-moving of their vehicles near Bornerbroek. — AFP

## Business

# US loan delinquencies creep up amid high debt loads: Report

## Credit card balances in April-June quarter surge

WASHINGTON: US households have continued to take on more debt, in part to deal with soaring prices, a report showed Tuesday, while cases of borrowers unable to pay loans are creeping up in a troubling sign of things to come. Facing the biggest surge in inflation in more than four decades, which is squeezing families trying to make ends meet, the New York Federal Reserve Bank's latest report shows credit card balances in the April-June quarter surged by the most in 20 years.

Total household debt posted a two percent increase in the latest three months, and is now \$2 trillion more than the pre-pandemic level, the report showed. While family finances remain in good shape for now—helped by government aid and the ban on foreclosures—researchers caution that the era of historically low delinquencies is coming to an end, especially among those with lower credit scores known as “subprime borrowers.”

“The second quarter of 2022 showed robust increases in mortgage, auto loan, and credit card balances, driven in part by rising prices,” said Joelle Scally, of the New York Fed’s Center for Microeconomic Data. “While household balance

sheets overall appear to be in a strong position, we are seeing rising delinquencies among subprime and low-income borrowers with rates approaching pre-pandemic levels.”

Delinquency rates remain low and an increase is to be expected as the moratoria on foreclosures end, but the report warns that data point to potential trouble ahead for communities that “are experiencing the economy differently.”

“We are seeing a hint of the return of the delinquency and hardship patterns we saw prior to the pandemic,” New York Fed researchers said in a blog post. Total household debt rose \$312 billion in the quarter to \$16.15 trillion, and the biggest component—mortgages—jumped \$207 billion to just under \$11.4 trillion, the report said. However, the amount of new home loans fell, amid rising lending rates.

Credit card balances (up \$46 billion) and auto loans (up \$33 billion to \$1.5 trillion) were impacted by rising prices, the report said.

Meanwhile, student loans, which still benefit from pandemic forbearance programs, were essentially flat at \$1.6 trillion. —AFP



OAKLAND: In this file photo taken on April 06, 2011, foreclosure signs sit on the porch of a foreclosed home in Oakland, California. US households have continued to take on more debt, in part to deal with soaring prices, a report showed on August 2, 2022. — AFP

## Huawei MateBook X Pro: The elegant, flagship laptop

KUWAIT: Current laptop designs are reliable, absolutely, but do they fully match up to the needs of global consumers? Laptops are central to the way we work and, increasingly, to the way we conduct our private lives, yet current offerings fail to take account of the growing appetite for choice and innovation. Ultimately, it is the ability to respond to current consumer trends and to break away from the standard mould which makes Huawei's new MateBook X Pro so notable. Huawei has demonstrated a refreshing ability to move towards an authentic, and even original, brand identity.

This sleek and stylish laptop is a gamechanger that is why it was dubbed the Ultimate elegant high-performance flagship laptop. It features a 3.1K Huawei Real ColourFullView Display in a unique new body and the robust performance of the Evo™ certified 12th Gen Intel Core processor in addition to the futuristic Super Device features.

### A display like no other

You experience the laptop primarily through its display. Huawei MateBook X Pro 14.2-inch OLED Huawei Real ColourFullView Display with 3.1K resolution is stunning in every sense of the word. It makes everything look a whole lot better and smoother with a high refresh rate of 90Hz. You can even count on this laptop for tasks that require the highest levels of color accuracy, like photo and video editing. The display is also super comfortable. In the Premium Edition, it uses a magnetically-controlled Nano Optical AR Layer to reduce reflections for greater clarity, even in bright environments. Also, it has received TUV Rheinland low

blue light (Hardware Solution) certification for its innovative luminous material that reduces the amount of blue light that is harmful to your eyes.

With its skin-soothing metallic body and unique matte surface offering a comfortable grip, Huawei MateBook X Pro sets a new standard for laptop aesthetics. The Premium Edition of the Huawei MateBook X Pro's body is made of lightweight and durable magnesium alloy, which has undergone a Micro-arc Oxidation Coating process. This makes the laptop body durable, wear-resistant and environmentally friendly.

### A huge leap in performance

It only gets better when you look under the hood. Powering it is the powerful 12th Gen Intel Core processor that is configurable up to Core i7-1260P. This new generation of processors has taken performance to the next level with an innovative hybrid architecture that gives you the best performance at maximum efficiency. Moreover, you can switch to the 30W Performance Mode when you need the extra boost by pressing the Fn + P key. This mode allows you to smoothly run multiple complex tasks at the same time. The Intel Iris Xe graphics card provides outstanding graphics processing performance, making complex graphics processing effortless and smooth. The laptop comes with 16 GB LPDDR5 5200 MHz dual-channel high-speed memory and supports up to 1 TB NVMe PCIe SSD.

In addition, the upgraded Super Turbo technology facilitates in-depth optimization at the system level for a quicker and smoother response. This contributes to a better experience, especially in video conferencing and heavy office scenarios.

### Super device - One feature to rule them all

The Huawei MateBook X Pro take multi-device collaboration to a whole new level, thanks to Super Device features, bringing super productivity with a cohesive multi-device experience. It lets you effortlessly connect to other Huawei devices near-



by and collaborate between them all. Simply place your Huawei FreeBuds Pro 2, mouse, keyboard, speakers and printers close to the Huawei MateBook X Pro, and the laptop will automatically discover them and provide a prompt for quick and easy pairing.

In addition, with smartphones like the newly launched Huawei Mate Xs 2 and tablets like the new Huawei MatePad Pro, it is even more useful. Once you have wirelessly connected your phone, you will see its UI (User Interface) appear on your laptop screen, so you can operate it as if your smartphone and laptop are one device. You can access and edit your files, use and manage up to three phone app windows simultaneously, take video or audio calls from your phone through your MateBook, and even use your mouse and keyboard to control your smartphone. Moreover, your tablet can be transformed into a drawing pad or second screen, with documents, images and more seamlessly shared between the two. The Huawei MateBook X Pro can also connect to a Huawei MateView monitor, so you can see your work on an even larger screen.

## Gas bills to double for millions of German households

BERLIN: German households are bracing for bigger-than-usual bills this winter as energy companies pass on the cost of gas, which has soared since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The invoice for a typical household could double from October 1, German group RheinEnergie warned in a statement on Monday, the first major provider to give a

detailed estimate.

The company supplies approximately 2.5 million people with energy in the region around the city of Cologne, in western Germany. “An increase of almost 450 percent in the procurement cost for natural gas” over the past year was behind the punishing increase, RheinEnergie said.

The “market deteriorated significantly again with the start of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine”, which further sent up the price, RheinEnergie said. A two-person household, with an average gas consumption of 10,000 kilowatt-hours annually, would see their bill jump from around €960 (\$980) a year ago to €2,002, the company said. Germany has been highly reliant on

supplies of Russian gas to meet its energy demands, but Moscow has slowly dwindled supplies since the start of the war. The threat that Russia could cut deliveries completely has raised the possibility of shortages over the winter and brought Germany closer to rationing supplies.

Officials in Berlin have mandated the filling of gas storage tankers before the winter and moved to allow under-pressure energy companies to pass on ballooning costs. The step, which will come into force in the autumn, could add “a few hundred euros” to household bills, Economy Minister Robert Habeck has said. That surcharge was however “not included” in the increase announced by RheinEnergie, the group said. —AFP

## Nintendo Q1 net profit jumps thanks to weak yen

TOKYO: Nintendo said Wednesday its first-quarter net profit jumped 28 percent on-year, mainly thanks to a weaker yen, but hardware and software sales declined because of a chip shortage and Covid-19 supply issues. The yen has plummeted more than 10 percent against the dollar this year as sky-high US inflation fuels a widening monetary policy gap—a boon for Japanese companies like Nintendo who sell products overseas.

For the three months to June, the gaming giant posted a net profit of 118.9 billion yen (\$893 million), citing the positive impact of “the depreciation of the yen”.

But the company left its annual forecast unchanged, warning that the global shortage of semiconductors and other logistical snarl-ups could hamper console production and distribution.

New game releases got off to a good start, including “Nintendo Switch Sports” and “Mario Strikers: Battle League”, it said, but sales were still no match for the previous year during the pandemic gaming boom. “Due to the effects of supply shortages in semiconductors and other components among other factors, hardware sales were

down 22.9 percent year-on-year, and software sales were down 8.6 percent year-on-year,” Nintendo added.

Soaring demand for indoor entertainment during virus lockdowns sent the company's profits soaring to an annual record of 480 billion yen in 2020-21. The firm nearly matched that figure in the last financial year, with its blockbuster Switch console continuing to perform well and strong software sales, especially for “Mario Party Superstars” and the latest Pokemon titles.

