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# Expatriates allowed to stay abroad for over 6 months

## Expats can renew residency permits while outside Kuwait

By Chidi Emmanuel, Islam Al-Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Expats with student visas and those on dependency visas are now allowed to stay abroad for over six months as it applies to those with work permit. "The initiative is to make life for expats in Kuwait easier, with consideration to foreign students as the world battles COVID-19," sources told Kuwait Times. The only exception is for domestic workers. If they stay abroad for more than six months, their residency permit will be cancelled unless their sponsors sign an agreement.

A government decision allowing expatriates with iqama to remain outside the country for more than six months is still in force. Until now, the decree has not been cancelled," the sources said. However, the sources said only domestic workers are not permitted to remain outside Kuwait for more than six months unless their sponsor applies for an exception on their behalf.

Expatriates are also allowed to renew their residency permits while they are outside Kuwait. "The decree allowing the expatriates to renew their iqamas online while abroad is still in effect," the sources added. Residency of expatriates who stay outside

Kuwait for more than six months won't be canceled, except for domestic workers.

This decision to continue with the exemption will be valid until further announcement. Kuwait's Interior Ministry had made this exemption for expatriates during the COVID pandemic as expatriate arrivals into Kuwait were suspended for fear of spread of coronavirus. Kuwait has slowly returned back to normalcy with all government and private sector offices functioning to pre-pandemic levels. The government recently cancelled all online work without exceptions.

Regarding the opening of visit visas, the Ministry of Interior has decided to extend its decision to halt the issuance of family visit visas until the end of this current year. According to sources, the Ministry said that security of the state and the parliamentary elections are of vital importance to the Ministry. The Ministry will deploy its personnel and will increase its presence in strategic areas during electoral gatherings, election-day and campaigns. The new elections will be held at the beginning of October. Files related to security need adequate time to be studied, especially the ones related to issuing family visas.



**KUWAIT:** A number of Bedoon activists gathered to stage a sit-in at the Freedom Square in the Taima area of Al-Jahra Governorate, in protest against what they describe as "the injustice inflicted on them" by Kuwait's government - demanding of their civil rights and a resolution for their decades-old unresolved case. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh (See Page 2)

## Controversy as Tunisian police interrupt show

**TUNIS:** An attempt by several Tunisian police officers to interrupt a popular comedian's show, arguing it violated "moral standards", has sparked fears of a return to censorship seen under the former dictatorship. Lotfi Abdelli, also an actor who is known for his edgy performances, was at a festival in the coastal city of Sfax on Sunday when police officers securing the event tried to stop his show. The police move came after a scene in which Abdelli criticized the authorities and the police, repeatedly brandishing his middle finger.

The 52-year-old called on the crowd to act as witnesses to the "hostile" behavior of "three police officers" whom he accused of throwing water bottles at him. Abdelli was able to finish the rest of his performance. Many Tunisians have since expressed fears of a return to the kind of censorship and repression seen under dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's rule, when such satirical shows would not have been authorized.

A police union on Tuesday posted "the scene of the show that irritated us" on its official Facebook page, apologizing for publishing "such triviality" and "nonsense". An interior ministry official told AFP on Tuesday that two officers had filed a complaint against Abdelli for "violating moral standards". Requesting anonymity, the official said the police union's statements "do not in any way represent the official position of the authorities or the interior ministry".

The interior ministry published a statement underlining that its "position is only communicated by official bodies" and that its "duty is to ensure citizens can exercise their public and individual liberties in the framework of that which is authorized by law". Bassem Trifi, a lawyer and human rights activist, said the police officers' move had set a "dangerous precedent", warning such intervention was the sign of a "police state". "The censure exercised by the police is an assault on the freedom of expression... guaranteed by the constitution," he said Tuesday on Facebook. —AFP

## Heat-related deaths could rise by 15%

**KUWAIT:** Heat-related mortality for non-Kuwaiti migrant workers could increase by around 15 percent by the end of the century, according to a Kuwait University study. Also, for every 100 deaths in Kuwait, around 14 could be attributed to heat driven by climate change by the century's end, says the environmental research letter prepared by Barrak Al-Ahmad from the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health, College of Public Health, Kuwait University.

## Russia rocket strikes kill 13

**KYIV:** Ukraine on Wednesday accused Russia of rocket strikes that killed 13 civilians in areas near a Russian-held power plant, where renewed fighting has raised fears of a nuclear disaster. The overnight strikes in the Dnipropetrovsk region in central Ukraine also injured 11 people, with five reported to be in a serious condition.

"It was a terrible night, regional governor Valentin Reznichenko wrote on Telegram, urging residents to shelter when they hear air raid sirens. "I

## FBI raid ignites political storm; Trump fumes

**NEW YORK:** Donald Trump on Wednesday declined to answer questions under oath in New York over alleged fraud at his family business, as legal pressures pile up for the former president whose house was raided by the FBI just two days

"It is uncertain what climate change could bring to populations and countries in the hot desert environment of the Arabian Peninsula," the study says. "Not only because they are already hot, countries in this region also have unique demographic profiles, with migrant populations potentially more vulnerable and constituting a large share of the population. In Kuwait, two-thirds of the population are migrant workers and record-high temperatures are already common."

The study quantifies the temperature-related mortality burdens in Kuwait in the mid - (2050-2059) and end-century (2090-2099) decades under moderate (SSP2-4.5) and extreme (SSP5-8.5) climate change scenarios. (See Page 3)

am asking and begging you... Don't let the Russians kill you," he wrote, adding that Russia had fired a total of 80 rockets at the area. Most of the casualties were in the town of Marganets, just across the Dnieper River from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, Europe's biggest. Regional council head Mykola Lukashuk said the strikes had hit a local power line, leaving thousands of people without electricity.

Ukraine and Russia have accused each other of recent shelling around the plant itself. Ukraine says Russia has stationed hundreds of troops and stored ammunition at the plant. The tensions have brought back memories of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear

Continued on Page 6



**KUWAIT:** Swimmers throw one another into the water at a beach in Salmiya district, some 20 kilometers east of the capital Kuwait City. Temperatures regularly soar in Kuwait in the summer to over 50 degrees Celsius. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



**DNIPROPETROVSK:** Photo shows a lyceum in Dnipropetrovsk region destroyed by Russian shelling amid Russia's military invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

ago. Trump said he had "no choice" but to invoke the fifth amendment, which allows individuals to remain silent to protect against self-incrimination under questioning.

In a statement Trump said "I declined to answer the questions under the rights and privileges afforded to every citizen under the United States Constitution," saying he took the advice from his legal counsel. "When your family, your company, and all the people in your orbit have become the targets of an unfounded, politically motivated Witch Hunt supported by lawyers, prosecutors, and the Fake News Media, you have no choice," Trump said.

"If there was any question in my mind, the raid of my home, Mar-a-Lago, on Monday by the FBI, just two days prior to this deposition, wiped out any uncertainty."

Trump earlier said on social media he was in the offices of New York Attorney General Letitia James, whose investigation is one of several active probes into the brash billionaire's business practices and other actions. The former president took to his Truth Social platform to launch a barrage of attacks on James, branding her a "racist" attorney general who is "trying to 'get Trump.'"

Continued on Page 6



# Bedoon activists protest in Taima to demand basic rights

## Protesters call for canceling 'abusive' central agency



KUWAIT: Bedoon activists organize a peaceful sit-in for the sixth consecutive day on Tuesday. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** A number of Bedoon activists gathered to stage a sit-in at the Freedom Square in the Taima area of Al-Jahra Governorate, in protest against what they describe as "the injustice inflicted on them" by Kuwait's government, demanding of their civil rights and a resolution for their decades-old unresolved case. The 'Bedoons' or stateless residents are classified by the Kuwaiti government as illegal residents.

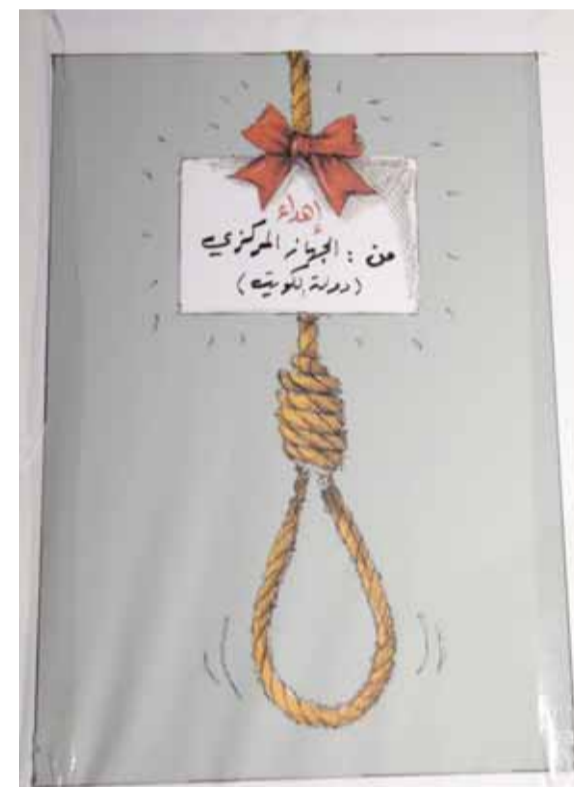
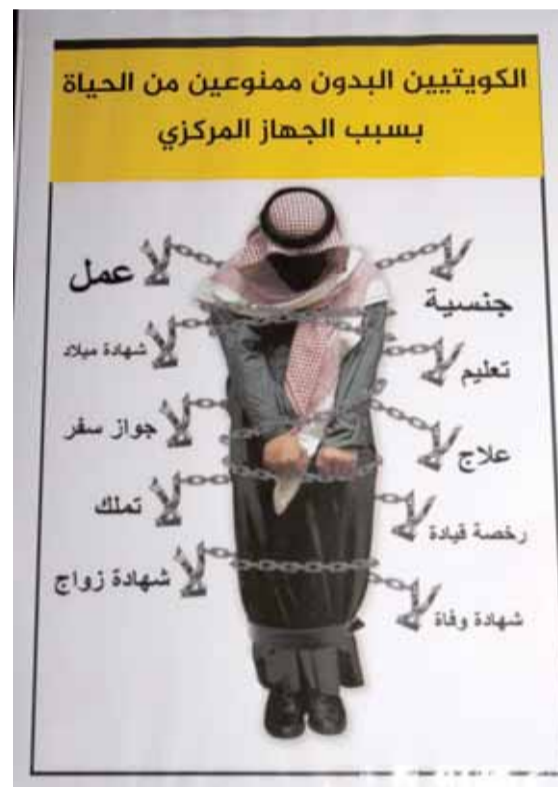
The activists went to the square to join Bedoon activist Fadel Al-Shammari, known as Abu Turki, and activist Basel Al-Shban, who started the sit-in about a week ago. "We held a sit-in last Thursday, August 4. We protested to remove the Central Agency for the Remedy of Situation of Illegal Residents, which oppresses the Bedoons with its decisions and forces them to sign papers with incorrect nationalities," Shammari said. He added, "We are two people who have been protesting daily in the same place for 24 hours a day. This is the third sit-in this year. In the last sit-in, we went on a hunger strike for 19 days without a response from the government. We were only visited by politicians, but without any solutions involved."

Shammari called for an urgent move to abolish the Central Agency for the Remedy of Situation of Illegal Residents and transfer stateless people to

courts to get a final resolution to their case, adding, "If we are not worthy of the Kuwaiti citizenship, just deport us. We are living as prisoners. The government has enough data about each (Bedoon) person. If I am a person with a known nationality, as they say, why am I not deported? Even when they say, 'you came from this or that country', we are being rejected by the embassies of the countries from which they claim we are from."

The protesters stressed that their movement is peaceful, and aim to convey their message to the Kuwaiti government and people in general. They call for the government to fulfil their legitimate demands, and for a rapid solution to the issue of the stateless people by granting them their civil rights and citizenship. They also call for dissolving Central Agency for the Remedy of Situation of Illegal Residents, and considering all decisions issued by it as null and void, as well as canceling all restrictions against children of Bedoons. They stressed that they would continue their sit-ins in Freedom Square unless the government works to find quick solutions to their humanitarian and just cause.

Many Bedoons claim that there is discrimination practiced against them and there is difficulty in enjoying basic state services such as education, housing, work, health care, and others. They have resorted to organizing protests to highlight their cause.



## Ibn Al-Haitham Training Programs to kick off September

**KUWAIT:** Applications for Ibn Al-Haitham Training Center for the year 2022-23 have started, announced the center's manager Dr Waleed Edhbayah. The program, which is an institution belonging to the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, aims to enrich the skills and capabilities of workers in Kuwait's Institutions in accordance with the needs of all of their sectors. "There will be 46 training programs in all fields, such as management, accounting, computer science, law, self-development and leadership presented by a selected elite of experienced certified professionals," clarified Dr Edhbayah. The program, which will be held from September 4, 2022 till March 9, 2023 is hoped to enrich the skills of workers in all levels by improving their performance and increasing their productivity. Applicants can visit [www.paaet.edu.kw](http://www.paaet.edu.kw), in order to apply for the training program.



Dr Waleed Edhbayah

## Irritable bowel syndrome becoming more common in Kuwait

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is one of the most common diseases that people have been hearing about a lot lately. But despite it being common, most patients don't know much information about it, and they face problems dealing with it and how to treat the painful symptoms. For some patients, IBS disease can affect them very badly, and prevents them from living a normal life due to its extreme painful symptoms that vary between abdominal pain, diarrhea, and bloating. Sometimes the patient can wake up from sleep due to extreme pain. On this topic, Kuwait Times spoke to Dr Ghanem Al-Salem, Consultant of Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology, and discussed more about the disease and what causes it.

Dr Salem pointed out that there are multiple factors that could affect the colon and cause the disease. "The colon could be affected by things that range from simple to more complicated things," he said. "The most common problem that we see in our clinics are patients suffering from irritable bowel syndrome, which is a functional disorder that doesn't cause organic or pathological problems such as colon cancer." He added, "Most medical examinations for patients come with normal results, but the patient would still have severe symptoms and won't feel well due to complaining from bloating, abdominal distension,

change in bowel habits between constipation or diarrhea, while some patients may have mix between both combined with abdominal pain."

He added that there are other serious syndromes that could be an important alarm to dangerous diseases that require immediate medical attention, such as significant weight loss, blood in the stool or if the patient wakes up from sleep due to the severe pain.

### IBS causes

Regarding the reasons behind the disease, Dr Salem said, "It is related to the lifestyle of the person. This involves the modern lifestyle that includes less exercise, depending much on transportations, less walking, communicating with people mostly through social media and not going out, and the type of food that has dramatically changed such as the excessive consumption of fast food. These all have severe effect on our bodies. In addition, we believe that stress also has a great effect. Most of us have jobs that we think about a lot, and we also have responsibilities towards our families and our future plans. That puts more pressure on our brains to process all that information, and that may affect our bowels." He explained that the excessive brain activity stimulates neurological cells, which in turn can make the bowel unstable with these symptoms.



Dr Ghanem Al-Salem

Regarding the treatment methods, Dr Salem said, "If the doctor diagnoses the patients with IBS, we start to educate them more about the disease, because we think that the main goal or pillar of the treatment is to teach them the best way to deal with the symptoms by understanding the mechanism behind it. We help the patient as much as we can by showing them how their lifestyles should be changed."

"There are proven diets we can provide the patient with to reduce the symptoms," Dr Salem mentioned. "We think that regular exercise can help, with some medications to reduce these symptoms. Unfortunately, a complete cure or relief of those symptoms is not available. Sometimes we find it difficult with patients, as some of them will feel fine and the symptoms will disappear and may come back, but most of the patients will have some of these symptoms ongoing, therefore we try our best to provide help to minimize these symptoms as much as we can."

Regarding the most affected gender by IBS, Dr Salem said, "Studies showed that women are more affected compared to men, yet with my clinical practice, I think it is affecting both genders the same, and probably in Kuwait it is more equal between both genders due to the same lifestyle we live in and the same factors that affect us."

He added that IBS recently is more common between teenagers and underage kids more than it used to be, especially after the pandemic, due to the lockdown and the communicating with others that has been decreased which had a major psychological effect on them. He mentioned that there is a study waiting to be published which confirms the prevalence of irritable bowel disease among teenagers.

## Over 250 students accepted in KILAW

**KUWAIT:** Between 250 and 280 students who have applied to Kuwait International Law School on their own expenses have been admitted to the university and their names are expected to be announced in the middle of next week, said Dr Saleh Al-Otaibi, the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs in a press conference. "There is great demand for admissions this year, as the number of applicants is currently three times bigger than the capacity of the college, and we are planning to stay within our specified capacity," Otaibi clarified.

The Assistant dean encouraged students to complete the procedures necessary in order to start their studies. He also expressed his wishes to all students for a successful academic time and future, and his confirmation that the college is adamant in reaching the latest developments of education so that students are equipped with the latest English and Arabic expertise, making their graduates valuable assets in their working career.



Local

# Heat-related deaths could increase by 15%, says Kuwait University study

14 out of 100 deaths could be attributed to heat by century's end

KUWAIT: Heat-related mortality for non-Kuwaiti migrant workers could increase by around 15 percent by the end of the century, according to a Kuwait University study. Also, for every 100 deaths in Kuwait, around 14 could be attributed to heat driven by climate change by the century's end, says the environmental research letter prepared by Barrak Al-Ahmad from the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health, College of Public Health, Kuwait University.



Barrak Al-Ahmad

"It is uncertain what climate change could bring to populations and countries in the hot desert environment of the Arabian Peninsula," the study says. "Not only because they are already hot, countries in this region also have unique demographic profiles, with migrant populations potentially more vulnerable and constituting a large share of the population. In Kuwait, two-thirds of the population are migrant workers and record-high temperatures are already common."

The study quantifies the temperature-related mortality burdens in Kuwait in the mid- (2050-2059) and end-century (2090-2099) decades under moderate (SSP2-4.5) and extreme (SSP5-8.5) climate change scenarios. "We fitted time series distributed lag non-linear models to estimate the baseline temperature-mortality relationship which was then applied to future daily mean temperatures from the latest available climate models to estimate decadal temperature-mortality burdens under the two scenarios."

According to the study, by mid-century, the average temperature in Kuwait is predicted to increase by 1.80 degrees C (SSP2-4.5) to 2.57 degrees C (SSP5-8.5), compared to a 2000-2009 baseline. "By the end of the century, we could see an increase of up to 5.54 degrees C," it points out. "In a moderate scenario, climate change would increase heat-related mortality by 5.1 percent (95 percent empirical confidence intervals: 0.8, 9.3) by end-century, whereas an extreme scenario increases heat-related mortality by 11.7 percent (2.7, 19.0)."

"Climate change induced warming, even under more optimistic mitigation scenarios, may markedly increase heat-related mortality in Kuwait," the study warns. "Those who are already vulnerable, like migrant workers, could borne a larger impact from climate change."

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the observed mortality and weather data in Kuwait from 2000 to 2016.

	N	Daily Mean (SD)
Deaths		
All non-accidental	73 748	11.9 (4.5)
Cardiovascular	35 285	5.7 (2.8)
0-65years	41 704	6.7 (3.0)
65+ years	32 044	5.2 (2.7)
Men	43 898	7.1 (3.2)
Women	29 850	4.8 (2.5)
Kuwaitis	39 389	6.3 (2.9)
Non-Kuwaitis	34 359	5.5 (2.8)
Temperature (°C)	6208 <sup>a</sup>	27.1 (9.8)
Relative humidity (%)	6190 <sup>a</sup>	34.4 (21.5)

<sup>a</sup> Represent total number of days in the time series.

Table 2. Average increase in future temperatures compared to a baseline decade from 2000 to 2009 under two climate change scenarios: moderate (SSP2-4.5) and extreme (SSP5-8.5).

	SSP2-4.5		SSP5-8.5	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Mid-century (2050-2059 vs 2000-2009)	1.80 °C	0.58 °C	2.57 °C	0.67 °C
End-century (2090-2099 vs 2000-2009)	2.70 °C	0.73 °C	5.54 °C	1.27 °C

Ahmad prepared the study titled 'Climate change and health in Kuwait: temperature and mortality projections under different climatic scenarios' in cooperation with Ana Maria Vicedo-Cabrera, Kai Chen, Eric Garshick, Aaron S Bernstein, Joel Schwartz and Petros Koutrakis. This study was supported by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science, the US Environmental Protection Agency, and the Harvard Chan National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences Center for Environmental Health.

Substantial increases

The study presents what the researchers believe to be "the first quantitative assessment of climate change and country specific temperature-mortality projections in an inherently hot and hyper-arid area in the Arabian Peninsula." "We find substantial increases in heat mortality associated with moderate warming projections by mid-century," it notes. "At the end of the century, we find projected warming to be associated with an increase of heat-related mortality risk of 5.1 percent in a moderate climate change scenario and by 11.7 percent in an extreme one, compared to the baseline decade. Climate-induced mortality seems inevitable even in moderate scenarios."

"Other temperature-mortality projection studies reported an increase in heat-related mortality in regions having a hot climate," it further points out. "Central and South America, southern Europe, and southeast Asia are projected to encounter an increase ranging from 10 percent to 17 percent in heat-related mortality under RCP8.5 and by the end of the century. Similarly, hotter regions in China showed stronger future mortality burdens, especially under extreme emission scenarios. In Houston, Texas, there was a notable increase in projected heat-related mortality and a much larger magnitude if the size and age of the population were accounted for, albeit with higher uncertainty."

"The IPCC sixth assessment report was 'virtually certain' that the magnitude and frequency of heat events have increased on the global scale since the last century (Intergovernmental Panel Climate Change 2021)," the study reads. "Compared to pre-industrial times (from 1850 to 1900), the IPCC estimated that there will be a 2.4 C (SSP2-4.5) and 4.4 C (SSP5-8.5) average increase in global temperatures by the end of the century. In Kuwait, compared to 2000-2009 rather than pre-industrial times, we estimated a 2.6 C (SSP2-4.5) and 5.5 C (SSP5-8.5) increase by the end of the century."

The global average increase is worrying in Kuwait for two reasons, says the study. "First, Kuwait is already on the extreme end of the temperature distribution. An upwards mean shift of a global 2.4 C or 4.4 C increase will result in frequent, and possibly unprecedented heat in Kuwait. Second, the Kuwaiti population, with a high percentage of

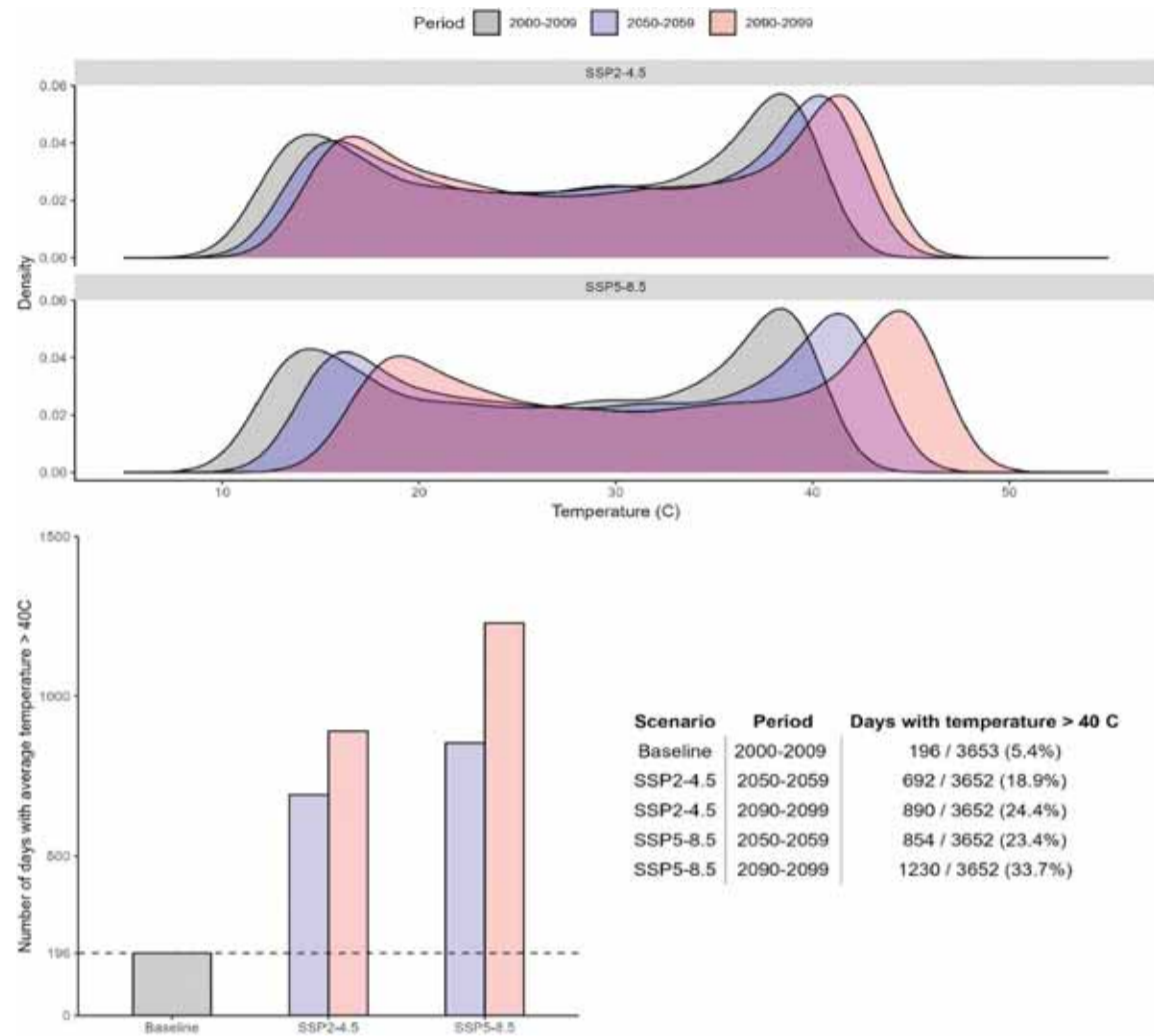


Figure 1. Distribution of future temperatures. Top panel shows the temperature density in baseline (2000-2009), mid (2050-2059) and end-century (2090-2099) decades under two climate change scenarios in Kuwait. Bottom panel and table show the corresponding number of days where average 24 h temperature in Kuwait exceeds 40 C.

migrants and growing prevalence of non-communicable diseases, may be particularly vulnerable."

"Migrant workers work in hazardous occupations," the study explains. "They tend to work for extended periods outdoors in extreme heat. We previously found that non-Kuwaiti migrant workers were especially vulnerable to extreme temperatures and air pollution. We now estimate that heat-related mortality could increase by more than 15 percent in the distant future for non-Kuwaitis. This is not surprising given the numerous stressors that may impair the health of migrant workers. Greater occupational protections for heat expo-

sure are needed to protect migrant workers and ensure health equity."

Finally, the study sounds an alarm that Kuwait, "an already hot country", is expected to endure more frequent and extreme temperatures even under moderate climate change scenarios. It also indicates that "warming of our planet is not evenly distributed." "Extreme heat in the future may result in additional deaths barring effective adaptation," the study concludes. "Vulnerable populations, including migrant workers, could bear disproportionate harm from climate change induced warming."

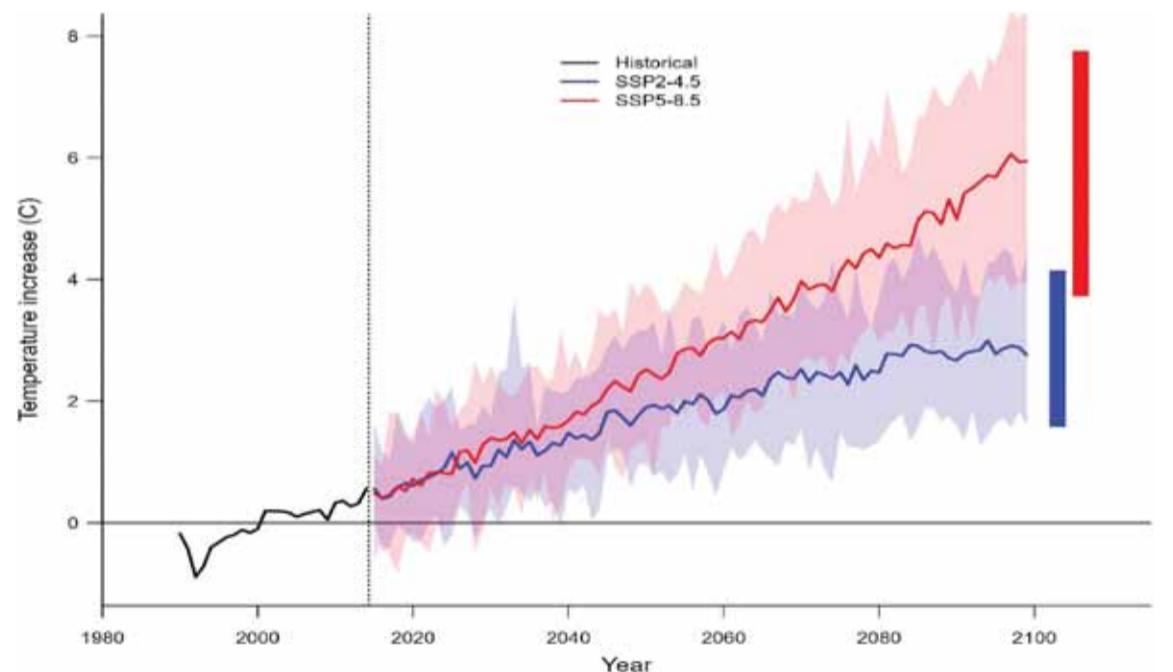


Figure 2. Average annual temperature increases in the future compared to historical temperatures in Kuwait.



## Health Minister tours new Farwaniya Hospital preparations

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Khaled Al-Saeed supervised the final preparations of the plans to open and operate the new Farwaniya Hospital. The minister toured the project's site on Tuesday along with Undersecretary Dr Mustafa Redha, as well as Assistant Undersecretary for Industrial and Project Affairs Engineer Ibrahim Al-Naham. The minister

listened carefully to members of the supervising panel who gave a detailed explanation on the latest developments of these preparations, which will be done through predetermined phases.

This comes in line with the ministry's plans to improve its capabilities to provide the best quality health services to patients, the ministry said in a statement. This comes in line with providing a fully operational hospital that includes the most services possible of the medical field. Moreover, the Minister acknowledges the efforts that have been made during the past period and the state's efforts to decrease obstacles and challenges, which allowed it to reach this stage, in expectation for a soon opening.





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#### News in brief

#### Kuwait condemns continued Zionist crimes in Palestine

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs denounced in the strongest terms the repeated crimes by the Zionist entity in Palestine, the latest of which was the killing of three Palestinians and destroying several houses during the storming of the city of Nablus. In a statement Tuesday, the ministry urged the international community to shoulder their responsibilities, respond urgently to the Zionist entity's aggressions.

#### Kuwait consulate in India closed for holiday

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait closed its consulate in India's financial capital Mumbai as part of a national holiday, which saw all state bodies and diplomatic missions shut, the foreign ministry said on Tuesday. Contrary to what was reported on social media, the reason for the closure is due to a national holiday in India, according to a ministry statement.