But Nintendo now has a more cautious outlook as life returns to normal, causing the gaming craze to slow, and expects to report a 340-billion yen net profit in 2022-23. Hideki Yasuda, senior analyst at Toyo Securities, warned that the chip shortage and supply problems linked to Covid-19 lockdowns in China would continue to pose headaches for Nintendo. “The company is feeling significant pressure on its supply chain,” he told AFP before the earnings release. “The Switch is sold out at stores. There is not enough supply.” It will be “very difficult” for Nintendo to hit its annual production target for the console if the problems continue, Yasuda said, after Switch sales declined 20 percent on-year in 2021-22. However, a recession in the United States or elsewhere is unlikely to pose a major problem, he said.

“Video gaming doesn't feel the impact of recessions. When the economy is strong, people buy products. When the economy weakens, people spend more time playing games.” —AFP

## Maersk profits double on higher freight prices

COPENHAGEN, Denmark: Danish shipping giant Maersk said Wednesday its profits doubled in the second quarter as freight prices have soared due to persistent bottlenecks on trade routes.

Demand for shipping plunged at the start of the COVID pandemic, but it has rebounded strongly since the second half of 2020, causing massive disruptions in supply chains.

Maersk, the world's largest container shipping line along with Italy's MSC, has posted robust profits since the second half of 2020.

Its net profit for the second quarter reached \$8.6 billion, compared to \$3.7 billion for the same period in 2021, up from record profits in the first quarter. “We delivered an exceptionally strong result for the second quarter and consequently recorded the 15th quarter in a row with year-on-year earnings improvements,” Soren Skou, CEO of Maersk said in a statement.

The company's revenue rose to \$21.7 billion in the second quarter, up from \$14.2 billion a year earlier. The rise was “mainly driven by significantly higher freight rates” even as this was “slightly offset by a decrease in volumes and by higher costs related to bunker, handling and network”, Maersk said in its earnings statement. “Landside congestion continues to be an issue around the world, with additional pressure from the Chinese lockdown,” it added, referring to China's recent measures to contain COVID outbreaks.

On Tuesday, Maersk announced an updated guidance to its full year results, as a result of “the continuation of the exceptional market situation” within shipping. Given the current market situation and despite withdrawing from Russia, the group said it expected earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization of around \$37 billion, up from its April forecast of \$30 billion. — AFP



Soren Skou

## German exports rise despite slowdown fears

FRANKFURT: German exports increased for the third month in a row, data published Wednesday showed, despite fears that Europe's largest economy could soon pitch into recession.

Germany exported 134.3 billion euros (\$136.8 billion) worth of goods in June, 4.5 percent more than in May, according to seasonally adjusted figures from the federal statistics agency Destatis. The closely watched indicator was 18.4 percent higher than in June last year.

Germany's trade balance remained positive at 6.4 billion euros, with the total value of goods imported in June sitting at 127.9 billion euros. Exports to EU countries were rose by 3.9 percent from May, while those to other countries rose by 5.3 percent.

Exports to Russia increased by 14.5 percent between May and June, albeit from a relatively low base. The export figure for June was 40.3 percent below its level in 2021 with trade collapsing after Western countries slapped tariffs on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine in February.

Despite the overall improvement, businesses have reported pessimism about the outlook for the Germany's export-driven economy. A survey published by the German Ifo Institute last week showed

their export expectations had dropped.

The darkening business climate also suggested that Germany was “on the cusp of a recession”, said think-tank president Clemens Fuest. The German economy stagnated between April and June, registering growth of zero percent, according to official figures published last week.

Meanwhile, German car sales fell again in July, official figures published Wednesday showed, as the industry battled persistent bottlenecks for key components. Just under 206,000 cars were registered in Germany in July, 12.9 percent less than in the same month last year, the federal transport authority, KBA, said in a statement.

New car sales had already fallen by 18.1 percent in June and 10.2 percent in May. Auto manufacturers have had to deal with supply issues for months, with shortages of key components leading to intermittent production stops and a slump in sales. In particular, a shortage of semiconductors, used in the vehicles' electronic systems, has slowed the industry down. Bottlenecks will continue “in the coming months”, said EY analyst Peter Fuss, adding that a recovery in the market “cannot yet be seen”. Whether there will be a rebound once the supply of semiconductors improves is “questionable”, Fuss said.

Economic conditions have “deteriorated”, with the threat of a Russian gas supply cut looming over the German economy, he added. “Inflation and the threat of recession are weakening demand” for new vehicles. The “high material and energy costs” are also likely to keep prices for vehicles “very high” for the time being, Fuss said. — AFP



This photo shows mahjong tile artisan Cheung Shun-king posing in his under-the-stair shop, Biu Kee Mahjong, in the Yau Tsim Mong District of Hong Kong. — AFP photos



Mahjong tile artisan Cheung Shun-king displaying his tool set, including a drill stand, carving knives, writing brushes and paint, used to make hand-carved mahjong pieces, at his shop in the Yau Tsim Mong district of Hong Kong.



Mahjong tile artisan Cheung Shun-king using a knife to remove excessive paint from a mahjong piece.



Mahjong tile artisan Cheung Shun-king, 70, painting Chinese characters on mahjong piece.

## Hong Kong mahjong carver among the last of his kind

Eyebrows furrowed in careful concentration as he chisels images and Chinese characters onto mahjong tiles, 70-year-old Cheung Shun-king is one of the last craftsmen of his kind in Hong Kong. Hand carving playing tiles for the popular Chinese game used to be a source of income for many, but the introduction of much cheaper machine-made sets whittled away at their customer base and turned their work into a rarity. Cheung's family alone used to own four separate shops, where as a teenager he learned his trade. Now only one remains.

"I have given my youth to it," he says of his work. "I don't know if I'll have the energy to carry on in a few years, but for now, I'll continue to do it." Cheung's store is on a street lined with mahjong parlours, but none of them buy their tiles from him. "My mahjong sets are expensive," he admits. A full set of hand-carved tiles costs HK\$5,500 (US\$700), he says, whereas machine-carved ones are around HK\$2,000.

The price reflects the time spent making them. Industrial production of tiles takes about an hour, but it takes five days for Cheung to complete the process of carving and coloring his tiles. Many of his customers buy sets as souvenirs and often request customized images.

But Cheung thinks this recent surge in interest in an old tradition may be ephemeral. "It is only in these last few



Mahjong tile artisan Cheung Shun-king, 70, carving mahjong pieces by hand at his shop.

years that people have felt a sense of nostalgia" and come to buy his tiles, he says. "What if a few years later no one feels nostalgia?" Despite his belief that his industry will continue to decline, Cheung says he will work for as long as he can, until there is no demand. He used to conduct workshops for young people but does not want to take on apprentices because of his pessimism.

"To learn (this skill) isn't a matter of one or two months-attempting it wouldn't work if you didn't immerse yourself in it for two to three years," Cheung says. "If,

by then, handcrafted mahjong tiles are no more a trend, then this skill would become useless." Cheung does not know how to play mahjong himself-his interest lies only in crafting the tiles. He says that being called an artist, however, is flattering, and a "big compliment" for him. "If others say it is art, then it is art. For me, it is my job, as I have to make a living." — AFP

## Apple TV+ counts its 'Luck' as fallen 'Toy Story' exec makes comeback

Like all good animated family movies, "Luck" has a thoroughly optimistic premise: that no matter how hopeless or dire your circumstances may seem, something good will eventually come of it. Apple TV+ will be hoping the same is true for John Lasseter, the former Pixar guru who resigned under a cloud of #MeToo harassment claims, and later became head of the new Skydance Animation.

"Luck" is that studio's first film, available to stream Friday, which follows 18-

year-old girl Sam and a talking black cat called Bob on their adventures in the fantastical Land of Luck. In this land of perfect fortune, all the world's good and bad luck is produced by magical creatures including leprechauns, dragons, unicorns and goblins, who then funnel it down to Earth. The movie features a voice cast of Simon Pegg, Whoopi Goldberg and Jane Fonda, along with Broadway star Eva Noblezada in the lead role of Sam, the world's unluckiest girl.

The cast could have been even starrer, had Emma Thompson not very publicly withdrawn in 2019 over the hiring of Lasseter, publishing her resignation letter in the Los Angeles Times. It was a decision that other cast members have mulled over, with Pegg telling AFP he "initially" had qualms before deciding to proceed. "It's a dangerous thing to just write people off immediately, I think, if there's some accountability, if there's some acknowledgement and acceptance," he told AFP.

### 'Complicated'

Lasseter, who transformed Pixar from a small Lucasfilm graphics department into the world's most successful animation studio with hits including "Toy Story," was accused of misconduct at the 2017 height of the #MeToo movement. The powerful studio president apologized to "anyone who has ever been on the receiving end of an unwanted hug," and for "falling short" in ensuring a culture of "trust and respect." The following year, he resigned, acknowledging in an internal memo that he had made staff feel "disrespected or uncomfortable."

Multiple sources alleged that Lasseter was a heavy drinker at company social events who would try to kiss women, place his hands on their thighs and hug them in meetings. In her letter, Thompson said the case of Lasseter was "complicated." Upon his hiring by Skydance, Thompson wrote that "any Skydance employees who don't want to give him a second chance have to stay

and be uncomfortable or lose their jobs."

For Pegg, it was important that Lasseter had "admitted accountability for the things that had been aimed at him." "We're all doomed if we are banished for stuff that we regret and apologize for, and mean that apology. That's the most important thing." Goldberg had a more succinct take: "Everybody steps in it sometime," she told AFP.

### 'Real-world stakes'

In the film, Sam-an orphan who has reached adulthood without finding a permanent foster home-follows Bob the cat (Pegg) into the Land of Luck in order to find a lucky penny. She hopes this magical coin can help her young friend Hazel find the "forever family" she never had. Of course, getting her hands on it is anything but straightforward, taking Sam on a physical journey through the realm's whirring Rube Goldberg machines and glittering waterfalls-and an emotional one.

"I really love that element. It's a film which is the most outrageous environments and concepts but paired with genuine real-world stakes about friendship," said Pegg. "Sometimes what appears to be bad luck can end up being good luck. Not least for Sam, who apparently lives an entire life of bad luck, only to go on this adventure and find exactly what she's looking for." For the filmmakers, the withdrawal of Thompson led to the hiring of Oscar-winner and social campaigner Jane Fonda, playing an elegant dragon who is the CEO of the luck-making operation. "When Jane joined the cast, I looked to her as being such a legendary activist and feminist," said Pegg. "I felt like she was a great person to take the lead from. And it was her involvement in the film that cemented my decision to do it." — AFP



Bianca D'Ambrosio, Chiara D'Ambrosio attend Apple Original Films' "Luck" Premiere Event at Regency Village Theatre.



Eva Noblezada, Adelynn Spoon, John Ratzemberger, Colin O'Donoghue attends Apple Original Films' "Luck" Premiere Event at Regency Village Theatre in Los Angeles, California.



Juju Green attends Apple Original Films' "Luck" Premiere Event at Regency Village Theatre.



Zara Jirgis attends Apple Original Films' "Luck" Premiere Event at Regency Village Theatre. — AFP photos



Iraqi photographer Samira Mazaal speaks during an interview at her studio in the city of Amarah in Iraq's southeastern Maysan province. — AFP photos



Iraqi photographer Samira Mazaal works at her studio.

## Focus on Samira, celebrity snapper of southern Iraq

She's southern Iraq's celebrity photographer, a former political prisoner who has spent more than 60 years behind the lens documenting people and places and defying convention. Samira Mazaal is 77 and still going strong more than half a century after turning to photography to feed her family — because she had no choice.

"Peasants, intellectuals, I've photographed them all," says the mother of two, her black hijab framing a face lined by life. "I have photographed Amarah in all its beauty — I went deep into the marshes," to the south of the city in the floodplain of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Everyone in the area turns to Studio Samira, be it for a passport photograph or to have a couple's portrait taken ahead of their wedding.

She tells how she became the first female photographer in Maysan province aged just 16, despite familial conventions that ruled in the Iraq of the 1960s, and also how political activism led to imprisonment and torture. "My family has never known any other business — we're all photographers," Samira says.

Framed photographs lining the walls bear witness to her trade, in both black and white or in colors faded by time. She has albums of images showing Iraq as it used to be: black-clad women carrying

huge bales balanced on their heads; a smiling peasant woman in a flowery dress, her hair braided, standing near a cow; a mother and child filling a pot with water from the river.

### 'Society can be cruel'

Samira's father was among the first to introduce photography to the province. "I asked him to initiate me into the craft, but he said: 'No, you're too young. You can't — society can be cruel,'" she recalls. But soon circumstances would force him to change his mind. He was rendered blind in a botched operation, and could no longer provide for his family. So Samira had to step in.

She started off using the daguerreotype method of the 1800s that uses silver-plated copper sheets, but then her father sold off some land so she could buy more modern equipment. "My studio became extraordinarily successful," she smiles. "Because I was a young woman, I could take pictures of families." Samira exploited the norms of a conservative society: the male heads of households preferred that a woman photographer, not a man, take the pictures of their wives and daughters. Bassem Al-Subaid is one satisfied client of Studio Samira.

"There isn't a single household in all of Maysan province that doesn't know



Iraqi photographer Samira Mazaal speaks during an interview at her studio.

Samira the photographer," he tells AFP. "My generation got to know Samira when we came to be photographed by her," adds the man in his forties. "It was the previous generation that saw her political activism." In 1963, Iraq was being torn apart by revolutions and bloody crack-downs, and the then adolescent had no idea that a communist tract would put her behind bars.

without a pasted copy of the poster," she boasts. "It wasn't a crime — it's a source of pride."

A picture of herself, which she still has today, made her famous. It shows her lying on a hospital bed after being tortured in a building in Amarah. "I was screaming so hard I thought the whole town would come and save me," she recalls. It was not to be: she spent the next four years, ill and abused, in a Baghdad prison. She was freed after an international campaign that led to pardons for several political prisoners in Iraq.

In 1981, she was again jailed briefly under the rule of then dictator Saddam Hussein. And then again 10 years later over a protest in Amarah against the repercussions of the Gulf War over Kuwait. Like several other women prisoners, she was granted a pardon after just a few months. Today the photographic studio is still welcoming clients, and despite her age, the revolutionary flame still burns brightly in Samira. She hails the October 2019 uprising, sparked by angry young Iraqis seeking to bring those in power to account. "The protesters should have transformed their movement into a massive revolution to root out corruption and the corrupt," Samira says. —AFP



Iraqi photographer Samira Mazaal shows an analog film roll and a memory card.



Iraqi photographer Samira Mazaal speaks during an interview at her studio.



Iraqi photographer Samira Mazaal poses with a framed picture of her on a hospital bed after being tortured in a building in Amarah.



Iraqi photographer Samira Mazaal poses for a picture next to framed images retracing her career during an interview.

### Snorkeller injured in suspected shark attack off English coast

A snorkeller off the coast of southern England has suffered a suspected shark bite, coastguards said on Tuesday, in what appears to be an extremely rare incident. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency said it sent a rescue team to Penzance in Cornwall "to meet a snorkeller who suffered a suspected shark bite" after the accident was reported last Thursday. "It is believed the swimmer suffered a leg injury," the coastguard service said, adding that the snorkeller had been treated by the ambulance service.

A Cornish tour agency that arranges snorkel trips to watch blue sharks confirmed a participant had received first aid after an "incident". Blue sharks which grow to nearly four meters (13 feet) long are summer visitors to UK waters. They are hunters, which migrate through oceans, eating fish and shellfish.

The blue shark is classed as "near threatened" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature because it is hunted for its flesh and fins and also gets caught accidentally in fishing nets. Blue Shark Snorkel Trips, based in Penzance, wrote on Facebook, "We have had an incident." "First aid (was) carried out on the person involved."

"Following advice and assessment from the coastguard, the person walked off the boat and received further treatment ashore," it added. The person injured was not named but the company quoted them as saying it was a "very scary incident" but added, "I don't for a second want this freak event to tarnish the reputation of an already persecuted species." "These occurrences

are extremely rare", the company said. It takes snorkellers to swim with blue sharks 10 to 20 miles offshore, according to its website. It warns that blue sharks are "apex predators" with no natural predators and participants "swim with them knowing there is a risk". —AFP



### Oscars group elects Janet Yang as new president

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences elected film producer Janet Yang as its new president, the group behind the Oscars announced Tuesday. Yang, best known for hits including "The Joy Luck Club" and "The People vs. Larry Flynt," becomes the fourth woman elected to run Hollywood's most elite group of filmmakers, and the first of Asian origin.

Academy members vote for the winners of the Oscars each year, while the group has recently launched a major new Los Angeles film museum which had been decades in the planning. In a statement, Academy CEO Bill Kramer praised in particular Yang's work on "membership recruitment, governance, equity, diversity, and inclusion" among other areas.

"I am thrilled that she is taking on the esteemed role of Academy President and look forward to working closely with her on our shared vision to serve our membership, celebrate the collaborative arts and sciences of motion pictures, and inspire the next generation of filmmakers," he wrote. The Academy has had to navigate multiple controversies in recent years, including accusations of a lack of racial diversity.