#### Seven injured in two-vehicle crash in Kabd

**KUWAIT:** Seven people were injured in a two-vehicle collision reported on Kabd Road on Tuesday, Kuwait Fire Force said. Firemen rushed to the scene in response to an emergency call and removed the victims from the wrecked cars, KFF said in a statement, noting that the injured were "one Kuwaiti citizen and six Asian nationals." The victims were medevacked to the nearest hospital, it added.

#### Photo of the Day



**KUWAIT:** The sunset seen from a location in Kuwait. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

## Kuwait stresses nuclear weapons-free Middle East achieves peace, stability

### Zionist entity only party in region not to join the treaty

**NEW YORK:** Kuwait reiterated on Tuesday that the goal of freeing the Middle East region of nuclear weapons and putting all nuclear facilities and program under the control of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is to achieve security, safety and stability in the region. This came in a speech delivered by Second Secretary of Kuwait's Diplomatic Mission at the UN Ibrahim Al-Dai during the second committee of the tenth conference of reviewing the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Dai affirmed abidance by the outcomes of the conferences of 1995, 2000 and 2010 mainly those related to the free Middle East of nuclear weapons. Abidance of the countries not having nuclear weapons by their responsibilities for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons indicates that those countries are aware of the risk of these weapons, he said. He stressed the importance for all countries of joining to the treaty as soon as possible. He said that Kuwait contributed to

efforts made by the Arab countries to implementing the resolution issued in 1995 and establishing a zone free of the nuclear weapons and other destructive ones in the Middle East.

Dai underscored the significance of the Zionist entity joining the treaty since it is the only party that did not join to it in the region. This prevents establishing a free zone of nuclear weapons in the region, he said, stressing that stability and security can't be achieved by having nuclear weapons or any other destructive weapons. He said that the resolution 1995 on the Middle East remains effective until its goals are achieved. He lauded the success of the first and second sessions of the conference pertaining to establishing a nuclear weapons-free Middle East. The final reports of the two sessions were sent to the head of the conference in a hope that they would contribute to implementing the resolutions issued by the previous conferences, he elaborated. — KUNA



**NEW YORK:** Second Secretary of Kuwait's Diplomatic Mission at the UN Ibrahim Al-Dai speaks during the second committee of the tenth conference of reviewing the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. —KUNA

## Kuwait FM, US Assistant Secretary of State discuss bilateral ties



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets US Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs Michele Sison. —KUNA

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah met on Wednesday with US Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs Michele Sison on the occasion of her visit to the country. During the

meeting, both sides discussed bilateral ties between the two friendly countries and ways to strengthen cooperation to reinforce international food security and health sector. Latest regional and international developments have been discussed. — KUNA



## Community to organize pharmacies across Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** In order to increase cooperation between ministries, the Minister of Health Dr Khalid Al-Saeed and the Minister of Commerce and Industry Fahad Al-Shuraiaan, conducted a meeting along with their undersecretaries, in order

to organize the pharmaceutical situation in Kuwait. A four-party committee was formed composed of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the Municipality along with the Civil Services Commission, to investigate and review all private pharmacies to make sure legal procedures, such as, licensing, prescribing medicine and make sure only receiving e-payments are being followed. Another meeting will be conducted in order to review the rules and regulations that are related to this issue, in order to ensure pharmaceutical availability and insure their spread out in an organized matter.

## Kuwait commences fundraising for Gazans

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) on Wednesday launched a fundraising campaign as a sign of support and solidarity with Palestinians in the Gaza Strip against Zionist entity's aggressions. "The campaign is meant to help people in the Gaza Strip and to ease out their distress triggered by recurrent Zionist entity's aggressions,"

KRCS Board Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer said. The initiative, which is part of Kuwait's national and humanitarian duty towards the Palestinian people, would help provide relief, medical and fuel requirements for Gaza hospitals, Sayer pointed out. The Kuwaiti relief endeavor comes amid awfully difficult conditions experienced by the Palestinian people, especially Gazans, as a result of surging Zionist entity's attacks on Palestinian territories, the charity chief added. — KUNA



Dr Hilal Al-Sayer

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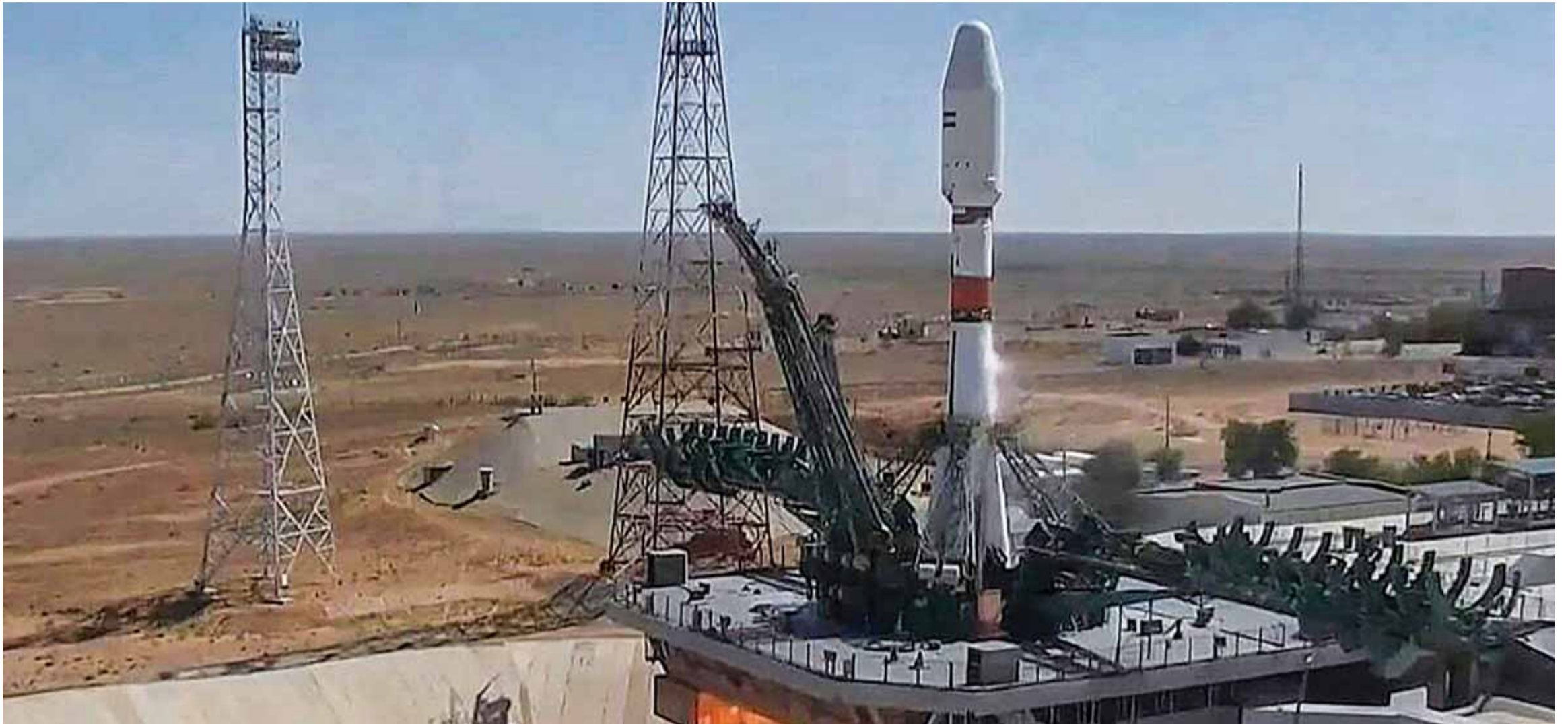


Taliban torn over reforms one year after seizing power

## Berlusconi eyes fresh comeback in Italian polls

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BAIKONUR, Kazakhstan: Russian Space Agency Roscosmos shows the Soyuz-2.1b rocket carrying the Khayyam satellite blasting off from a launch pad at the Baikonur Cosmodrome. An Iranian satellite launched by Russia blasted off from Kazakhstan early August 9, 2022, and went into orbit amid controversy that Moscow might use it to improve its surveillance of military targets in Ukraine. —AFP

# Russia launches Iranian satellite

## Russia launch satellite with significant spying capabilities on Iran's behalf

ALMATY, Kazakhstan: An Iranian satellite launched by Russia blasted off from Kazakhstan Tuesday and reached orbit amid controversy that Moscow might use it to boost its surveillance of military targets in Ukraine.

As Russia's international isolation grows following Western sanctions over its invasion of Ukraine, the Kremlin is seeking to pivot towards the Middle East, Asia and Africa and find new clients for its embattled space programme.

Speaking at the Moscow-controlled Baikonur Cosmodrome in the Kazakh steppe, Russian space chief Yuri Borisov hailed "an important milestone in Russian-Iranian bilateral cooperation, opening the way to the implementation of new and even larger projects".

Iran's Telecommunications Minister Issa Zarepour, who also attended the launch of the Khayyam satellite, called the event "historic" and "a turning point for the start of a new interaction in the field of space between our two countries".

Nasser Kanani, the Iranian foreign ministry spokesman, said on Twitter that "the brilliant path of scientific and technological progress of the Islamic republic of Iran continues despite sanctions and the

enemies' maximum pressure".

Iran, which has maintained ties with Moscow and refrained from criticism of the Ukraine invasion, has sought to deflect suspicions that Moscow could use Khayyam to spy on Ukraine. Responding to the launch, Washington said Russia's growing cooperation with Iran should be viewed as a "profound threat".

"We are aware of reports that Russia launched a satellite with significant spying capabilities on Iran's behalf," a US State Department spokesperson said. "Russia deepening an alliance with Iran is something that the whole world should look at and see as a profound threat."

Last week, The Washington Post quoted anonymous Western intelligence officials as saying that Russia "plans to use the satellite for several months or longer" to assist its war efforts before allowing Iran to take control.

Less than two hours after the satellite was launched on a Soyuz-2.1b rocket, the Iran Space Agency (ISA) said "ground stations of the Iran Space Agency" had already received "first telemetric data".

The space agency stressed on Sunday that the Islamic republic would control the satellite "from day one" in an apparent reaction to the Post's report.

"No third country is able to access the information" sent by the satellite due to its "encrypted algorithm", it said.

The purpose of Khayyam is to "monitor the country's borders", enhance agricultural productivity and monitor water resources and natural disasters, according to the space agency.

### 'Long-term cooperation'

Khayyam, apparently named after the 11th-century Persian polymath Omar Khayyam, will not be the first Iranian satellite that Russia has put into space.

In 2005, Iran's Sina-1 satellite was deployed from Russia's Plesetsk Cosmodrome. Iran is currently negotiating with world powers, including Moscow, to salvage a 2015 deal aimed at reining in Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

The United States—which quit the landmark Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA in 2018 under then-president Donald Trump—has accused Iran of effectively supporting Russia's war against Ukraine while adopting a "veil of neutrality".

Russian President Vladimir Putin met Iranian counterpart Ebrahim Raisi and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran last month—one of his few trips

abroad since Moscow's February 24 invasion.

Iran's Khamenei called for "long-term cooperation" with Russia during their meeting, and Tehran has refused to join international condemnation of Moscow's invasion of its pro-Western neighbour.

Iran insists its space programme is for civilian and defence purposes only, and does not breach the 2015 nuclear deal, or any other international agreement.

Western governments worry that satellite launch systems incorporate technologies interchangeable with those used in ballistic missiles capable of delivering a nuclear warhead, something Iran has always denied wanting to build.

Iran successfully put its first military satellite into orbit in April 2020, drawing a sharp rebuke from the United States.

Borisov, who last month replaced bombastic nationalist Dmitry Rogozin as head of the Russian space agency, had acknowledged that the national space industry is in a "difficult situation" amid tensions with the West.

Russia will continue its space programme but end activities at the International Space Station—an outlier of cooperation between Moscow and the West—after 2024, he said. —AFP

## China warns it will not tolerate Taiwan 'separatists'

BEIJING: China on Wednesday vowed zero tolerance for "separatist activities" in Taiwan and reaffirmed that it would take the self-ruled island by force if necessary. The warning from Beijing, which considers Taiwan its territory, came after days of unprecedented Chinese military drills around the island sparked by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip.

Pelosi last week became the highest-ranking US official to visit Taiwan in decades despite stark threats from China, which tries to keep Taipei isolated on the world stage. China's Taiwan Affairs Office on Wednesday issued a white paper laying out how it intends to claim the island through a range of economic incentives and military pressure.

"We are ready to create vast space for peaceful reunification, but we will leave no room for separatist activities in any form," said the paper. China will "not renounce the use of force, and we reserve the option of

taking all necessary measures".

It added, however: "We will only be forced to take drastic measures to respond to the provocation of separatist elements or external forces should they ever cross our red lines." China last issued a white paper on Taiwan in 2000. Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, the island's top policymaking body on China, rejected the paper and said the document "is full of... lies". "Taiwan maintains that 'neither side belongs to the other', and firmly refuses 'one country, two systems'—this is the current status of the Taiwan Strait and the reality," it said in a statement.

"One country, two systems" refers to the model under which Hong Kong and Macau were promised a degree of autonomy under Chinese rule. It has been proposed by Beijing as a solution for Taiwan. The release of the white paper came on the same day that a top Taiwan opposition politician flew to China for meetings with Taiwanese businesspeople, prompting condemnation from Taipei which had called on him to cancel the trip.

Andrew Hsia, deputy chairman of the Beijing-friendly Kuomintang party, travelled to China with a delegation in an unofficial capacity and was not scheduled to visit the capital. He will quarantine for 10 days and return to Taiwan on August 27, the party said in a statement.

But President Tsai Ing-wen criticised him for travelling across the Taiwan Strait after days of Chinese mili-

time Cuba is already battling electricity outages. Four military helicopters flew repeated sorties over the depot, dropping sea water on the blaze.

"The firefighting teams continue to clear a path to the flames so the teams charged with applying the foam can get to the place," Matanzas governor Mario Sabines said on Twitter. He added that smoke from the fire had reduced visibility to near zero, and drones were deployed to provide a better view.

Four of the eight tanks on site have already collapsed in the blaze, have spilled their contents, and were still burning, according to deputy fire chief Alexander Avalos Jorge. Water was being sprayed on the remaining four tanks, clustered just 150 meters (about 492 feet) from the other four tanks, in a bid to keep them cool.

The tanks each have a capacity of some 50,000 cubic meters or 50 million liters of fuel. The Matanzas depot, built in the 1980s and modernized several times, supplies the Antonio Guiteras thermoelectric plant, the largest in the communist nation.

The plant features five docks to receive ships of up to 180,000 tonnes, and can handle 40,000 barrels a day. The big question now is "the supply of fuel



This handout image taken on August 9, 2022 shows an air-to-air refuelling of a PLA fighter jet during a military drill in an undisclosed location. —AFP

itary drills around the island. "At this moment, the Kuomintang still insisted on going to China, disappointing our people. The Kuomintang's actions are also sending the wrong message to the international community," Tsai told a meeting of her ruling party on Wednesday.

Since the late 1990s, the island has transformed from an autocracy into a vibrant democracy, and a distinct Taiwanese identity has emerged. Relations between the two sides have significantly worsened since Tsai became president in 2016. —AFP

to thermoelectric plants," said Jorge Pinon, a Cuban expert in energy policy at the University of Texas. "The problem with (electricity generation) has not been the lack of fuel, but the plants are very old and have maintenance problems. Now they will also have a lack of fuel," he said. "If they lose Matanzas, they lose the ability to supply the power plants," said Pinon.

The disaster comes at a time when the island—with an outdated energy network and persistent fuel shortages—has faced mounting difficulties in meeting energy demands. Since May, authorities have imposed energy blackouts of up to 12 hours a day in some regions—sparking protests around the nation of 11 million people.

Thirteen flights have arrived from Mexico and four from Venezuela with technicians, firefighters and equipment, including fire retardant foam, fire hoses, helicopter water buckets, spray pumps and medicines.