Most notably, the group was pummeled with criticism for a dearth of Black Oscar nominees during the #OscarsSoWhite movement, which emerged in 2015. It has since fulfilled a pledge to double the number of women and minority members by 2020, significantly expanding overall membership from around 6,000 to nearly 10,000 in the process. Around 19 percent of Academy members are now from underrepresented ethnic and racial communities. — AFP



Producer Janet Yang arrives at China's first Film Awards, Huading Film Awards, in Hollywood, California. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Aerial view showing a large sinkhole that appeared over the weekend near the mining town of Tierra Amarilla, Copiapo Province, in the Atacama Desert in Chile. — AFP photos



# SINKHOLE LARGER THAN TENNIS COURT HAS CHILE PERPLEXED

Experts in Chile on Tuesday were investigating the appearance of an enormous sinkhole, bigger than a tennis court, that has appeared near a copper mine in the Atacama desert. Experts were dispatched to examine the hole, some 32 meters (104 feet) across and twice as deep, which appeared in an area about 800 kilome-

ters (nearly 500 miles) north of Santiago over the weekend, the National Geology and Mining Service (Sernageomin) said in a statement. A 100-meter security perimeter has been erected around the hole in the Tierra Amarilla municipality, near the Alcaparrosa mine operated by Canadian firm Lundin Mining. The com-

pany said in a statement there had been "no impact to personnel, equipment or infrastructure," and the sinkhole has remained stable since its detection. As a preventive measure, "development work in an area of the Alcaparrosa underground mine has been temporarily suspended," the company said. Sernageomin director

David Montenegro said experts would seek to determine the cause of the collapse and "ensure that all safety measures are taken to safeguard the lives of workers and communities close to the site." Cristian Zuniga, mayor of the Tierra Amarilla municipality of some 13,000 inhabitants, told journalists the sink-

hole was unprecedented. "We ask that the cause be clarified: whether the collapse is the product of mining activity or something else," he said. Chile is the world's largest copper producer, responsible for a quarter of global supply. — AFP

## Belgium detainee rips out toilet, escapes from jail

A 25-year-old man has escaped a detention cell in Belgium's capital by breaking its toilet and wriggling out through a hole in the wall, the police said Tuesday. The man fled the police station in Brussels' Molenbeek neighborhood in the night of Monday to Tuesday, just a few hours after his arrest, it said. Making the best of a "faulty" security camera, the young man "unhooked the toilet from the wall" and slipped out "through a hole no larger than an A4 sheet of paper", a police spokesman told AFP. He appears to have dropped down into an underground corridor and then climbed out of a window onto the street, he said. The escapee, who holds several previous convictions, had been detained on Monday for violating the terms of his parole in an ongoing case over failing to comply with police orders, a spokesman for the prosecution in the Flemish city of Courtrai said. — AFP



(From left to right) Dane DiLiegro, Ben Rosenblatt, Dakota Beavers, Jhane Myers, Amber Midthunder, Dan Trachtenberg, Stormee Kipp, Patrick Aison and Michelle Thrush attends the Prey Premiere at Regency Village Theatre in Los Angeles, California. —AFP photos

## Comanche warriors take spotlight in 'Predator' prequel 'Prey'

Having battled mighty heroes across time and space, the invisible extra-terrestrial hunters of the "Predator" films have a new-or rather, old-foe in an 18th-century female Comanche warrior. Prequel film "Prey," out Friday on Hulu in the United States, is perhaps the most unlikely direction yet for the "Predator" franchise, which first hit screens with Arnold Schwarzenegger's 1987 action classic. Since then, the bloodthirsty trophy-hunting creatures have slaughtered humans in Central American rainforests, Los Angeles and faraway planets, even battling the monsters of the "Alien" fran-

chise in two crossover films. The latest installment is set centuries earlier, landing its predator in 1719 North America, where it takes up the trail of Comanche hunters, French fur-trappers and buffalo. Director Dan Trachtenberg told a packed preview screening at Comic-Con in San Diego last month he had been inspired to make the film because "Native American and Comanche specifically have often been relegated to playing the sidekick or the villain, and never the hero." During the 19th century, Comanches clashed with Europeans and other Native American peoples across the Southern Plains of the modern-day United States, earning a reputation for fearsome military prowess. Hollywood has mostly portrayed them as brutal enemies, such as in John Ford's classic Western "The Searchers." In the new film, Amber Midthunder plays the heroine Naru, a young woman who must battle sexism within her own tribe as well as the film's villain. Disney-owned 20th Century Studios' decision "to get behind a movie like this that has not just a female action hero, but

an Indigenous female action hero... that's something that I don't recall seeing, maybe possibly ever," she said. The film's setting is "a real time in history for us, that is not that long ago, (when) I had ancestors walking around doing cool stuff, you know?" While "Prey" was shot in English, French and Comanche, its Native American actors later re-recorded their lines so that the whole movie can be played in Comanche-a first for a major studio film, according to producer Jhane Myers, who is herself Comanche. For Midthunder, "what I really honestly thought about every day I came to work, was not wanting to let down Comanche people first and foremost, but specifically Indigenous people." "And that if it did work, and we did pull it off, then how great that would be for us to have something where we feel like we can look at a movie and feel represented and reflected in a way that you're proud of," she said. "Because we don't often get that." — AFP

## Rare white elephant born in Myanmar

A rare white elephant has been born in western Myanmar, state media said on Wednesday, unveiling what many in the Buddhist-majority country believe to be an auspicious creature. Born last month in western Rakhine state, the baby weighs about 80 kilograms (180 pounds) and stands roughly 70 cm (two-and-a-half feet) tall, according to the Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper. Footage released by state TV showed the tusker tot following his mother to a river and being washed by its keepers, and later feeding from her. The mother-a 33-year-old called Zar Nan Hla-is kept by the Myanmar Timber Enterprise in Rakhine state, the Global New Light said, adding the baby possessed seven of the eight characteristics associated with rare white elephants. "Pearl-colored eyes, plantain branch-shaped back, white hair, a distinctive tail, auspicious plot signs on the skin, five claws on the front legs and four on the back legs and big ears," the newspaper reported. Social media users first posted about the birth of the elephant-which has not been named yet-late last month. Historically, white elephants were considered extremely auspicious in Southeast Asian culture, and the region's ancient rulers acquired as many as they could to boost their fortunes. But the ruinous cost of keeping the beasts in appropriately lavish style gave rise to the modern expression in which a "white elephant" is a useless, if beautiful, possession. There are currently six white elephants in captivity in the military-built capital Naypyidaw, according to state media-mostly from Rakhine state and the southern Ayeyarwady region. —AFP



This handout photo shows a newborn baby white elephant walking on the ground at Taungup township in Rakhine state. — AFP



## Lawyers decry ban on 'menacing' eyewear at Japan prison

A Japanese prison that banned a convict from wearing his glasses because they made him look "menacing" has come under fire from lawyers who call the decision a rights violation. The jail in northern Japan stopped the prisoner bringing in his half-rimmed specs-with a silver bar on top,

and no visible frame underneath-while serving his sentence, according to the Sapporo Bar Association, which has issued a warning to the facility. Tsukigata Prison disallowed the glasses because they "lent a menacing aura" to the man that risked "intimidating and inviting derision from" other prisoners, the association cited the jail as saying. The style of eyewear in question "could have a bad influence on his incarcerated life, by triggering undisciplined behaviour such as fights and bullying," it said. A prison official defended the move when contacted by AFP. "We believe there is nothing illegal or unjust in the way we handled the situation," the staff member said, declining to be named due to the jail's internal policy. The prisoner, a man in his 40s who has

since been released, lived without glasses for months while jailed for a traffic law violation, said the lawyers' official warning, filed in June. His eyesight was so bad that he ended up "bumping into other inmates" and suffering "bouts of strong headaches". Sapporo Bar Association vice president Ayako Ito told AFP this week that for people with limited vision, glasses can be tantamount to "a body part". "For example, prisoners are entitled to spend their days reading, but being deprived of glasses renders such an act difficult, which violates their rights to maintain a minimum standard of cultured living" as guaranteed by the Japanese constitution, she said. Ito said it was just the latest instance of a prison in Japan denying inmates access to glasses for various

reasons. Tsukigata Prison was also called out by the bar association in 2020 after it rejected another prisoner's request to use his own Bvlgari glasses, which it deemed "too ostentatious". Strict rules in Japanese prisons have been challenged before. In October, a death-row prisoner in southern Japan's Fukuoka region reportedly sued the state, seeking to restore his right to use colored pencils for drawings. That prisoner saw art as a way to express his remorse, but a rule change last year by the justice ministry led to colored pencils being banned at detention centers. — AFP

## Sports

# Dolphins punished, stripped of 2023 first-round NFL Draft pick

## F1 star Hamilton takes ownership stake in NFL Broncos

NEW YORK: The NFL stripped the Miami Dolphins of their 2023 first-round NFL Draft pick and punished owner Stephen Ross on Tuesday for tampering with star quarterback Tom Brady and rival coach Sean Payton. The penalties were handed down after the conclusion of a six-month probe by independent investigator Mary Jo White on allegations of tampering and tanking games. "The investigators found tampering violations of unprecedented scope and severity," NFL commissioner Roger Goodell said.