A Mexican Navy logistics support ship also arrived at Matanzas Bay Tuesday with a helicopter on deck. And Cuba's deputy foreign minister, Carlos Fernandez de Cossio, thanked the United States—which has maintained six decades of sanctions against the communist nation—for an offer of "technical advice." —AFP

## Firefighters battle to contain Cuba fuel depot blaze

MATANZAS, Cuba: Helicopters and firefighters battled Tuesday to contain a days-old blaze at a fuel depot in Cuba that has already destroyed four tanks and was threatening four more. The fire, which started on Friday after lightning struck one of the tanks, left a 60-year-old firefighter dead and 14 colleagues missing, according to authorities.

More than 100 people were reported injured, with 22 still hospitalized. About 5,000 people have been evacuated from around the disaster zone on the outskirts of Matanzas, an industrial city of 140,000 people some 100 kilometers (60 miles) west of Havana.

As teams prepared Tuesday to try and douse the fire with foam, fears were rising that the blaze could threaten the fuel supply to thermoelectric plants at a

## Up to 50 missing after migrant boat sinks off Greece

ATHENS: An air and sea rescue operation was underway Wednesday after around 50 people went missing when a migrant boat sank in the Aegean Sea, the Greek coastguard said. The vessel foundered at dawn off the islands of Karpathos and Rhodes after setting sail on Tuesday from Antalya, southern Turkey, heading for Italy.

"According to the statements of 29 rescued people, there were 80 people on the boat, so up to 50 people are missing," a coastguard press office official told AFP. But state television channel ERT said the number of people on board had been between 30 and 60.

Coastguard spokesman Nikos Kokalakis told the channel: "It's not possible that the boat could have been transferring 80 migrants. We are talking about a lower number." The rescue effort, ordered by merchant shipping minister Yannis Plakiotakis, according to a coastguard statement, included four vessels already sailing in the southern Aegean, two coastguard patrol boats and a Greek air force helicopter.

Strong winds of up to 50 kilometres per hour (30 mph) were hampering the operation, Kokalakis told Skai radio. "Many of those shipwrecked were not wearing life-jackets," Kokalakis said. A video posted by the coastguard showed an army helicopter rescuing two survivors from the sea and transferring them to Karpathos. Another 27 people were transferred to land aboard a tanker that joined the search off the island of Kos, said the coastguard.

Although the migrant boat appears to have been trying to get to Italy, Greece is often the country of choice for people fleeing Africa and the Middle East to try to reach a better life in the European Union.

Thousands come to Greece via Turkey over the narrow and perilous sea crossing separating the traditional enemies. Sixty-four people have perished in the eastern Mediterranean since January, the International Organization for Migration says. Eight people died off the Greek island of Mykonos on June 19 when 108 more were rescued, according to the UN migration body. —AFP



## International

# Peruvian police raid presidential palace in search of president's sister-in-law

## Court authorized the preliminary detentions of those involved for 10 days

**LIMA, Peru:** Peruvian police and public prosecution agents raided the presidential palace in Lima on Tuesday in an unsuccessful bid to arrest Yenifer Paredes, the sister-in-law of President Pedro Castillo, for alleged corruption and money laundering.

The unprecedented police operation was carried out after the prosecutor's office requested a "raid" of the "residential area of the government palace," the Court of Justice said in a statement. After almost four hours of searching, the agents left the presidential residence without finding Paredes, who now appears to be a fugitive from justice.

Paredes, 26, lives with Castillo and his family in the presidential residence within the Government Palace. Judicial raids were taking place simultaneously in several other locations in the capital, with Jose Nenil Medina, a mayor from Castillo's native Chota province, and

businessmen brothers Hugo and Angie Espino arrested for alleged involvement in the same corruption ring.

The court authorized the preliminary detentions of those involved for 10 days. Paredes had already been summoned to testify before the public prosecutor's office and to appear before a commission of the Peruvian Congress in mid-July.

The public prosecutor's office has five open investigations against President Castillo, who is himself facing corruption allegations. In a message broadcast on television late Tuesday, Castillo called the operation "an illegal raid" that was part of a conspiracy to remove him from office.

"Today, the Government Palace and the Presidential House have once again been violated with an illegal raid endorsed by a judge, coincidentally when a request is being made for my disqualification for five years to take away from the Peruvian peo-

ple their legitimate government," said Castillo, a 52-year-old former teacher and trade unionist.

Earlier on Tuesday, a parliamentary report recommended disqualifying and criminally prosecuting Castillo over his reported consideration of a proposal to allow landlocked Bolivia access to the sea through Peru, an allegation he denies.

Castillo completed a year in office in July. He has so far faced two impeachment proceedings in Congress and has a 74 percent disapproval rating amongst the public, according to opinion polls.

Paredes is the fourth person in the presidential entourage to be investigated for alleged corruption.

Other members of Castillo's close circle to be prosecuted are a nephew who served as an adviser and a former transportation minister, both of whom are fugitives from justice, and his former presidential — AFP



LIMA: Peru's President Pedro Castillo (L) congratulating Miguel Rodriguez, after the latter was sworn in as his Minister of Foreign Affairs in Lima. — AFP

## Heat, drought rekindle wildfire in south France

**BORDEAUX, France:** A fire that destroyed thousands of hectares of tinder-dry forest in southwest France has flared again amid a fierce drought and the summer's latest wave of extreme heat, officials said Wednesday.

An additional 6,000 hectares (15,000 acres) of pine forest have burned in the so-called Landiras blaze since Tuesday afternoon, forcing the evacuation of around 6,000 people, Gironde regional officials said in a statement.

"The fire is extremely violent and has spread to the Landes department" further south, home of the Landes de Gascogne regional park, the prefecture said, and further evacuations are likely. "It's a major fire... much more intense and fast-moving" than at the height of the Landiras blaze that ignited in July, Marc Vermeulen of the regional fire-fighting authority told journalists.

No one has been injured in the coastal area that draws huge summer tourism crowds but 16 houses were destroyed or damaged near the village of Belin-Beliet. The fire was spreading toward the A63 motorway, a major artery linking Bordeaux to Spain, with thick smoke forcing the road's closure between Bordeaux and Bayonne.

The Landiras fire was the largest of several that have raged this year in southwest France, which has been buffeted by record drought and a series of heat waves. Arsonists set some of the fires and officials initially suspected a criminal origin for the Landiras blaze. Police later released a suspect for lack of evidence.

Around 500 firefighters are on the scene, supported by water-dropping planes. The Gironde prefect, Martin Guespereau, said Wednesday "the risks are very high" that adverse weather conditions will allow the fire to spread further.

"The weather is very unfavourable because of the heat, the dry air, the record drought and the fact that there is a lot of peat in the ground... the fire didn't go out in July, it went underground," he told journalists. — AFP

## Berlusconi eyes fresh comeback in Italian polls

**ROME:** Scandal-plagued former premier Silvio Berlusconi said Wednesday he hoped to return to Italy's parliament in September elections, almost a decade after being forced out over a conviction for tax fraud.

"I think that, in the end, I will be present myself as a candidate for the Senate, so that all these people who asked me will finally be happy," the 85-year-old billionaire and media mogul told Rai radio. After helping bring down Prime Minister Mario Draghi last month by withdrawing its support, Berlusconi's centre-right Forza Italia party looks set to return to power in September 25 elections.

It is part of a right-wing coalition led by Giorgia Meloni's post-fascist Brothers of Italy, which includes Matteo Salvini's

anti-immigration League. Berlusconi brushed off reports he is worried about the possibility of Meloni-whose motto is "God, country and family"-becoming prime minister of the eurozone's third-largest economy.

Noting the agreement between them that whoever wins the most votes chooses the prime minister, he said: "If it is Giorgia, I am sure she will prove capable of the difficult task." But he urged voters to back his party as the moderate voice in the coalition, emphasizing its European, Atlantacist stance.

"Every extra vote in Forza Italia will strengthen the moderate, centrist profile of the coalition," he said in a separate interview published Wednesday in the Il Giornale newspaper. Berlusconi was Italy's prime minister three times in the 1990s and 2000s, but has dominated public life for far longer as head of a vast media and sports empire.

The Senate expelled him in November 2013 following his conviction for tax fraud, and he was banned from taking part in a general election for six years. He was elected to the European Parliament in 2019, however, and threw his hat in the



Silvio Berlusconi

ring earlier this year to become Italy's president—although his candidacy was predictably short-lived.

Berlusconi remains hugely controversial in Italy and embroiled in the many legal wrangles that have characterised his long career. He remains on trial for allegedly paying guests to lie about his notorious "bunga-bunga" sex parties while prime minister.

Berlusconi has also suffered a string of health issues, some related to his hospitalisation for coronavirus in September 2020, after which he said he had almost died. — AFP

## Russia rocket strikes kill...

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disaster in then Soviet Ukraine, which killed hundreds of people and spread radioactive contamination over much of Europe. The plant was captured by Russian troops on March 4 after a battle with Ukrainian forces.

The strikes came a day after major blasts at the Saki airfield, a key military base on the Russian-annexed Crimea peninsula. Dramatic amateur footage on social media appeared to show panicked holidaymakers fleeing a Crimean beach with young children, as ballooning clouds of grey smoke rose over the horizon.

Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 and has used the region as a staging ground for its attacks, but it has rarely been a target for Ukrainian forces. Moscow insisted that the explosions were caused by detonating ammunition rather than Ukrainian fire. Ukraine's

army, which for months pleaded for long-range artillery from Western allies, has been hitting targets deeper in Russian-held territory since some started arriving in recent weeks. Kyiv has also taken credit for several acts of sabotage inside Russian-held territory.

New buyer for Ukraine grain? - The war has severely hampered grain supply from Ukraine, leading to an international food crisis as it is one of the world's biggest producers. But some ships have been able to leave Ukrainian ports in recent days after a deal with Russia brokered by the United Nations and Turkey.

The first grain shipment to leave on the Sierra Leone-flagged vessel Razoni departed the Ukrainian port of Odessa on August 1 and had been expected to dock in the Lebanese port of Tripoli at the weekend. But the Ukrainian embassy said a new buyer for the shipment was being sought after the original Lebanese buyer cancelled the order. A five-month delay after Russia's invasion "prompted the buyer and the shipping agent to reach agreement on the cancellation of the order," the Ukraine embassy said in a statement late Tuesday. It is currently anchored off the Turkish port of Mersin. — AFP



NEW YORK: Former President of the United States, Donald J. Trump, departs Trump Tower for the office of Attorney General Letitia James' office in New York on August 10, 2022. — AFP

has set off a political firestorm.

The FBI, which is led by Christopher Wray, a Trump appointee, declined to provide a reason for the raid. But US media outlets said agents were conducting a court-authorized search related to the potential mis-handling of classified documents that had been sent to Mar-a-Lago after Trump left the White House in January 2021. Trump predictably voiced outrage over the search, dubbing it "weaponization of the justice system."

At the White House, Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said President Joe Biden did not have any advance notice about the raid and respected the independence of the Justice Department. Since leaving office, Trump has remained the country's most divisive figure, continuing to sow falsehoods that he actually won the 2020 vote. He also has faced intense legal scrutiny for his efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 election and over the January 6 attack on the US Capitol by his supporters. — AFP

## US uncovers Iran 'plot' to kill former White House official

**WASHINGTON:** The US Justice Department said Wednesday it had uncovered an Iranian plot to kill former White House National Security Advisor John Bolton, and announced charges against a member of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The Justice Department said 45-year-old Shahram Poursafi, also known as Mehdi Rezayi, had offered to pay an individual in the United States \$300,000 to kill Bolton, the former US ambassador to the United Nations.

The Justice Department said that plan was likely set in retaliation for the US killing of top Guard commander Qassem Soleimani in Iraq in January 2020. The allegation came as Iran weighs a proposed agreement in Vienna talks to revive the 2015 agreement that aims to prevent Tehran from developing nuclear weapons. For months Tehran has held up the deal, demanding that the United States remove its official designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a sponsor of terrorism.

"This is not the first time we have uncovered Iranian plots to exact revenge against individuals on US soil and we will work tirelessly to expose and disrupt every one of these efforts," said US Assistant Attorney General Matthew Olsen. According to the charges, Poursafi tried to arrange Bolton's murder beginning in October 2021, when he contacted online an unidentified person in the United States, first saying he wanted to commission photographs of Bolton.

That person passed the Iranian onto another contact, who Poursafi then asked to kill Bolton. He offered \$250,000, which was then negotiated up to \$300,000. "Poursafi added that he had an additional 'job,' for which he would pay \$1 million," the Justice Department said. But that second person, court documents say, was



Former National Security adviser John Bolton

a confidential source for the US Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The ostensible assassin stalled, waiting for an initial payment, but only in late April did Poursafi send money, paying a total of \$100 in cryptocurrency. Poursafi was charged with the use of interstate commerce facilities in the commission of murder-for-hire, which brings up to 10 years in prison, and with providing and attempting to provide material support to a transnational murder plot, which carries a maximum 15 years sentence.

Bolton, one of the leading "hawks" of the US foreign policy establishment and a strong critic of Iran, was national security advisor in the White House of president Donald Trump from April 2018 to September 2019. In the administration of president George Bush, he was ambassador to the United Nations from 2005-2006.

The court documents indicated Bolton was aware of the plot and cooperated with investigators, allowing photographs of himself outside his Washington office to be sent to Poursafi. Over the months Poursafi discussed the plot with his US contact, he disclosed that it related to Tehran's desire for revenge for the US killing of Soleimani. Soleimani was head of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force and personally maintained its network of allies and proxies across the Gulf region. He was targeted by a US drone strike just after he landed at Baghdad's airport on January 7, 2020. — AFP

## FBI raid ignites political storm...

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James is conducting "a continuation of the greatest Witch Hunt in US history!" Trump wrote. "My great company, and myself, are being attacked from all sides. Banana Republic!" James suspects the Trump Organization fraudulently overstated the value of real estate properties when applying for bank loans, while understating them with the tax authorities in order to pay less in taxes. Trump and his eldest children, Donald Jr and Ivanka, had been due to start testifying under oath in July but the depositions were postponed due to the death of the former president's first wife.

The Trumps have denied any wrongdoing, and the former Republican leader has charged that the probe is politically motivated. If James, an African-American Democrat, finds any evidence of financial misconduct, she can sue the Trump Organization for damages but cannot file criminal charges, as it is a civil investigation. Trump's son Eric hit out at James in a tweet Wednesday, saying his father was sitting "for a deposition in front of the most corrupt Attorney General in the United States."

Donald Trump on Wednesday also posted video clips of James verbally attacking Trump, calling him an "illegitimate president" and vowing a lawsuit. James's probe is one of several legal battles in which Trump is embroiled, threatening to complicate any bid for another run for the White House in 2024. The deposition comes on the heels of a Federal Bureau of Investigation search on Trump's Florida residence in an escalation of legal probes into the 45th president that

## Facebook use plunges among US teenagers

**SAN FRANCISCO:** US teens have left Facebook in droves over the past seven years, preferring to spend time at video-sharing venues YouTube and TikTok, according to a Pew Research Center survey data out Wednesday. TikTok has "emerged as a top social media platform for US teens" while Google-run YouTube "stands out as the most common platform used by teens," the report's authors wrote. Pew's data comes as Facebook-owner Meta is in a battle with TikTok for social media primacy, trying to keep the maximum number of users as part of its multi-billion dollar ad-driven business.

The report said some 95 percent of the teens surveyed said they use YouTube, compared with 67 percent saying they are TikTok users. Just 32 percent of teens surveyed said they log on to Facebook - a big

drop from the 71 percent who reported being users during a similar survey some seven years ago. Once the place to be online, Facebook has become seen as a venue for older folks with young drawn to social networks where people express themselves with pictures and video snippets.

About 62 percent of the teens said they use Instagram, owned by Facebook-parent Meta, while 59 percent said they used Snapchat, researchers stated. "A quarter of teens who use Snapchat or TikTok say they use these apps almost constantly, and a fifth of teen YouTube users say the same," the report said. In a bit of good news for Meta's business, its photo and video sharing service Instagram was more popular with US teens than it was in the 2014-2015 survey. Meanwhile, less than a quarter of the teens surveyed said they ever use Twitter, the report said.

The study also confirmed what casual observers may have suspected, 95 percent of US teens say they have smartphones, while nearly as many of them have desktop or laptop computers. And the share of teens who say they are online almost constantly has nearly doubled to 46 percent when compared to survey results from seven years ago, researchers noted. — AFP



## International

# Tense Kenyans await results of close-fought presidential election

## Country hit by skyrocketing inflation and an unemployment crisis

**NAIROBI, Kenya:** Kenyans waited anxiously on Wednesday for the results of the country's presidential election after a largely peaceful poll, with low turnout pointing to growing frustration with the political elite. Preliminary results broadcast by Kenyan television suggest a tight race for the presidency between Deputy President William Ruto and Raila Odinga, the veteran opposition leader now backed by the ruling party.

Both men have vowed to maintain calm following Tuesday's poll, but the memory of past election-related violence remains fresh for many Kenyans, who have urged political parties to accept the results.



'We call for patience'

With pressure building on the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), which has to declare the results by August 16, officials worked overnight to count votes and dispel rigging fears, as observers watched.

By 10:00 am (0700 GMT) on Wednesday, the national tallying centre had received nearly 95 percent of the presidential results forms transmitted from thousands of polling stations. "We call for patience among Kenyans as we undertake this rigorous exercise and also endeavour to complete this exercise as soon as possible," IEBC chairman Wafula Chebukati said in a late-night briefing.

Kenyans, some of whom lined up before dawn to cast their ballot, voted in six elections on Tuesday, choosing a new president as well as senators, governors, lawmak-



NAIROBI, Kenya: A newspaper vendor arranges newspapers that headlines electoral news following Kenya's general election at a newsstand in Nairobi on August 10, 2022.—AFP

ers, woman representatives and some 1,500 county officials. Despite the early show of enthusiasm however, turnout was markedly lower than previous years, suggesting that for some Kenyans at least, patience with years of unfulfilled promises was running out. According to latest IEBC figures, turnout at 4:00 pm Tuesday, 10 hours after polling began, was just over 56 percent of the 22 million registered voters.

That compares with a final turnout in the disputed August 2017 election of 78 percent. Some Kenyans said they just wanted the election cycle to end so they could focus on putting food on the table in a country hit by skyrocketing inflation and an unemployment crisis.

"The election was done yesterday, I am not interested in wasting more time on it," Celestine Muoki, a 28-year-old IT specialist, told AFP. "Let us move on," she said, echoing the exhaustion felt by many in Kenya.

### 'Lack of faith in politicians'

But few Kenyans expect either Ruto or Odinga to accept the result without a fight, reflecting earlier polls in the East African nation where no presidential election outcome has gone uncontested since 2002.

Once the heir-apparent, Ruto, 55, found himself banished to the sidelines after two-term President Uhuru Kenyatta — who cannot run a third time — joined

hands with his former foe Odinga, 77, in a move that stunned the country.

Since then, the wealthy businessman has cast himself as the champion of "hustlers" trying to survive in a country ruled by "dynasties" — the Kenyatta and Odinga families that have dominated Kenyan politics since independence from Britain in 1963.

With a third of Kenya's population living in poverty, economic pressures weighed on voters even before the war in Ukraine sent the prices of essential goods soaring. Prior to the election, some observers surmised that the economy could surpass tribal affiliations as a key factor driving voter behaviour, while others said politicians' failure to tackle the crisis could keep people away from the ballot all together. "Many Kenyans... have cited their lack of faith in politicians to improve their current economic circumstances as the main reason for not participating in the August polls," Oxford Economics said in a note last week.

### 'Calm and peaceful'

If neither Ruto nor Odinga wins more than 50 percent of the vote, Kenya will stage a run-off for the first time in its history. Kenya's international partners are closely watching the election in a country deemed a beacon of regional stability.

Local polls were suspended in several areas on Tuesday, triggering a protest in one case, but police said the electoral process had largely "remained calm and peaceful with no major incidents to report". Security is tight nationwide, with a view to preventing a repeat of the post-election violence that has hit Kenya in the past, and schools have been ordered to remain closed until Monday. The 2007 poll was followed by politically motivated ethnic clashes that killed more than 1,100 people, while Odinga's challenge to the 2017 election result was met with a heavy-handed police response that left dozens dead.—AFP



TOKYO: Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (front C) and his cabinet ministers attend a photo session at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo. Japan's prime minister reshuffled his cabinet after a slump in approval ratings.—AFP

## Japan's premier reshuffles cabinet

**TOKYO:** Japan's prime minister reshuffled his cabinet Wednesday after a slump in approval ratings, replacing the brother of assassinated ex-leader Shinzo Abe as defence minister. Fumio Kishida led his ruling party to victory in an upper house election last month, days after Abe was shot dead by a man resentful of the Unification Church.

Since then, as the public scrutinises the church's ties with Japanese politicians and Kishida's handling of the economy, approval ratings for the government have tumbled. They fell 13 percentage points in three weeks to 46 percent, according to a poll published Monday by public broadcaster NHK.

Political veteran Yasukazu Hamada was named defence minister—a key role, given Kishida's pledge to ramp up the defence budget to counter growing threats from China and North Korea. Hamada, who previously served as defence minister from 2008-9, replaced Abe's brother Nobuo Kishi, whose ailing health has prompted concern.

Kishi also recently vowed to "thoroughly review" his links to the Unification Church, after acknowledging that church members had served as cam-

aign volunteers. Since Abe's death a month ago, Japanese media has revealed that many ruling lawmakers—especially those in Abe's faction—received similar assistance from Unification Church members, something the group says followers only do as private citizens.

The organisation founded in Korea in 1954, whose followers are colloquially known as "Moonies", has confirmed that the mother of the man suspected of killing Abe was a member. She reportedly declared bankruptcy after making donations of around 100 million yen (\$1 million at the time) to the church.

On Wednesday, Kishida said he had told all his ministers to review their ties with the organisation, "so as to clear suspicion from the public". "I appointed only those who accepted my strict instructions that each one of them check their relationship with the group and strictly review it based on their responsibility as a politician," he told reporters.

Earlier, the top government spokesman announced the new cabinet including Katsunobu Kato, who served as health minister under Abe and returns to head the ministry. Flamboyant figure Taro Kono, who has also held several high-profile ministerial posts, was named digital affairs minister.

And Sanae Takaichi, known for her hawkish views, is the new economic security minister—one of just two women in the cabinet. The current foreign and finance ministers will stay in place, while Kishi has been appointed aide to the prime minister.—AFP

## Pakistan zoo cancels lion auction

**LAHORE:** A Pakistan zoo has called off plans to auction 12 lions from its ever-growing pride to private buyers, saying it would instead create new enclosures for the big cats. The auction planned for Thursday had drawn condemnation from the WWF, which urged authorities at Lahore Safari Zoo to instead rehome them with other government wildlife facilities.

"The main reason behind the auction was the lack of space," deputy director Tanvir Ahmed Janjua told AFP, adding officials had decided to speed up work building two new enclosures. "Now that this issue is to be resolved soon, there is no need for the auction to take place."

Set over 200 acres, Lahore Safari Zoo is considered one of the best in the country—where zoos are known for disregarding animal welfare. The Lahore facility is currently home to 29 lions, six resident tigers and two jaguars.

Zoo officials had set a reserve of 150,000 Pakistan rupees (\$700) per cat—about the same price as a cow—but hoped each would fetch around two million rupees at auction. Keeping lions, tigers and other exotic wildlife as pets is not uncommon in Pakistan, and is seen as a status symbol.

Wealthy owners post images and video clips of their big cats on social media, and rent them out as props for movies and photoshoots. Janjua denied opposition from animal rights activists had led to the decision to cancel the auction.

"Should the lions breed more, and we see we are running out of space once again, then we can easily hold another auction," he said.—AFP

## Taleban torn over reforms one year after seizing power

**KANDAHAR, Afghanistan:** One year on from the Taleban's return to power in Afghanistan, some cracks are opening within their ranks over the crucial question of just how much reform their leaders can tolerate.

Infamous during their first reign for their brutal crackdowns on rights and freedoms, the Islamists vowed to rule differently this time. On a superficial level at least, they appear to have changed in some respects. Officials in Kabul have embraced technology, while cricket matches are cheered in full stadiums.

Television was banned under the Taleban government's first incarnation, while Afghans now have access to the internet and social media. Girls are allowed to attend primary school and women journalists are interviewing government officials—unthinkable during the Taleban's first stint in power in the 1990s.

The group's hardline core, composed of battle-hardened veteran fighters, is against any significant ideological change that could be viewed as a sign of capitulation to their enemies in the West. "You have one (Taleban) camp, which is pushing ahead with what they're seeing as reforms, and another camp that seems to think even these meagre reforms are too much," said Ibraheem Bahiss, an Afghanistan analyst with International Crisis Group. The United States and its allies—which had bankrolled Afghanistan for 20 years—have locked the country out of the global banking system and billions in frozen assets abroad, as they hold out for reforms from the Taleban.

Without significant progress, it is the Afghan people who suffer as the country reels under a massive economic crisis that has seen some families choose between selling their organs or their infant daughters.

### 'Retrograde dogmatic views'

On whether the Taleban are even capable of reform, analysts are wary that recent policy changes amount to little more than "tokenism". "There are some cases where we could point to an evolution in policy, but let's be very clear... We're still looking at an organisation that has refused to move beyond very retrograde, dogmatic views," said Michael Kugelman, an Afghanistan specialist with the Washington-based Wilson Center think tank.

Most secondary schools for girls remain closed. Many women have been forced out of government work, while many fear venturing out and being chastised by the Taleban. Simple joys such as music, shisha and card games are strictly controlled in the most conservative areas, while protests have been crushed and journalists regularly threatened or detained.

Demands from the West for an inclusive government were ignored, and the assassination of AI-

Qaeda's leader in Kabul last week underlined the Taleban's ongoing ties with jihadist groups.

### Reform as capitulation

It is from the Taleban's power base of southern Kandahar that the secretive supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada gathers his powerful inner circle of veteran fighters and religious clerics to impose a harsh interpretation of sharia. And for them, ideological concerns outweigh any political or economic drivers to effect change.

"The needs of the Afghans remain the same as 20 years ago," Mohammad Omar Khitabi, a member of a council of clerics who advise Akhundzada in Kandahar, told AFP. His thoughts are echoed by Kandahar's Vice and Virtue Director Abdul Rahman Tayabi, another close aide of the supreme leader.



KABUL: Afghan primary schoolgirls walk to their school along a street in Kabul. One year on from the Taleban's return to power in Afghanistan, some cracks are opening within their ranks over the crucial question of just how much reform their leaders can tolerate.—AFP

"Our people do not have too many demands, like people in other countries might have," he told AFP. Afghan families were left stunned in March when Akhundzada overturned the education ministry's decision to reopen secondary schools for girls.

Some analysts believe he felt uneasy over what could be seen by hardliners as an act of surrender to the West on girls' rights. Hopes of restoring international money flows were shattered—to the dismay of many Taleban officials in Kabul, some of whom spoke out against the decision. Relations with Western diplomats—who meet regularly with Taleban ministers but have no access to Akhundzada—suffered a major setback. A slew of directives that harked back to the first reign of the Taliban quickly followed. "The decisions that (Akhundzada) has made so far are all based on the opinions of religious scholars," said Abdul Hadi Hammad, the head of a madrasa and member of the supreme leader's advisory council.—AFP



LAHORE: Young lions are seen at their enclosure at the Lahore Safari Zoo in Lahore.—AFP



THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 2022

# Business

## Boursa Kuwait buoyed up by acquisitions, bank profits

### Kuwait market booms due to balanced performance of operating companies

KUWAIT: Stock trading at the Kuwaiti stock exchange, now known as Boursa Kuwait, has been recently buoyed up by a set of factors, primarily international liquidity, bank profits and acquisitions, Kuwaiti economists opined. Interviewed by KUNA, the economists listed other stock stimulation elements as mergers, bank facility contracts and favorable financial results of traditional and Islamic investment funds. Al-Dorra Petroleum Services Company's Board Chairman Waleed Al-Houti said since the beginning of this year the market has been booming thanks to the balanced performance of operating companies, especially banks that have capitalized on the four hikes in the discount rate decided over the last seven months.

The Boursa Kuwait's administration has paved the way for all business wishing to join the stock exchange, and managed to rope in family companies, he said, pointing out an endeavor to draw public companies, particularly oil ones, just as a value added to already listed sectors. However, Al-Houti maintained, the market is still in need of further sectors involving all sorts of social media firms, given that social media is now attracting remarkably growing numbers of fans. He spoke highly of the bourse's strategy to draw more international liquidity funds that target the prime market's companies and even hold 60 percent of trading, led by investment portfolios and funds.

Also speaking to KUNA, Sorouh Company's Board Member Suleiman Al-Wagayan said the market has recently experienced varied stages that have affected companies, including the Central Bank's decisions to raise the discount rate by a quarter percentage point four times since the beginning of this year.

He forecasted further rises in the discount rate during the coming period, thus affecting the cost hike for debtors, saying that the banking sector would undoubtedly be the top winner. Al-Wagayan commended acquisitions and mergers of many companies over the last period as a "favorable matter", underlining that the amalgamation of small-sized firms into mega entities would mean higher gains but lower costs. In this context, he lauded the Kuwait Finance House (KFH) acquisition of Bahrain's Ahli United Bank as a step that would unquestionably give Kuwaiti banks a boost in the future. For his part, Kuwait Dealers Association Chairman Mohammad Al-Tarrah said the stock exchange has seen stable trading since early this year thanks to the balanced performance of leading firms, in spite of the international circumstances that have impacted on several world markets.

He believed that lately repeated hikes in oil prices worldwide have also positively affected the Kuwaiti market, mainly relevant companies. The stock exchange has succeeded in roping in new



Boursa Kuwait

types of companies, mainly family ones, not to mention public businesses, thus boosting its position at both local and investment levels, he

noted. The Kuwaiti stock exchange concluded July stock trading by shooting up to KD 45.8 billion (\$151.14 billion). — KUNA

## Iraq launches Mosul airport reconstruction

MOSUL: Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi on Wednesday inaugurated the reconstruction of Mosul international airport, still in disrepair five years after the battle that expelled the Islamic State group from the city.

Entire sectors of the northern metropolis have remained in ruins since the July 2017 recapture of Mosul by Iraqi forces backed by a US-led multinational coalition. The airport, which was heavily damaged in the battle, has been disused since the jihadists seized Mosul and adjacent areas in 2014.

Kadhemi, in an official ceremony at the airport on the southern outskirts of Mosul, laid the foundation stone for its renovation. Airport director Haider Ali told AFP that the reconstruction has been assigned to two Turkish companies and is expected to take 24 months.

Despite the slow pace of reconstruction, the city of 1.5 million inhabitants has regained a semblance of normality: shops have reopened, traffic jams are back and international agencies have been funding restoration projects for historic sites.

But huge challenges remain. At the end of 2021, the Red Cross estimated that 35 percent of west



MOSUL: A handout image released by the press office of Iraqi Prime Minister on its Facebook page on August 10, 2022 shows Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi (R) during the laying of the foundation stone ceremony of the Mosul International Airport rehabilitation project. — AFP

Mosul residents and less than 15 percent in east Mosul, which bore the brunt of the fighting, have enough water to meet their daily needs.