Ross and Dolphins vice chairman Bruce Beal were found to have violated NFL anti-tampering rules by "impermissible communications" with seven-time Super Bowl champion Brady while he was under contract to the New England Patriots and Tampa Bay Buccaneers and with Payton while he coached the New Orleans Saints. The Dolphins will forfeit their 2023 first-round pick and their 2024 third-round choice.

Ross was fined \$1.5 million and suspended through October 17. He cannot go to the Dolphins' facility or represent the club and team at NFL gatherings during the span. He was removed from all NFL committees. Beal was fined \$500,000 and banned from league meetings for the 2022 season. "I know of no prior instance of a team violating the prohibition on tampering with both a head coach and star player, to the potential detriment of multiple other clubs, over a period of several years," Goodell said. "Similarly, I know of no prior instance in which ownership was so directly involved in the violations."

Tanking allegations raised by former Dolphins coach Brian Flores against Ross, including financial incentives and other encouragement to deliberately lose games, were not punished. The probe supported Flores and concerns about comments made by Ross but found there were no serious offers made to reward lost games.

Beal was found to have made improper contact with Brady from August 2019 through the 2019 playoffs while he was with the Patriots, what were described as "numerous and detailed discussions" with reports to Ross. There was also contact with

Brady after the 2021 season when Brady was still under contract to Tampa Bay before his brief retirement and return to the Bucs.

Ross and Beal contacted Brady about becoming a limited partner and possibly an executive and quarterback with the Dolphins. Payton's agent was contacted last January about a head coaching job with the Dolphins before announcing his retirement. The Saints were not asked to allow such contact.

### 'Strongly disagree'

Ross said he would not fight the sanctions in order to avoid becoming a distraction to the team. "With regards to tampering, I strongly disagree with the conclusions and the punishment," Ross said in a statement. "However, I will accept the outcome because the most important thing is that there be no distractions for our team as we begin an exciting and winning season. I will not allow anything to get in the way of that."

The probe found the Dolphins did not deliberately lose 2019 games to improve the team's position in the 2020 draft nor did Ross instruct such actions. But it found Ross said "on a number of occasions" that draft position should take priority over record and Flores expressed concern to club executives about such remarks. In relation to Flores alleging he was offered \$100,000 to lose games, the probe found there were "differing recollections about the wording, timing and context" but it was not meant as a serious offer.

### Ownership stake

In another development, seven-time Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton has joined the ownership group of the NFL's Denver Broncos, the team announced Tuesday. The Broncos entered into a sale agreement with the Walton-Penner family in June pending ownership approval of the deal, which is expected to come next Tuesday. "Excited to join an incredible group of owners and become a part of the @Broncos story!!" Hamilton tweeted. "Honored to work with a world class team and serve as an example of the value of more diverse leadership



MIAMI GARDENS: Tua Tagovailoa #1 of the Miami Dolphins directs a drill during training camp at Baptist Health Training Complex in Miami Gardens, Florida. —AFP

across all sports."

The 37-year-old Englishman posted a photo of his dog wearing a Broncos' scarf and shirt and added, "Roscoe already thinks he made the team". Wal-Mart store heir Rob Walton, his daughter Carrie Penner and son-in-law Greg Penner paid \$4.65 billion, the largest sale price for any North American sports team, to purchase the Broncos. Former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was added to the ownership group last month and Hamilton, a record 103-time F1 race winner, is the latest high-profile investor.

"We're delighted to welcome seven-time Formula One world champion Sir Lewis Hamilton to our ownership group," Walton said in a statement. "He's a champion competitor who knows what it takes to

lead a winning team and a fierce advocate for global equality, including in his own sport. "With over 100 race wins, Lewis is considered the most successful F1 driver of all time. His resilient spirit and standard of excellence will be an asset to the ownership group and the Broncos organization."

The sale must be approved by at least 24 of the NFL's 32 club owners to complete the purchase from the Pat Bowlen Trust. Bowlen purchased the Broncos in 1984 and died in 2019. The vote is likely only a formality and it is scheduled for an owners' meeting next week. The Broncos won their third Super Bowl crown in 2016 but have not made the playoffs since. They went 7-10 last year for a fifth consecutive losing season. —AFP



## Kuwait Gymnastics Federation prepare national teams

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Gymnastics Federation announced a plan to prepare the national team for the upcoming events starting with the Arab Men and Women Championship in Algeria in September. Chairman of the Board of KGF Fahad

Al-Soula said the Girls Rhythmic Gymnastics team will travel to Kazakhstan to join a training camp for 23 days in preparation for the Arab Championship. The delegation will be headed by member of women committee Suad Al-Kandari and team manager Lujain Al-Asfour.

Al-Soula, who also heads the Arab Federation said the Men and Women teams will leave to Georgia on Saturday for a 20-day training camp in preparation for the same Championship, and they includes 12 men and 6 women. Al-Soula said the Parkour team will be in a training camp in Liverpool from August 10. They will participate in the world championship in Bulgaria next month.

in going to the Nationals.

Soto, who helped the Nationals win the 2019 World Series, was MLB's hottest trade prospect after the 23-year-old Dominican outfielder rejected a 15-year contract extension offer worth \$440 million last month. He joins a Padres team, powered by top-hitting infielders Manny Machado and Fernando Tatis Jr., that owns a 58-46 record. While San Diego trails the Los Angeles Dodgers by 12 games in the National League West division, the club is in a wildcard playoff position.

The Padres lost their only two World Series appearances, in 1984 and 1998, and have reached the playoffs only once since 2006, falling to the Dodgers two years ago in the division series after their only winning season since 2010. Soto, who is set to become a free agent after the 2024 season, has a career .291 batting average with 119 home runs and 358 runs batted in over five seasons. The two-time All-Star was the 2020 National League batting champion with a .351 average and won last month's Home Run Derby at the MLB All-Star Game.

At age 21, Soto hit three homers in the 2019 World Series to help spark the Nationals to victory in a seven-game showdown with Houston. "He was a big part of our success in '19," Martinez said. "Those memories will never go away. We talked about them for a while. He's a great kid." Bell, 29, is batting .301, a career-high, with 14 homers and 57 RBI for the Nats this season, his second in Washington after five seasons in Pittsburgh. His contract expires after the current campaign. Hosmer, 32, helped the Kansas City Royals capture the 2015 World Series and owns a career .277 batting average with 196 homers and 875 RBI. —AFP

## Kyrgios cruises in first match since Wimbledon

WASHINGTON: Wimbledon runner-up Nick Kyrgios won in his first match since making his Grand Slam final debut, ripping American Marcos Giron 6-3, 6-2 on Tuesday at the ATP and WTA Washington Open. The 27-year-old Australian fired 12 aces and saved the lone break point he faced to oust Giron in 59 minutes for a triumphant return at the US Open hardcourt tune-up.

After a 3-3 start, Kyrgios won nine of the last 11 games for the victory despite memories of a poor effort in a first-round exit last year during "a dark time in my life." "I just really wanted to force myself to have high energy and pull out a performance," Kyrgios said. "My confidence was a bit low coming out just because just being on that court again. I got disgraced last year first round, and it was tough to stomach. "I'm proud of my performance today. It wasn't easy." World number 63 Kyrgios, whose most recent title came at Washington in 2019, booked a second-round match against US 14th seed Tommy Paul.

Kyrgios said he has struggled to move on after his Wimbledon final loss to Novak Djokovic last month. "That match hurts," Kyrgios said. "To have that opportunity and come up short wasn't easy for me to stomach. "It was hard. I feel like a Grand Slam final doesn't come around so often for us normal players. That was like the golden opportunity. "I'm doing all the right things to put myself in that position again. I don't think we thought it was possible to contend for Grand Slams, but now it's a genuine thing."

A hearing in Australia on common assault charges against Kyrgios from a January 2021 incident had originally been scheduled for Tuesday but last month was moved to August 23, six days before the start of the US Open. "I've got people in my corner and my team dealing with those things. They are out of my



WASHINGTON: Nick Kyrgios of Australia plays a shot against Marcos Giron of the United States during Day 4 of the Citi Open at Rock Creek Tennis Center on August 02, 2022. —AFP

control," Kyrgios said. "All I can do is just continue to work and keep my head down and do what I love to do every day."

Top seed Andrey Rublev advanced to the third round by defeating Britain's Jack Draper 6-4, 6-2. World number eight Rublev dispatched the 81st-ranked English left-hander in 83 minutes without surrendering a break. Rublev will play for a quarter-final berth Thursday against an American, either Jack Sock or Maxime Cressy. Rublev, 24, seeks his fourth ATP title of the year and the 12th of his career after crowns at Marseille and Dubai in February and Belgrade in April.

Rublev, who wrote "No War Please" on a camera lens at Dubai, was among Russian players banned from Wimbledon because of his homeland's military invasion of Ukraine. "There's nothing more important than to have peace and love all around the world," Rublev said. "I do believe that, by being united and doing good things for the peace, if tennis will be example of it, maybe other sports will follow and maybe one day sport can be without politics." —AFP

## Soto and Bell sent to Padres in MLB blockbuster deal

WASHINGTON: Washington Nationals slugger Juan Soto and first baseman Josh Bell were sent to the San Diego Padres on Tuesday in a blockbuster deal at the Major League Baseball trade deadline. Teams raced to make final roster moves for the last two months of the campaign, but the biggest was Soto and Bell boosting the Padres' dreams of a first World Series title.

Washington obtained shortstop CJ Abrams, pitcher MacKenzie Gore, first baseman Luke Voit and three prospects in exchange for Soto and Bell. "When the Padres reached the tall threshold we had for the trade, we decided to make the trade," said Mike Rizzo, the Nationals president of baseball operations. "It was a well-rounded package. We like the talent level of all the players." The Nationals have MLB's worst record at 35-69. Nats manager Dave Martinez said it was a "crazy" day of "mixed emotions" at seeing Soto depart while welcoming new talent.

"What he meant to us, for the Nationals family, for the fans, for the city, we should cherish that," Martinez said. "With the players we got, the future is bright and we're looking forward to that." A no-trade clause in first baseman Eric Hosmer's contract allowed him to reject a move to the Nationals, so the Padres instead shipped him to the Boston Red Sox for cash and two prospects. Voit replaced him

## Women's British Open breaks new ground at Muirfield

GULLANE: In a week when England's European Championship football victory was hailed as a major breakthrough for female sport, Muirfield will make history by staging the Women's British Open golf championship. The famed Scottish links course has been host to 16 men's British Opens-but the club has not always been so welcoming to women and received widespread criticism with a vote to maintain an all-male membership policy in 2016.

Following the backlash-and a threat to remove the club from the Open rota-the decision was overturned in 2017 and five years on the best women's golfers in the world will face the challenge set by one of the sport's toughest tests. For 2009 champion Catriona Matthew, it is a dream come true. The two-time winning European Solheim Cup captain has lived in North Berwick all her life, just a few minutes drive from Muirfield.

"Growing up, I could never have imagined playing in a British Open at Muirfield, it's going to be a great experience for everyone," said the 52-year-old, who has been given the honor of hitting the first tee shot on Thursday morning. "It elevates the

Championship going to (men's) Open venues. Hopefully, girls and boys will be inspired by seeing the men and women play over the same courses. "I've been a litter picker and a scorer at men's Opens here, it will be nice to actually play in a Championship."

### 'Childhood dream'

Sweden's Anna Nordqvist will defend the title she won at Carnoustie a year ago-an ideal venue for someone whose Scottish husband grew up in the Dundee area. "Carnoustie is a special place for me but it is just as special to be defending at Muirfield," said the 35-year-old three-time major winner.

"If someone had told me when I was growing up that one day I would win a British Open I would have said they were crazy. Winning the British was my childhood dream." The first four of the year's five majors have produced winners from different countries in American Jennifer Kupcho (Chevron Championship), Australian Minjee Lee (US Open) and South Korea's Chun In-gee (PGA Championship), while Canada's Brooke Henderson won the Evian Championship two weeks ago. Henderson is now relishing the chance of triumphing at successive majors. "I think Muirfield is the best links course I have ever played," said the 24-year-old. "It means a lot to all of us to be here. It's hosted so many men's Opens and this is proof that the women's game is continuing to grow and hopefully it is making a difference for future generations." —AFP

Sports

# New-look Bayern Munich favored to continue dominance in Bundesliga

## Bayern to kick off title defense against Eintracht Frankfurt

BERLIN: Bayern Munich kick off their Bundesliga title defense against Europa League winners Eintracht Frankfurt on Friday, hoping an off-season spending spree will account for the loss of star striker Robert Lewandowski. With five Champions League participants for the first time ever this season, German football is in rude health, although Bayern will still be favored to claim their 11th straight domestic title.

While Lewandowski, who scored 344 goals in 375 games in all competitions during eight years at the Allianz Arena, will be missed up front, coach Julian Nagelsmann will take some solace from Saturday's 5-3 Super Cup triumph over RB Leipzig, which saw five different players get on the scoresheet for the Bavarians. Bayern CEO Oliver Kahn believes the acquisition of Sadio Mane from Liverpool could work in the German champions' favour by making Bayern less predictable in attack.

"You could see how many opportunities we had going forward, how many different formations we had, how surprising we can be," Kahn said in the aftermath of Bayern's tenth Super Cup victory. While the goals may not be in short supply, it is

at the back where their transfer efforts will truly be tested. In bringing in centre-back Matthijs de Ligt from Juventus, Bayern are looking to shore up a leaky defense. On evidence of the three second-half goals conceded in the Super Cup, Nagelsmann still has some work to do.

### Dortmund toughen up

Last season's runners-up Borussia Dortmund will head up a chasing pack looking to dethrone the perennial German champions. After conceding 52 goals last year, more than any other side in the top eight, Dortmund loosened the purse strings to bring in German national team centre-backs Nico Schlotterbeck and Niklas Sule from Freiburg and Bayern respectively. Up front, Karim Adeyemi from Red Bull Salzburg will provide a threat from the wings Dortmund have missed since the departure of Jadon Sancho in 2021, while defensive midfielder Salih Ozcan has been brought in to provide steel and mental stability.

The biggest doubt for the Westphalians however will be up front, with Sebastian Haller - who arrived from Ajax to replace Manchester City-bound Erling Haaland in the summer - set to miss

an uncertain period due to his testicular cancer diagnosis. New sporting director Sebastian Kehl appealed to fans to show "a little realism" in pursuit of their first title since 2012. "Bayern make 285 million euros (\$291 mn) more in revenue than we do. Roughly speaking, they will invest twice as much in their squad this season as we have."

### Leipzig keep Nkunku

RB Leipzig enter the season having won their first major title, beating SC Freiburg on penalties to lift the 2021/22 German Cup. They've also managed to buck the trend of recent summers by holding onto their best players, with 2022 German Footballer of the Year Christopher Nkunku signing a two-year contract extension in June. The Paris Saint-Germain academy graduate scored 35 goals in 52 appearances for Leipzig last season. Nkunku said his side had what it takes to win the Bundesliga but needed to be more consistent.

"Consistency is key... It's the only way of beating Bayern to the title." Leipzig have cemented their title credentials by snatching in-form left-back David Raum from Hoffenheim, despite heavy interest from Bayern and Dortmund. Alongside

Leipzig, Bayer Leverkusen have managed to hold onto their best players, with winger Moussa Diaby and midfielder Florian Wirtz electing to stay in the red and black.

The signing from Sparta Prague of Czech striker Adam Hlozek, who will partner countryman Patrik Schick up front, further boosts Bayer's hopes, but the pressure is already on coach Gerardo Seoane after a first-round German Cup exit at the hands of third-division SV Elversberg. Fresh from securing their first European silverware in 42 years, Frankfurt could also make an unlikely title push, but will need to juggle their domestic league ambitions with an inaugural Champions League campaign.

In addition to retaining Kevin Trapp and Filip Kostic - two players crucial in last year's triumph - Frankfurt have brought in 2014 World Cup winner Mario Goetze from PSV Eindhoven to pull the strings from midfield. The World Cup in Qatar means a considerably longer than usual winter break in the Bundesliga this season. The last set of fixtures before the World Cup will be matchday 15 on the weekend of November 12 and 13, with the Bundesliga not returning until January 20. —AFP



## Martyrs Karting Championship

KUWAIT: Al-Qurain Martyrs Karting Championship was concluded earlier in the week at Al-Kout Mall tracks following a very strong competitions. The event was held by Amiri Divan Secretary, Director of the Martyr's office Salah Al-Oufan and Kuwait Karting Club Treasurer Yousuf Al-Kandary and families of Beit Al-Qurain Martyrs. Results of the event were as follows: In the Junior Girls Category: Suad Al-Zanki

(First): Noura Al-Azmi (Second) and Sheikha Khalid (Third). In Junior Boys: Yaqoub Al-Zanki took first; Mishal Al-Shaalan (Second) and Hamad Al-Kandari (Third). - Girls: Eman Shams-El-Deen (First); Fatima Al-Shuwaie (Second) and Sharifa Baqer took third. - For Boys: Abdallah Khan (First); Faisal Al-Shuwaie (Second) and Adel Al-Shuwaie (Third).