Kadhemi, quoted in a statement issued by his office, said that "huge efforts" were being made to

rebuild the city. In January, a provincial official spoke of a \$266-million budget for major reconstruction projects, notably in the health, education and transport sectors for 2021-2022, according to the state news agency INA. — AFP

## Elon Musk sells \$7bn worth of Tesla shares

WASHINGTON: Elon Musk has sold nearly \$7 billion worth of Tesla shares, according to legal filings, amid a high-stakes legal battle with Twitter over a \$44 billion buyout deal.

The Tesla boss sold some 7.9 million shares between August 5 and 9, according to filings published on the Securities and Exchange Commission's website on Tuesday.

"In the (hopefully unlikely) event that Twitter forces this deal to close and some equity partners don't come through, it is important to avoid an emergency sale of Tesla stock," Musk, the world's richest man, wrote on Twitter late Tuesday.

Twitter is locked in a legal battle with the mercurial Tesla boss over his effort to walk away from the April agreement to buy the company, and a judge has ordered that a trial will begin in October. Musk has filed a countersuit, accusing Twitter of fraud and alleging the social media platform misled him about key aspects of its business before he agreed to a \$44 billion buyout.



Elon Musk

The move comes after Musk sold around \$8.5 billion worth of shares in the electric carmaker in April as he was preparing to finance the Twitter deal. He tweeted at the time: "No further TSLA sales planned after today."

Tesla rose 3.4 percent to \$879 before the start of regular trading Wednesday, while Twitter jumped 4.3 percent to \$44.69, Bloomberg reported. Musk has now sold about \$32 billion worth of Tesla shares since November.

"He is cashing up for Twitter," Charu Chanana, a strategist at Saxo Capital Markets told Bloomberg News. Chanana said she believed Musk may be attempting to take advantage of a Tesla share price rebound of about 35 percent since late May. "The bear market rally has started to falter, and further repricing of Fed expectations could mean more pain for equities ahead, especially in tech."

Analysts say Musk may continue selling Tesla stock. "Musk said at the Tesla shareholder meeting that any weakness in the share price was a buying opportunity, and then 24 hours later started selling stock himself," Jim Dixon, a senior equity sales trader at Mirabaud Securities, told Bloomberg News.

Dixon added that it was "very unlikely" that Musk was finished selling Tesla stock. Tesla share prices have been tied to the fate of Musk's Twitter deal in recent weeks, first slumping over concerns that pursuing the deal could distract him and lead to unnecessary financial risk, and then rebounding when he said he wanted to abandon the takeover.

Musk's deal to buy Twitter included a provision that if it fell apart, the party breaking the agreement would pay a termination fee of \$1 billion under certain circumstances. At a net worth of \$250 billion, Musk tops the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, although he has lost \$20.1 billion since the start of the year, mainly due to the decline in Tesla's stock price. — AFP

## European stocks steady, dollar down

LONDON: European stock markets and the dollar fell Wednesday ahead of a crucial US inflation report that could help set the pace of future interest rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve. Analysts warn that if the reading exceeds forecasts, it could increase the possibility of further monetary policy tightening by the Fed, reinforcing expectations for a possible recession.

The US central bank has said its decision on the timing and magnitude of the rate hikes will depend on data, as it attempts to tread a fine line between bringing down inflation from four-decade highs and not choking off recovery.

Recent indicators showing a slowdown in activity had fuelled hopes that the Fed would be less hawkish. But a bigger-than-predicted jump in US jobs last month revived talk of a third straight three-quarter hike in September.

The Fed "will need to make sure inflation moves back towards target sustainably before contemplating pausing its tightening cycle", said Carol Kong at Commonwealth Bank of Australia. "A strong inflation outcome today will likely reinforce the (Fed) is still some way away from that point yet, and see markets re-adjust higher their expectations for US interest rates." The data on Wednesday come at a sensitive time for world markets, which have been buffeted by the war in Ukraine, supply chain snarls and rising China-US tensions over Taiwan.

While the latest earnings season has been less painful than feared, there are increasing signs that the economic slowdown is beginning to impact companies, with some major firms including Apple and Amazon-providing downbeat outlooks.

Chip-maker Micron became the latest, saying revenue would likely come in at the low end of its



NEW YORK: People use their phones to take pictures on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) at the opening bell at Wall Street in New York City. — AFP

forecasts in the fourth quarter owing to weak demand. A day before, rival Nvidia unveiled disappointing results.

Elsewhere, oil prices remain stuck around six-month lows, even after news that supplies from Russia to three European countries through Ukraine had been halted as sanctions prohibited the processing of the transit payment.

Crude oil prices have essentially wiped out all the gains seen since Russia's invasion of its neighbour in February as expectations of a recession hit demand forecasts. But Edward Moya, analyst at Oanda trading group, said the market would not likely weaken further. "Whatever crude demand destruction that occurs from a weakening global economy won't be able to drag down oil prices much lower given how low the supply outlook remains," he said. — AFP

## Spain's energy saving curbs come into force

MADRID: New Spanish energy-saving rules that limit air-conditioning use in public spaces came into force Wednesday despite soaring temperatures as part of an EU-wide effort to reduce reliance on Russian energy. Under the government decree, air conditioning must be turned down and set at no lower than 27 degrees Celsius (80.6 Fahrenheit) during the warmest months of the year in rules affecting everything from public transport to shops, offices, theatres and cinemas.

During the summer months, temperatures across Spain often hit 40C or higher. The legislation also affects heating in winter, when temperatures can be set no higher than 19C. "The plan's aim is to save gas for the winter in case (Russian President Vladimir) Putin decides to cut off gas supplies to Europe as a result of sanctions... which could make this winter very difficult," Joan Groizard, head of the Energy Savings and Diversification Institute at Spain's ecology ministry, told public television.

Adopted last week, the legislation also requires that from 10:00 pm, shops switch off window-display lighting in a move also affecting the illumination of public buildings. By the end of September, any air-conditioned or heated premises must have an automatic door-closing mechanism installed to avoid energy waste. However, the law does not lay out any specific penalties and has left the task of monitoring compliance to Spain's 17 regions, some of which have been highly critical of the move, notably those run by the right-wing opposition People's Party. — AFP



## Business

# In Norway, old oil platforms are being slowly dismantled to get a second life

**'If you come here in a year-and-a-half, you will see nothing left'**

**STORD, Norway:** At an industrial yard in southwestern Norway, decommissioned oil platforms are slowly being dismantled for a second life in the circular economy. Three gigantic disused platforms stand on the docks on the island municipality of Stord where they are being taken apart bit by bit—as much as 98 percent of their total 40,000 tonnes is suitable for recycling.

"If you come here in a year-and-a-half, you will see nothing left", says Sturla Magnus, a senior official at Aker Solutions, a group specialised in both building and dismantling oil platforms. Behind him, workmen in hardhats and fluorescent jackets are busy on the three structures: the platform from the Gyda field that was closed in 2020, and two others that have paid their dues at the Valhall field still in operation.

Once the security inspections are complete and the electrical equipment and dangerous materials like asbestos have been removed, the remainder—the giant, empty shells—are left to powerful cutting machines.

The most attractive waste are the tens of thousands of tonnes of high-quality steel, which can be reused on new oil platforms, other industrial structures or offshore wind turbines. "This is steel that has to stand up to the harsh weather conditions in the North Sea. In other words, this is the best there is", says Thomas Nygard, project director for decommissioning at Aker Solutions.

While the company is a player in the highly polluting oil industry and still makes more oil installations than it demolishes, it is in favour of recycling. According to various estimates, one kilo (2.2 pounds) of recycled steel generates 58-70 percent less greenhouse gas emissions than a kilo of new steel.

## China's consumer inflation pushes to two-year high

**BEIJING:** China's consumer inflation rose in July to a two-year high, official data showed Wednesday, with a surge in pork prices pushing up the cost of food. Compared with other countries, consumer costs in the world's second-biggest economy have not skyrocketed, largely spared the impact of a global surge in food prices after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

China's consumer price index (CPI), a key gauge of retail inflation, grew less than expected at 2.7 percent from a year ago in July, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) data showed.

CPI rose slightly on-year "due to an increase in prices of pork, fresh vegetables and other food, as well as seasonal factors", NBS senior statistician Dong Lijuan said in a statement. Food prices were up 6.3 percent on-year, with pork spiking 20.2 percent in July, she added.



**SHENYANG, China:** Photo shows a woman carrying a dog as she shops at a market in Shenyang in China's northeastern Liaoning province. — AFP

## UK postal workers to hold series of strikes over pay

**LONDON:** Postal workers in Britain are set to stage a series of strikes in the coming weeks over pay, their union announced Tuesday, in the latest industrial action to hit the UK. The Communication Workers Union (CWU) said the planned walkouts—on August 26 and 31, and September 8 and 9—would be the biggest strike of the summer to demand a "dignified, proper pay rise".

It follows a recent ballot of former state-run Royal Mail staff in the union, which was completed by 77 percent of members and saw 97.6 percent of them back striking. Over 115,000 postal workers are set to walk out during the four days of action.

"Nobody takes the decision to strike lightly, but postal workers are being pushed to the brink," CWU General Secretary Dave Ward said in a statement. "There can be no doubt that postal workers are completely united in their determination to secure the dig-

### 10,000 installations to dismantle

The North Sea is one of the oldest offshore oil and gas basins in the world and is gradually being depleted. Many of the oil platforms there are coming to the end of their life spans. In a 2021 report, the industry association Oil and Gas UK (OGUK) — which has since changed name to Offshore Energies UK (OEUK) — forecast that more than one million tonnes of North Sea platforms would need to be dismantled by the end of the decade. That is a large market, and one that is growing. Several years ago, OGUK's forecast was for 200,000 tonnes. "If you look globally, it's probably close to 10,000 installations which are going to at some point in time come back to shore", Magnus says.

Aker Solutions' current workload is scheduled through 2028. Meanwhile, some platforms are being maintained despite their advanced age. One of Norway's oldest platforms, Statfjord A, has been in use since 1979. It was due to be taken out of service in 2022, but oil giant Equinor decided in 2020 to extend its life span until 2027.

The same is true for two other platforms in the same field, Statfjord B and C, which are only a few years younger, but have been extended until 2035. The reprieve is due to the remaining oil reserves which are believed to be "considerable", a decision sure to have been sugar-coated by soaring oil prices.

### Environmental stakes

Nevertheless, even some environmental activists are reluctant to see the platforms disappear entirely. The earliest installations were made with legs of concrete-metal was preferred for later models—and according to the Norwegian branch of Friends of the

Prices of the staple meat rose in part because of the reluctance of some farmers to sell—ostensibly to maximize profits—and a pick-up in consumer demand, according to the NBS.

While fuel prices were also higher than the same period last year, their growth rates have declined, Dong said. "The headline rate has been lifted by fuel inflation and, more recently, a rebound in food inflation," said Julian Evans-Pritchard, senior China economist at Capital Economics in a recent report.

He added that a weak labour market "may further sap price pressures", and that he expects inflation to fall later this year. The producer price index (PPI) — measuring the cost of goods at the factory gate—rose 4.2 percent in July, down from 6.1 percent in June, official data showed Wednesday.

This was lower than the expectation in a Bloomberg poll of analysts. The NBS said this was influenced by a drop in international commodity prices such as crude oil and non-ferrous metals. "The priority given to keeping factories open while restricting many consumer activities has meant that, domestically, lockdowns have been disinflationary," Evans-Pritchard added in his earlier report. "Unlike elsewhere, stimulus has targeted investment rather than household spending." — AFP

nified, proper pay rise they deserve."

However, Royal Mail's management accused the CWU of failing to "engage in any meaningful discussion on the changes we need to modernise, or to come up with alternative ideas" during three months of talks.

Its operations director Ricky McAulay said the union had rejected a 5.5 percent pay rise offer, which was "the biggest increase we have offered for many years". "We can only fund this offer by agreeing the changes that will pay for it," he added.

Workers across various UK industries, from the railways and airports to lawyers and public sector employees such as teachers and nurses, are demanding significant pay rises to keep up with surging inflation.

Staff at the Post Office, a separate public company that runs the nationwide network of branches following their separation from Royal Mail in 2012, held their own strike over pay last month.

Meanwhile national rail and London underground workers, lawyers and others have already staged several walkouts this summer, while other industrial action is planned. It comes as the Bank of England last week predicted UK inflation would peak this year at just over 13 percent, reaching the highest level since 1980. It also forecast Britain will sink into a lengthy recession later this year and unveiled the biggest interest rate hike since 1995. — AFP



**STORD, Norway:** Decommissioned oil platform Gyda set to be demolished is pictured in a yard in Stord (Norway). It could have been their cemetery, but in this construction site in southwestern Norway, old oil platforms, emblems of the age of fossil fuels, are experiencing a new life stamped with the seal of the circular economy. — AFP

Earth, the cement made for "fantastic" artificial corals because of its rough, pock-marked surface.

"All those who have worked on a platform will tell you: there are a lot of big fish that live nearby because there's no industrial fishing and the fish can grow to be up to 10 years old", says the group's marine biologist, Per-Erik Schulze.

## Experts see inflation reprieve in US

**WASHINGTON:** Is inflation finally slowing down in the United States?

Inflation data due to be released Wednesday is expected to show at least a partial cooling down of consumer prices and bring a breath of fresh air for US President Joe Biden just months before crucial midterm elections. Fueled by aggressive consumer spending of pandemic savings, global supply chain snarls, domestic worker shortages, and Russia's war on Ukraine, inflation reached 9.1 percent in June, year over year, the highest in 40 years.

But it is expected to fall to 8.6 percent in July, according to MarketWatch. White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said that although the administration has not seen the fresh statistics yet, "We know that gas prices have fallen." "And we hope those gas price declines will factor into the CPI inflation data," Jean-Pierre told reporters Tuesday.

Consumer prices have continued to climb in the United States, squeezing family budgets and, and by extension, Biden's popularity.

His opponents accuse Biden of precipitating infla-

The organisation has therefore called for the cement pillars to be left at sea, difficult as they are to uproot. The rest can be dismantled and marine reserves created around the sites.

After siphoning the depths of the oceans for decades, Norway's oil sector could thereby end up helping to protect them—even if just a little. — AFP

tion with his gigantic \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package, which he enacted in March last year, shortly after assuming office. And Republicans renewed their criticism of Biden's economic policy, saying Sunday's passage in the Senate of his massive climate and healthcare bill titled the "Inflation Reduction Act," does the opposite of its stated purpose.

### Larger issue

But the devil is in the details. Experts worry that the inflation slowdown linked to the drop in gasoline prices could be outweighed by rising rent and real estate prices. "The larger issue is what happens to home ownership costs & rents," Diane Swonk, chief economist for KPMG, wrote on Twitter.

Similar to other economists, Swonk expects to see a rise in the so-called underlying inflation rate that excludes food and energy, which had risen to 5.9 percent in June, year over year.

The question now facing Washington is whether it will be possible to bring inflation down sustainably, without plunging the world's largest economy into recession, after two quarters of economic contraction.

In a bid to tamp down inflation, the US Federal Reserve has already hiked the interest rate four times to a range of 2.25 to 2.5 percent. On the bright side, the US labor market remains dynamic and in July the unemployment rate fell to the pre-pandemic level of 3.5 percent. But there are still nearly two jobs open for every available worker, which pushes wages up and contributes to inflation. — AFP

## Deliveroo says losses grow, to exit Netherlands

**LONDON:** Deliveroo, the international delivery food app, announced Wednesday a big increase in losses as investment costs ate into rising revenues, adding it planned to exit its struggling Netherlands market.

Loss after tax jumped 41 percent to £153.8 million (\$186 million) compared with the first six months of last year, the British group said in a statement. Revenue grew 12 percent to £1 billion despite easing Covid curbs and controversy over treatment of its riders. Deliveroo said the outlook was clouded by strong inflation and the Ukraine war. However, company founder and chief executive Will Shu expressed confidence in the company's ability "to adapt financially to any further changes in the macroeconomic environment".