Salah Al-Oufan said the event honoured Kuwaitis (Martyrs of Qurain) - who sacrificed their lives for Kuwait. He thanked the Karting Club for organizing the event. Mahdi, the son of Martyr Abdelwahid Al-Sairafi thanked the Club for sharing the memory and focusing on the heroic role of the martyrs.

## Rangers suffer blow; Monaco held by PSV

PARIS: Rangers saw their hopes of returning to the Champions League group stage suffer a blow on Tuesday as the Glasgow giants slumped to a 2-0 defeat away to Belgian upstarts Union Saint-Gilloise in the first leg of their third qualifying round tie. French-born Maltese international Teddy Teuma gave the Belgians the lead just before the half-hour mark, and Union Saint-Gilloise got a potentially crucial second goal in controversial fashion with 14 minutes left.

Connor Goldson was penalized for a handball in the area following a VAR review and Dante Vanzeir stepped up to score the resulting penalty. It is a remarkable result for the Brussels club, who returned to the Belgian top flight last season after an absence of almost half a century and promptly finished second under the ownership of English entrepreneur Tony Bloom. Unable to host Rangers in their own stadium, the match was played in the nearby city of Leuven, but that did not prove a handicap for Union.

Giovanni van Bronckhorst's Rangers now face an uphill struggle in the return leg next Tuesday, August 9. "It is very disappointing, especially when

our performance was not at the level we normally are and the level you need to compete at this level," Van Bronckhorst told the BBC. Of the penalty, he added: "You are playing in the biggest competition in Europe, with so much at stake, and to give a penalty like this is very hard." Last season's beaten Europa League finalists, Rangers are looking to return to the Champions League group stage for the first time in over a decade.

### Benfica win big

The winners of the third qualifying round tie will go on to a play-off later this month against either Monaco or PSV Eindhoven, with the winners of that advancing to the group stage. Monaco needed a late equaliser from centre-back Axel Disasi to draw 1-1 with Ruud van Nistelrooy's PSV at the Stade Louis II on Tuesday. Disasi prodded home from close range when an Ismail Jakobs free-kick fell to him in the penalty area 10 minutes from time.

That cancelled out Joey Veerman's first-half opener for PSV and ensured the tie is finely poised ahead of next week's return leg in the Netherlands. Monaco missed out on direct qualification for the group stage when they conceded a stoppage-time goal on the final day of the last Ligue 1 season and dropped from second to third in the table as a result, behind Marseille. Benfica, who reached the quarter-finals last season before losing to Liverpool, crushed Midtjylland of Denmark 4-1 in Lisbon with Goncalo Ramos scoring a hat-trick. —AFP

## New faces to watch in Bundesliga this season

BERLIN: A new-look Bayern Munich will enter the 2022/23 season as firm favorites to win their 11th straight Bundesliga title, despite one of the more tumultuous off-seasons in recent memory. Bayern lost star striker Robert Lewandowski to Barcelona, but the 31-time German champions have strengthened across the park, adding Liverpool forward Sadio Mane alongside Juventus defender Matthijs de Ligt, Ajax pair Ryan Gravenberch and Noussair Mazraoui, and French attacking starlet Mathys Tel. AFP Sport takes a look at five new faces to watch in the Bundesliga as the season kicks off this weekend.

### Matthijs de Ligt

Bayern wasted no time in reinvesting the 50 million-euro transfer fee Barcelona paid for Lewandowski, bringing in one of Europe's hottest defensive talents in De Ligt from Serie A side

Juventus. Bayern spent a reported initial fee of 70 million euros (\$71.3m) to bring the former Golden Boy winner to Saebener Strasse, making De Ligt the second most expensive transfer in the club's history. In addition to adding De Ligt's defensive strengths, Bayern have secured a leader by signing the 22-year-old. The Dutch international became the youngest captain in Champions League history when he led Ajax against Real Madrid at the age of 19 in 2019.

### Karim Adeyemi

Borussia Dortmund managed to secure the services of forward Adeyemi from Red Bull Salzburg early in the close season, despite interest from several of Europe's elite clubs. Dortmund paid a reported 30 million euros for the former Bayern Munich junior, who can play as a lone striker or on either wing. While not a like-for-like replacement, Adeyemi's nose for goal should see him at least in part replace the departed Erling Haaland's output in black and yellow this season. Adeyemi, who topped the Austrian scoring charts with 19 goals as Salzburg won their ninth consecutive title, opened his account with a goal in his first competitive appearance for Dortmund as they beat 1860 Munich in the first

round of the German Cup on Friday.

### David Raum

New RB Leipzig addition Raum may just be the addition the German Cup holders need to claim their first ever Bundesliga title in the 2022/23 season. In just his first season in the top division after being signed from Greuther Fuerth, left-back Raum provided 11 assists and scored three league goals for Hoffenheim. His performances earned him a first national team call-up, with the 24-year-old quickly establishing himself as a crucial component of coach Hansi Flick's Germany side ahead of this year's World Cup in Qatar. Raum was also heavily courted by both Bayern and Dortmund after his stellar 2021/22 performances but said "coming to Leipzig is absolutely the right step for me" when making the move in late July.

### Mario Goetze

Far from a Bundesliga newcomer, World Cup-winning attacking midfielder Goetze makes his return to Germany with Eintracht Frankfurt after a successful two-year stint at Dutch giants PSV Eindhoven. Goetze won the Dutch Cup and the Dutch Super Cup during his time with PSV, showing

the type of form which won him the Golden Boy award in 2011 and had him marked as one of Europe's top prospects. Europa League winners Frankfurt will be hoping the five-time Bundesliga champion can bring some much-needed experience and guile to the Eagles, who enter their first ever Champions League campaign this season.

### Maya Yoshida

Promoted giants Schalke took a major step in ensuring they stay in the top division when they secured Japanese centre-back Yoshida on a free transfer from Serie A side Sampdoria. Yoshida, who has captained Japan since 2019 and will lead them into their opening-round clash with Germany at the Qatar World Cup later in the year, played for Premier League side Southampton from 2012 to 2020.

Yoshida, 33, replaces fellow Samurai Blue representative Ko Itakura in Schalke's defense, after Itakura made the move to Bundesliga rivals Borussia Moenchengladbach in July. On his arrival in the Bundesliga, Yoshida said he was "delighted to wear the Schalke shirt" and declared himself a long-time fan of the Royal Blues, having first watched Atsuto Uchida during his time at the Veltins Arena between 2010 and 2017. — AFP

# Classifieds

### CHANGE OF NAME

en name: DAANYAAL JUNAID and Surname: SAIT. (C# 2032)

I, DAANYAAL JUNAID, son of JUNAID ISMAIL and holder of Indian Passport No. S9923330 having permanent residence in Bengaluru Karnataka, India and residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under, giv-

I, Ronald Baptist Naronha, holder of Passport No. L0034115 do hereby change my name to Ronald Baptist Naronha for all purpose. I will henceforth be known in the name Ronald Baptist Naronha, and I also under-

take to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C# 2029)

I, Abdul Rahim Abdul Aziz holder of Passport No. T5332471. Do hereby inform you to add my surname Khan. I will henceforth be known as Abdul Rahim Abdul Aziz Khan. Old Name - Abdul

Rahim Abdul Aziz, New Name - Abdul Rahim Abdul Aziz Khan (C# 2030)

I, Joyce Piedade (Civil ID No. 281070408072 / Passport No. R8665839), would like to correct my name, Old Name: Joyce Anthony Piedade, New Name: Joyce Fernandes. (C# 2033)

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Table with 4 columns: Hospital Name, Phone Number, Hospital Name, Phone Number, Hospital Name, Phone Number, Hospital Name, Phone Number. Includes Sabah Hospital, Amiri Hospital, Maternity Hospital, Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital, Chest Hospital, Farwaniya Hospital, Adan Hospital, Ibn Sina Hospital, Al-Razi Hospital, Physiotherapy Hospital, Kaizen center, Rawda, Adaliya, Khaldiya, Kaifan, Shamiya, Shuwaikh, Abdullah Salem, Nuzha, Industrial Shuwaikh, Qadsiya, Dasmah, Bneid Al-Gar, Shaab, Qibla, Ayoun Al-Qibla, Mirqab, Sharq, Salmiya.

### Clinics



BIRMINGHAM: Australia's Emma McKeon (top) competes to win and take the gold medal in the women's 50m freestyle swimming final at the Sandwell Aquatics Centre. —AFP

## Pool queen McKeon makes history; Kiplimo dances to 10,000m victory

### Johnson-Thompson on track to end title drought

BIRMINGHAM: Australian swim star Emma McKeon made Commonwealth Games history by winning her 19th medal as Jacob Kiplimo raced to victory in the 10,000m on the first day of track and field. McKeon pulled one ahead of shooters Michael Gault and Phil Adams and fellow swim star Chad le Clos, who has endured a nightmare Games in Birmingham. The 30-year-old South African had looked set to take the record himself when he came to Birmingham but so far he has just a silver medal to show for his efforts. On another dramatic night of action in the pool, Adam Peaty showed the mentality that has brought him three Olympic titles. The 27-year-old Englishman admitted to being at the "bottom of the bottom" after his shock defeat in the 100m but bounced back on Tuesday to take gold in the 50m.

"I had two options this morning I either fight or don't fight," he told the BBC. "Everyone who knows me, knows I fight." Prince William, his wife Kate and their seven-year-old daughter Charlotte attended the morning session of the swimming events. The evening again belonged to dominant Australia, who have now won 22 golds at the Sandwell Aquatics Centre out of a total of 43 on offer.

#### Kiplimo win

Uganda's Jacob Kiplimo made light of the absence of two-time world 10,000m champion Joseph Cheptegei by destroying his compatriot's Commonwealth Games record at the Alexander Stadium. Kiplimo, who took bronze at the recent world championships, celebrated with a dance on crossing the line after finishing in 27min 09.19sec, ahead of Kenyan pair Daniel Ekenoy and Kibiwot Kandie.

"I think for me for winning this Commonwealth Games title was everything, the most important thing for me this season," said the 21-year-old Olympic bronze medalist. "But

I still have a lot of things to do in the future at the Olympics and world championships." There were golds too for Australia's Nina Kennedy, who built on her bronze in the world championships to take the pole vault title with a best of 4.60 metres, and Chioma Onyekwere of Nigeria in the discus (61.70m).

England's Jake Jarman claimed a fourth gold medal on the final day of gymnastics while compatriot Joe Fraser grabbed his third with victory in the parallel bars. "I'm going to find somewhere in my house to store them (the medals) - maybe a glass cabinet or something like that, if there's space," said the 20-year-old Jarman. On another stellar day for the home nation, Alice Kinsella won the women's floor while Australia's Kate McDonald won gold in the women's balance beam. Cypriot Ilias Georgiou won the men's horizontal bar.

England finished with 10 gold medals out of a total of 14 in the artistic gymnastics. In the more genteel world of lawn bowls, India triumphed in the women's fours final, beating 2018 silver medalists South Africa 17-10, while Wales beat England in the men's pairs final.

"We woke up with the mindset that this is a new day, a new beginning, and that we have the opportunity to do something very special," said India's Rupa Rani Turkey. "We are glad we been able to achieve that."

Samoan weightlifter Don Opeloge won 96kg gold after his dreams of competing in the Tokyo Olympics were dashed by Covid-19 travel restrictions. On Tuesday he performed a celebratory dance and hopes there will be more to come from his compatriots on Wednesday. "We are called the 'Dream Team' in Samoa and we will win more medals. Tomorrow I will be dancing and singing with them." The first-ever Commonwealth 3x3 basketball competition came

to an end with England beating Australia in the men's final while Canada beat the host nation in the women's gold-medal match.

#### Kenyan woe at Games

Katarina Johnson-Thompson is within sight of her first heptathlon title since being crowned world champion in 2019 going into Wednesday's evening session at the Commonwealth Games. The 29-year-old, who has struggled with injuries, takes a 122-point lead over compatriot Jade O'Dowda into the javelin and 800m after the long jump competition.

She will headline the evening session alongside Jamaica's Olympic sprint champion Elaine Herah-Thompson, who is bidding to bounce back from the disappointment of taking bronze in the 100m at last month's world championships. Kenya's medal hopes suffered a major blow in the morning session when Olympic and world 800m champion Emmanuel Korir was disqualified from the 400m for lane infringement in his heat.

Compatriot Mary Moraa's hopes of an unlikely 400m-800m double also ended as she eased out early in her 400m heat. The world 800m bronze medalist did not seem overly concerned as she had a big smile on her face-she has already qualified for Saturday's women's 800m final. England's Victoria Ohuruogu, who is coached by her sister, the 2008 Olympic 400m champion Christine-sauntered through her heat in 51.34sec, with Jamaica's Junelle Bromfield also through.

Both 29-year-old Ohuruogu and Bromfield won relay medals in the world championships in Eugene, Oregon. "I felt a bit rusty, a few niggles, but happy to go through and on to the next one," said Ohuruogu. The form runner in the



BIRMINGHAM: Gold medalist Uganda's Jacob Kiplimo celebrates on the podium during the medal ceremony for the men's 10,000m athletics event at the Alexander Stadium in Birmingham. —AFP

400m is Sada Williams of Barbados, who took individual bronze at the worlds and looked impressive in winning her heat. Ohuruogu's team-mate, Matthew Hudson-Smith has battled back from mental health issues to take a world bronze in the 400m.

He eased into the second round in a time of 46.26 and the disqualification of Korir has removed a sizeable obstacle for his ambitions of taking gold. "I have tired legs, but it was a controlled heat really," he said. "My recent British record (44.35, set in May) gives me loads of confidence coming here, but the job's not done." Muzala Samukonga might have paid a hefty price for running a personal best of 44.89 to win his heat as he clutched his right hamstring. The Zambian ended up being taken off in a wheelchair. —AFP

## Ronaldo, Maguire most abused Premier League players on Twitter

LONDON: Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo and Harry Maguire have received the most Twitter abuse of any Premier League players, a report published Tuesday has found. Analysis by British media regulator Ofcom of 2.3 million tweets in the first half of last season found nearly 60,000 abusive posts, affecting seven in 10 top-flight players. Half of that abuse was directed at just 12 individuals - eight from United.

Twitter was chosen due to its popularity with players, and because it makes data available for research but the study does not take into account the safeguards that are in place. Ofcom is preparing to regulate technology companies under new Online Safety laws aimed at protecting users. "These findings shed light on a dark side to the beautiful game," Ofcom group director for broadcasting and online content Kevin Bakhurst said. "Online abuse has no place in sport, nor in wider society, and tackling it requires a team effort."

"Social media firms needn't wait for new laws to make their sites and apps safer for users. When we become the regulator for online safety, tech companies will have to be really open about the steps they're taking to protect users. We will expect them to design their services with safety in mind." The report identified two peaks in the frequency of abusive tweets. The first came on the day Ronaldo rejoined Manchester United-August 27 2021 - generating three times more tweets than any other day (188,769), of which 3,961 were abusive.

The volume of posts can largely be explained because of Ronaldo's 98.4 million followers. On this day, the Portugal forward was mentioned in 90 percent of all tweets aimed at



Cristiano Ronaldo

Premier League footballers and 97 percent of abusive tweets. The second peak came on November 7 when Maguire tweeted an apology following Manchester United's 2-0 home defeat by Manchester City, with many posts using insulting language towards the England defender.

Twitter said it also removed more than 38,000 abusive tweets, with a spokesperson telling Britain's PA news agency they were "committed" to combating abuse and did not tol-

erate harassment on grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation. At an Ofcom event at the National Football Museum in Manchester on Tuesday, Manchester United women's player Aoife Mannion said using social media was a particular "deal with the devil" for female footballers. "We do need it because we need the exposure and visibility we get from it, we don't need the abuse," she said. —AFP

## Kuwait's FA hires Bento as national team head coach

KUWAIT: Kuwait Football Association appointed Portuguese former capped international Rui Bento as national team head coach on Tuesday. The FA also appointed his compatriot Emilio Peixe as head coach for the U-20s side and a referee committee, headed by Irishman Alan Snoddy. Bento, 50, began his senior playing career in 1991 as a centre back for Portuguese Primeira Liga record title-holders and two-time UEFA Champions League winners Benfica, retiring at Sporting Lisbon in 2004.

He won the Primeira Liga twice with Lisbon clubs Boavista and Sporting in the 2000-01 and 2001-02 seasons respectively, where he played as a defensive midfielder and the FIFA U-20 World Cup with the Portuguese national team. Bento's managerial career began in 2009, his most significant sides managed being Boavista and Portugal's U-17s between 2008 and 2011, along with a brief stint at the Saudi Pro League with Al-Ahli Saudi FC. —KUNA