### Netherlands exit

Deliveroo said it "proposes to consult on ending its operations in the Netherlands", noting it did "not hold a strong local position" in the country. The company added that it "would require a disproportionate level of investment, with uncertain returns, to reach and sustain a top tier market position".

A planned exit from the Netherlands towards the end of November follows Deliveroo's departure from Spain last year, although the group on Wednesday said it had gained market share in the UK and Italy.

It added that overall marketing and other investment costs, including spend on technology, jumped 29 percent to almost £369 million in the first half. Deliveroo has enjoyed strong sales growth in a short space of time but faces questions over its sustainability, highlighted by its failed stock market debut which took place in London last year.

Its initial public offering was the capital's biggest stock market launch for a decade, valuing the group at £7.6 billion. But its share price tumbled on launch day by almost a third from the IPO price of £3.90 as investors questioned Deliveroo's treatment of its self-employed riders. A French court of appeal last month found Deliveroo guilty of "undeclared work" for classifying a courier as an independent contractor instead of an employee. In early London trading following Wednesday's earnings update, Deliveroo's share price rose 0.8 percent at 92 pence.



**Deliveroo to exit its struggling Netherlands market.**

"Stay-at-home stocks like Deliveroo fared extremely well during the pandemic when restaurants and bars were shut and households were forced into lockdown," noted Victoria Scholar, head of investment at Interactive Investor. "However, the reopening of the economy combined with stiff competition from the likes of Just Eat and Uber Eats and q-commerce (quick-commerce) players like Gorillas and Go Puff, as well as the cost-of-living crisis, have created an extremely challenging environment." — AFP

## Vienna dims street lighting as energy prices increase

**VIENNA:** Vienna, a city known for its Christmas markets and its New Year concert, is cutting back on public lighting in the face of soaring energy prices. "There will be no Christmas illuminations this year on the Ring," the famous boulevard that encircles the centre of the Austrian capital, city spokeswoman Roberta Kraft told AFP. And the lights at the Christmas market in the square in front of the city hall would only be switched on at night and not at dusk, as in previous years, "which is to say about an hour later, on average, every day", she said.

The city authorities said they had not calculated exactly how much they would save, but the move comes after energy prices have skyrocketed following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its response to Western sanctions. Last Friday, the Austrian Energy Agency announced that its electricity price index for September rose by more than 256 percent year-on-year. — AFP



## Business

# Germany plans 10-bn-euro inflation relief tax package

## Inflation in Germany reached 7.5 percent in July

**BERLIN:** Germany will offer tax relief worth 10 billion euros (\$10.2 billion) to help workers cope with soaring inflation, Finance Minister Christian Lindner said Wednesday. The package will raise base tax-free allowance as well as bring up the level from which the top income tax rate of 42 percent will apply. Families will also benefit from higher tax exemptions for dependent children.

Inflation in Germany reached 7.5 percent in July, fractionally lower than the 7.6 percent recorded in June, fuelled mainly by energy prices that soared following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Lindner said his plan is aimed primarily at fighting the problem of employees who find themselves with a higher tax burden because they have received a pay increase to combat inflation.

As a result, the gain the workers have received is wiped out essentially by the higher taxes due. The phenomenon, called "cold progression", also typically hits lower incomes harder. Lindner said 48 million Germans would be facing higher taxes from January 2023 if no relief was offered.

"For the state to benefit at a time when daily life is becoming more expensive... that is not fair and also dangerous for economic development," said Lindner.

### Double whammy

The tax relief measures come on top of a 30 billion euro package unleashed by Chancellor Olaf Scholz earlier this year to help consumers beat infla-

tion. The earlier package included a fuel tax cut and a public transport ticket valid across Germany priced at just 9 euros a month for June, July and August.

But it is clear that the clouds hanging over Europe's biggest economy are only darkening as the country heads into the colder months. The Ukraine conflict has derailed Germany's hopes of finally shaking off the coronavirus pandemic and roaring back to growth.

With its export-oriented industries, Germany has been particularly vulnerable to the supply chain bottlenecks and raw material shortages caused by the pandemic. But now, Germans are also staring down the barrel of doubling energy bills, after Russia drastically curtailed its supply following its invasion of Ukraine.

The power crunch is not only nibbling away at consumers' purchasing power but also hurting German industry, much of which relies on cheap energy supplies to manufacture exports. Employees in Europe's biggest economy are therefore facing the double whammy of higher costs and a growing threat of job losses as major companies mull idling some factories because it may no longer be cost effective to keep production lines running.

German growth stagnated in the second quarter of the year, but analysts have warned that a recession in the second half will be inevitable. At their last forecast in March, the German government's economic advisers estimated that gross domestic product will expand by 1.8 percent for 2022. —AFP



**BERLIN, Germany:** (L-R) German Finance Minister Christian Lindner, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and German Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection Steffi Lemke arrive for the weekly cabinet meeting on August 10, 2022 in Berlin. —AFP

## Food retailer Ahold Delhaize delays IPO

**THE HAGUE, Netherlands:** Food retailer Ahold Delhaize, which owns supermarkets in the United States, Europe and Indonesia, said Wednesday it was postponing the listing of its online store Bol.com due to unfavourable market conditions.

The Dutch-Belgian group — whose US stores include Food Lion, Giant and Stop & Shop — said in a statement that it "will revisit opportunities when market conditions are more conducive." The company said Bol.com — a Dutch website that features a broad range of consumer products — "strongly outperformed the e-commerce market" but "considering current equity market conditions, we have decided that the second half of 2022 is no longer the right time."

Based in Zaandam just north of Amsterdam, the group announced last year it had approved an initial listing, but did not give further details. In its earnings statement on Wednesday, Ahold Delhaize said it delivered a "resilient performance" despite food prices being driven up by soaring inflation and a rising energy crisis fanned by the war in Ukraine.

The group posted a second-quarter net profit of 603 million euros (\$616 million), up from 540 million euros the year before. Net sales jumped by 15 percent to 21.4 billion euros, Ahold Delhaize said, mainly buoyed by growing US sales figures.

In addition to its US shops, the group owns several supermarkets in seven European countries and Indonesia. "I am pleased to report that we had a strong second quarter," chief executive Frans Muller said. But he added: "For consumers and businesses alike, these are difficult times."

"The war in Ukraine is causing an unprecedented energy crisis, commodity prices are high, and inflation has reached record levels," Muller said the group's brands were "laser focused on supporting customers and helping them to manage their spending efficiently." Looking forward, Ahold Delhaize said it expected rising inflation and energy costs to continue for the rest of the year, but it expected to grow by mid single-digit figures. — AFP

## TUI narrows losses, tourism demand surges

**FRANKFURT, Germany:** TUI, the world's largest tourism operator, said Wednesday booking levels were closing on pre-coronavirus pandemic levels as it reduced its losses for the quarter. Between April and June, the travel group made a net loss of 356.7 million euros (\$364.4 million), after losing 934.8 million euros in the same period last year.

Around 5.1 million people travelled with TUI in the quarter, an 84 percent increase on 2021. At the same time, the group's revenues climbed to 4.43 billion euros, "almost seven times more" than last year.

"Although the entire European airline sector continues to face challenges, we have successfully ramped up our business with a significant increase in demand," incoming TUI CEO Sebastian Ebel said in a statement. Travellers have faced widespread chaos over recent months as airports have struggled to process high passenger numbers. TUI registered 75 million euros of additional cost related to the travel disruptions, "particularly in British air traffic", the group said. —AFP

## HK's Cathay Pacific narrows H1 loss, eyes better year

**HONG KONG:** Hong Kong carrier Cathay Pacific on Wednesday reported losses had narrowed in the first half after an "extremely difficult start" to the year, but said its capacity will improve in coming months as travel sentiment improves.

The \$637 million loss in January-June was narrower than the \$968 million deficit suffered in the same period last year, as the airline benefited from strong cargo demand and cost-cutting measures.

Chairman Patrick Healey said in a statement that the first few months were "particularly unfavourable" as pandemic-related travel restrictions severely constrained Cathay's flight operations and greatly affected demand for travel.

But he added that the airline was gearing up for borders reopening and expected a stronger second-half. Cathay aims to boost passenger flight capacity to a quarter of pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2022, while it is looking to lift cargo capacity to 65 percent, Healey said.

The airline carried 335,000 passengers in the

first half of the year, more than double that of the same period in 2021, bringing in \$263 million in revenue. Income from the cargo unit jumped 9.3 percent to \$1.5 billion.

Total revenue was up 17 percent on-year at \$2.4 billion. Hong Kong has taken tentative steps toward reopening its borders after being internationally isolated for two and a half years owing to strict COVID rules for travellers.

On Monday authorities said visitors would now have to spend just three days in hotel quarantine, down from seven and much lower than the three weeks earlier in the year.

Cathay praised the adjustments as "positive steps" but pressed the government to "urgently provide a clear roadmap" to remove all pandemic-related restrictions on passengers and aircrew.

The firm's ability to operate more flights "continues to be severely constrained by a bottleneck on crewing resources under the existing quarantine requirements", Healey said on Wednesday.

Last month, Hong Kong also suspended a circuit-breaker mechanism that penalised airlines for bringing in coronavirus cases — which had affected numerous Cathay routes, including for key markets such as the United States and Britain.

The airline operated just 29 destinations in January, compared with more than 100 before the pandemic.

Hong Kong authorities are hinting at a poten-



**Hong Kong carrier Cathay Pacific**

tial international reopening in November, timed to coincide with the high-profile Rugby Sevens tournament and a banking summit.

Cathay is bringing aircraft parked overseas back to Hong Kong and is aiming to hire more than 4,000 front-line employees over the next 18 to 24 months, Healey said.

In June, Hong Kong also extended the draw-down period of a US\$1 billion bridge loan to Cathay — the second time in two years — as part of a US\$5 billion government bailout to help the airline weather the pandemic.

Hong Kong's home carrier suffered a reputational blow earlier this year when a coronavirus outbreak was traced to two of its flight attendants who breached their quarantine rules. They were fired and later prosecuted. —AFP

## KFH announces winners of Al-Rabeh draw

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced the names of the winners of the fourth weekly draw for the month of July 2022, under the "Al-Rabeh" account. 10 customers won cash prizes worth KD 1,500 each.

The newly designed Al-Rabeh campaign launched by KFH in 2022, provides prizes and draws that offer customers several chances of winning "weekly, monthly and quarterly". The campaign crowns 536 winners throughout the year.

The winners are Anwar Al-Dousari, Mohammed Al-Mohimeed, Ismail Al-Dousari,

Hani Saleh, Yad Mukhay Ali, Abdultawab Yousef, Abdullah Al-Shamry, Em Dy AbdulMalik, Munawer Al-Mutairi, Hamad Al-Ajmi.

The draw took place under the supervision of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The campaign is part of KFH's ongoing efforts to offer exceptional products and services that meet customers' aspirations, enhance the Bank's leadership in the local and global markets, as well as reflect its excellence in offering innovative banking solutions as per the highest quality standards.

The Al-Rabeh account is a salary account available to customers wishing to transfer their salaries and manage their personal accounts. Customers can open Al-Rabeh account in any of KFH branches in Kuwait, or through the Bank's online channels. The account can be opened in the Kuwaiti Dinar and is targeted for customers wishing to transfer their salaries and manage their personal accounts. Salary transfer is a pre-

requisite for customers to enter the draw provided that the transfer of salary to Al-Rabeh account is constant.

Regarding the terms and conditions of the prizes and draws, a customer is able to deposit 3 salaries during the 3 months prior to the draw, and the minimum balance of the account should not be less than KD 50 at the end of each month during the 3 months prior to the draw. Ten draws take place on a weekly basis for amount of KD 1,500 for 10 winners each, 1 KG of KFH gold will be drawn monthly for one winner and KD 25,000 for one winner every quarter, reaching a total number of 536 winners during the year.

KFH is keen to further meet customers' requirements and aspirations and their increasing needs as well as offer innovative and modern services, therefore achieving customer satisfaction, which is one of the fundamentals at KFH. The Bank has achieved a qualitative shift in the level of financial services by utilizing technology.

## Philippines cancels Russia chopper deal over US sanctions

**MANILA, Philippines:** The Philippines has scrapped an order for 16 Russian military helicopters, an official confirmed Wednesday, following reports former president Rodrigo Duterte decided to cancel it due to US sanctions on Moscow.

Manila—a longtime Washington ally—agreed in November to pay 12.7 billion pesos (\$228 million) for the Mi-17 helicopters, as it seeks to modernise its military hardware. The United States and its allies imposed wide-ranging sanctions on Moscow in the wake of its assault on Ukraine in February.

They are aimed at cutting off Russia from the global financial system and choking off funds available to Moscow to finance the war. The Philippine defence department was "formalizing the termination" of the contract, spokesman Arsenio Andolong said Wednesday.

Without mentioning US sanctions on Moscow, Andolong told AFP "changes in priorities necessitated by global political developments resulted in the cancellation of the project by the previous administration".

Delfin Lorenzana, who served as defence secretary under Duterte, said in March that the Philippines had paid a deposit for the transport helicopters before war erupted in Ukraine and the deal



**QUEZON CITY, Philippines:** Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr (L) and incoming military chief Lieutenant General Bartolome Vicente Bacarro applaud during a change of command ceremony at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City, Philippines has scrapped an order for 16 Russian military helicopters, an official confirmed Wednesday. —AFP

was "on track". But last week Lorenzana, who now heads a different government agency, told local media that Duterte himself decided to cancel the deal in the waning days of his administration over the sanctions threat.

"I don't know if we can still get back the money since we were the ones who terminated the contract," Lorenzana told reporters. Russian embassy officials in Manila could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

Philippine ambassador to Washington Jose Romualdez recently told AFP the decision to cancel was triggered by "the Ukrainian war". Romualdez

said Manila was also wary of falling foul of a US law passed in 2017 that sanctions anyone doing business with Russia's intelligence or defence sectors.

The United States was offering "alternative helicopters to meet our needs", he added. Manila began a modest military modernisation programme in 2012. Until recently, its equipment featured Vietnam War-era helicopters and World War II naval vessels used by the United States.

After President Ferdinand Marcos Jr took power on June 30, the new government reviewed the Russian deal, arriving at the same decision as Duterte. —AFP



# Ailing beluga put down in last-ditch French rescue bid

An ailing beluga whale that strayed into France's Seine river was put down by vets Wednesday during a last-ditch rescue attempt to keep the animal alive, local officials said. The fate of the whale captured the hearts of people across the world since it was first spotted in the highly unusual habitat of the river that flows through Paris, far from its usual Arctic waters.

Rescuers had worked overnight to lift the male out of the Seine by crane for transfer to a saltwater pen, in a delicate, final effort to save the life of the ailing mammal, which was no longer eating. It was then driven at a painstakingly slow speed north to the Normandy port of Ouistreham, where vets hoped to release the animal into a habourside pen and then possibly into the wild. But the experts unanimously decided after examining the beluga on arrival in Ouistreham that there was no other option than to put the male down, the local authority of the Calvados region said.

"Despite the technical and logistical efforts, the condition of the cetacean unfortunately deteriorated during the trip," it said. "Examinations showed that the beluga was in a state of great weakness and its respiratory activity failing. The decision was therefore taken collectively, with the veterinarians, to euthanize it," it added.

### 'Tragic outcome'

After nearly six hours of work by dozens of divers and rescuers, the 800-kilogramme (1,800-pound) cetacean had



Rescuers pull up a net as they rescue a beluga whale stranded in the River Seine at Notre Dame de la-Garenne, northern France.—AFP

been lifted from the river by a net and crane at around 4:00 am (0200 GMT) and placed on a barge under the immediate care of a dozen veterinarians. The 24 divers involved in the operation and the rescuers handling the ropes had to try several times to lure the animal into the nets to be lifted out of the water.

The beluga was then given a health check and driven to Ouistreham. "During the journey the vets noted a worsening of his health and in particular the breathing," said Florence Ollivet-Courtois, a vet for the local emergency services, in a video posted on social media. "The animal was not getting enough air and suffering visibly. We therefore decided that it made no

sense to set it free and proceeded to euthanasia."

"The transfer was risky, but essential to give an otherwise doomed animal a chance," the Sea Shepherd NGO, which has been assisting in the rescue, said on Twitter. "Following the deterioration of his condition, the vets took the decision to euthanize him. We are devastated by this tragic outcome that we knew was very likely," it said.

The four-meter (13-foot) whale was discovered more than a week ago heading towards Paris and was stranded about 130 kilometers (80 miles) inland from the English Channel at Saint-Pierre-la-Garenne in Normandy. Since Friday,



Rescuers pull up a net as they rescue a beluga whale stranded in the River Seine at Notre Dame de la-Garenne, northern France.—AFP

the animal's movement inland had been blocked by a lock some 70 kilometers northwest of Paris, and its health deteriorated after it refused to eat.

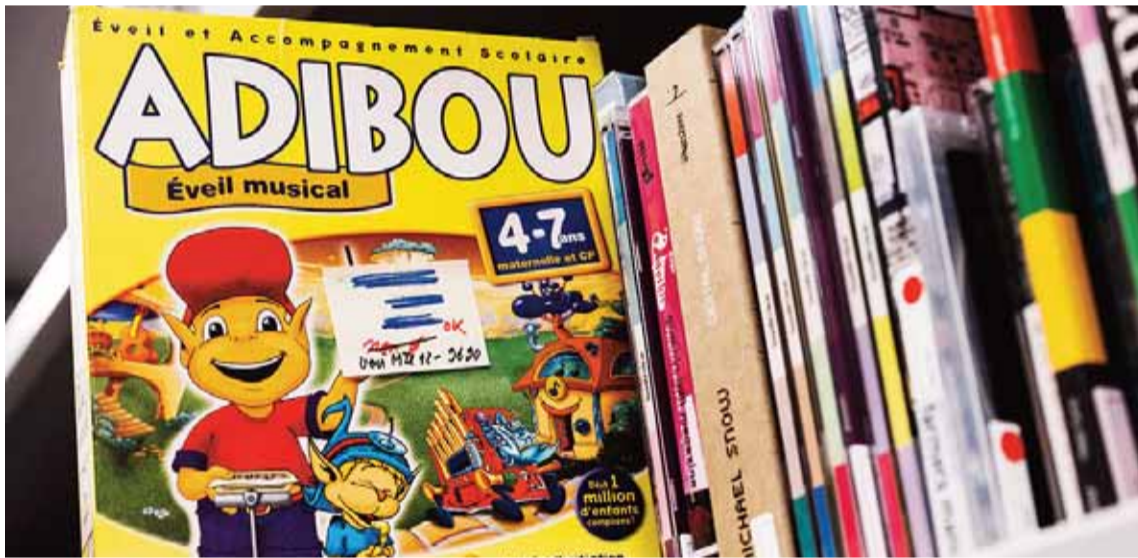
### Killer whale also died

This is the second drama involving a big marine mammal in an unexpected area to grip France in the last months. A sick killer whale—a member of the dolphin family also known as an orca—was spotted in the Seine in May but died after attempts failed to guide the animal back to the sea.

Interest in the beluga's fate has spread far beyond France, generating a large influx of financial donations and other aid

from conservation groups as well as individuals, officials said. While belugas migrate south in the autumn to feed as ice forms in their native Arctic waters, they rarely venture so far.

According to France's Pelagis Observatory, which specializes in sea mammals, the nearest beluga population is off the Svalbard archipelago, north of Norway, 3,000 kilometers from the Seine. The trapped whale is only the second beluga ever sighted in France. The first was pulled out of the Loire estuary in a fisherman's net in 1948. — AFP



This photograph shows the educational video game Adiboo belonging to the Charles Cros collection exposed at the Francois-Mitterrand National Library of France in Paris.—AFP photos



This photograph shows the video games Puchi Carat (left) and Stunt GP belonging to the Charles Cros collection exposed at the Francois-Mitterrand National Library of France in Paris.

## 'Total art': Inside France's vast video game archive

In the bowels of an imposing modernist tower in Paris, Laurent Duploye carefully handles a pristine copy of "Tomb Raider" before slotting it back on the shelf alongside thousands of other classic video games. Duploye oversees a huge archive of games at France's National Library (BNF), one of the longest-running efforts to preserve a part of global heritage that is often overlooked by cultural institutions. "The video game can be regarded as total



This photograph shows the home video game console Atari 2600 belonging to the Charles Cros collection.



This photograph shows the video shooting series light gun NES Zapper belonging to the Charles Cros collection.

art, because it combines graphic art, narrative art and a narrative structure," Duploye told AFP.

The 1990s glass and steel structure, a short hop from the banks of the River Seine, houses room upon room of archived books, where researchers and students quietly go about their business. But Duploye is adamant the video game collection is not out of place in the august surroundings.

"For the BNF, video games are as precious as the other documents deposited here," he said. "We pay the same attention to them. It is cultural heritage in its own right." The treasured collection now holds some 20,000 titles in all possible formats, from cartridges to diskettes and CD-ROM,

and adds a further 2,000 samples each year. A team of 20 looks after the collection, empowered by a 1992 law on the preservation of multimedia documents. While the law did not mention video games specifically, its wording is wide enough to be interpreted that way, making it one of the oldest pieces of legislation of its kind anywhere in the world. The US Library of Congress only began its efforts to preserve digital media in 2000, and there are many other initiatives led by enthusiasts across the world.

### Emulator hunt

The video games are stored on darkened shelves at a constant temperature of 19 degrees to protect them from humidity.



This photograph shows the home video game console Hanimex 7771 belonging to the Charles Cros collection exposed at the Francois-Mitterrand National Library of France in Paris.

A few floors above, there is also an enviable collection of vintage gaming consoles—from the earliest examples such as the rare Magnavox Odyssey from the early 1970s, to the Atari Lynx and Sega Saturn, all the way to the Nintendo Game Boy, the ultimate 1990s icon.

"We are keeping these consoles to give future researchers, decades or even hundreds of years from now, an understanding of how to play these video games, what hardware was used," said Duploye. While the consoles and physical games can be stored on shelves and behind glass, there are huge challenges with many games that can no longer be found in physical form.

For these, the library relies on commu-

nities of enthusiasts who re-create old games on modern computers. "We have two engineers in the multimedia department who are constantly monitoring these issues to find emulators, make them work and make them compatible with our collections," said Duploye. The archivists also face a problem that many games are now played in the cloud and never exist in physical form.

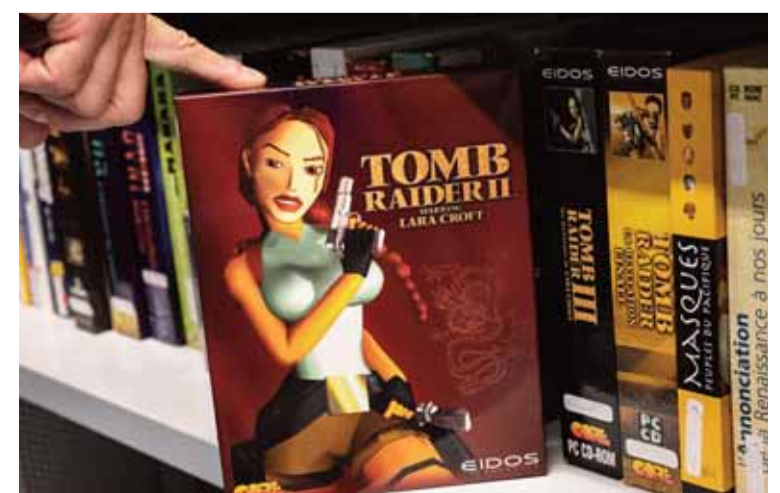
Duploye said the library was locked in negotiations with publishers and platforms to find a workaround. Ultimately, he said, the ambition is to hold the largest collection in the world. "It would be great for French heritage," he said. — AFP



This photograph shows the home video game console Odyssey belonging to the Charles Cros collection.



This photograph shows the Sony home video game console PlayStation 1 belonging to the Charles Cros collection.



This photograph shows the video game Tomb Raider II belonging to the Charles Cros collection.





A photograph shows the main room of The Canteen restaurant in Bristol, one of the first in the UK to place the carbon footprint of its dishes on its menu besides the calories. — AFP photos



A member of staff prepares some food at The Canteen restaurant, one of the first in the UK to place the carbon footprint of its dishes on its menu besides the calories, in Bristol.



A photograph shows desserts prepared at The Canteen restaurant in Bristol.

## ON THE MENU AT A UK RESTAURANT: CARBON FOOTPRINT



A member of staff prepares some food at The Canteen restaurant.



A member of staff prepares to serve food to clients at The Canteen restaurant.



A member of staff prepares some food at The Canteen restaurant.



A photograph shows the menu of The Canteen restaurant in Bristol.

The menu at The Canteen in southwest England doesn't just let diners know how much a dish costs. They can also check its carbon footprint. The carrot and beetroot pakora with yoghurt sauce is responsible for just 16 grams of CO2 emissions. The aubergines with a miso and harissa sauce with tabbouleh and Zaatar toast caused 675 grams of carbon dioxide. As customers weigh their options, the menu at the vegetarian restaurant in Bristol includes a comparison with a dish that it does not serve: the emissions from a UK-produced hamburger.

"Three kilos for a burger, wow! I can't believe it," exclaimed Enyioma Anomelechi, a 37-year-old diner sipping a drink outside in the sunshine. The menu notes that a real beef burger's emissions is "10 times the amount of its vegan alternative". The carbon footprints of businesses and consumers have come under growing scrutiny as countries scramble to limit global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius and to achieve net-zero emission by 2050.

The Canteen became in July the first restaurant to agree to put its carbon footprint on the menu under a campaign spearheaded by UK vegan campaigning charity Viva! The restaurant's manager, Liam Stock, called the move a way to "see what we are doing; to understand and improve ourselves". The average British person has an annual carbon footprint of more than 10 tons, according to UK government figures. Britain has set the ambitious goal of reducing harmful emissions by 78 percent by 2035, compared with 1990 figures, in order to meet its international climate change commitments.

### 'Climate emergency'

Switching to a plant-based diet is one of the most effective ways for an individual to reduce their carbon footprint, experts from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said in April. The livestock industry replaces CO2-absorbing forests with land for grazing and soy crops

for cattle feed. The animals also belch huge amounts of methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Whether diners will let carbon footprints influence their order choices remains to be seen, but Stock said the menu innovation has stoked interest and support.

### 'Cradle to store'

Stock said he knew his restaurant's dishes would score low carbon footprints, as most of his ingredients are sourced regionally. "We didn't have to change anything," he said, while admitting some surprises, such as learning that imported



A member of staff prepares some food at The Canteen restaurant.

"In England if you're a big chain restaurant, it's the law that you have to have calories on (the menu)," he said. "But a lot of people are saying... they're more interested in carbon." While Anomelechi noted the "huge" difference in emissions between a hamburger and other dishes, he said he did not necessarily want to be burdened with knowing his order's calorie count or carbon footprint. "When I go out to eat I just want to enjoy," he added, noting he would be more inclined to change his ways when grocery shopping.

Laura Hellwig, campaigns manager at Viva!, said the carbon footprint figure should become compulsory. "We are in a climate emergency and consumers have to be able to make informed choices," said the activist. In her view, "most people would actually choose for the planet" if confronted with a comparison between the carbon footprint of a meat-based meal and a vegan dish.

spices drive up emissions. To calculate the dishes' footprints, The Canteen sent its recipes and the source of the ingredients to a specialized company called MyEmissions.

It is able to calculate the carbon impact from "cradle to store", taking into account farming, processing, transport and packaging. "If I was choosing between two dishes, maybe depending on how hungry I was, I might choose the one with a lower footprint," said Nathan Johnson, a 43-year-old diner at the restaurant. That day, he opted for the chef's salad, which racks up 162 grams of carbon.

Another diner, 29-year-old Emma Harvey, also backed the idea of increased awareness of carbon footprints "and the ethical effects of the food that we're eating". "We have to incorporate things (like) that into everyday life," she said. — AFP

## Tourists return but Easter Islanders draw lessons from COVID isolation

During more than two years of the coronavirus pandemic, Easter Island was closed to tourism-forcing inhabitants to turn to a more sustainable way of life and relearn forgotten skills. Now that the island's borders are open once again, local people, including the Rapa Nui indigenous population, want to resist the temptation to return to their pre-pandemic lifestyle. "The time has come that the ancients predicted," Julio Hotus, a member of the Easter Island council of elders, told AFP.

Hotus said the Rapa Nui people's

ancestors had warned about the importance of maintaining food independence because of the risk the island faced of one day becoming isolated, but that recent generations had ignored the warnings. Before the pandemic, the island's food supply was almost exclusively provided by Chile.

Easter Island lies 3,500 kilometers (2,100 miles) off the west coast of Chile and is world renowned for its monumental statues of human figures with giant heads, called moai. With a population of just 8,000, it used to attract 160,000 tourists a year—"an avalanche" according to Hotus—but in March 2020 Easter Island closed its borders over COVID.

### No tourists, no income

Olga Ickapakarati used to sell small stone moai figurines to tourists but once she was left without an income, she turned to agriculture and fishing to survive, just as her ancestors had lived before contact with European explorers. "We were all left with nothing, we were

left in the wind .... but we began planting," Ickapakarati told AFP. She took advantage of a program that delivered seeds before the island was shut off from the outside world. Ickapakarati planted spinach, beets, cilantro, chard, celery, basil, pineapple, oregano and tomatoes.

What she didn't eat, she shared with neighbors, just as many families did in creating an island-wide support network. "All the islanders are like this. They have good hearts. If I see that I have a surplus of something, I give it to another family," said Ickapakarati, who lives with her children and grandchildren. This new focus on sustainable living does not mean an end to tourism on Easter Island. Last week, the first airplane of tourists for 28 months landed on the island, too much excitement from the locals desperate to see new faces. But there will be no immediate return to the two flights a day of yesterday. There will be just two a week for now, although the number will gradually increase. Large hotel chains have decided to stay closed. "We will continue with

tourists, but I hope that the pandemic has taught a lesson that we can apply for the future," said Hotus.

### 'Archeological heritage at risk'

Another thing the pandemic did was to create awareness of the necessity to look after natural resources affected by climate change, such as water and energy. And also the emblematic moais. Carved from volcanic rock by the Polynesian Rapa Nui people between 1200 and 1500, there are more than 900 on the island, which measures 24 kilometers by 12 kilometers. The statues can measure up to 20 meters in height and weigh more than 80 tons.

Most remain at the quarry where they were originally carved but many others were carted to coastal areas to look inland, presumably for ceremonial purposes. The moais have been damaged by heavy rainfall, strong winds and the ocean waves crashing against the statues and their bases, leading to fears for their future. "Climate change, with its



Workers of the Mataverí international airport hold flowers as they wait for tourists to arrive in Hanga Roa, Easter Island, Chile.

extreme events, is putting our archeological heritage at risk," said Vairoa Ika, the local environment director. "The stone is degrading" and needs to be protected. "The problem with the moais is that they are very fragile," added Pedro Edmunds Paoa, the island's mayor, who says the statues' worth is "incalculable."

He said that authorities need to "forget about the tourist" vision and take protective measures, even if that means covering the statues "with glass domes", which would ruin not just the authentic view but also tourists' photographs. He also wants inhabitants to make maximum use of natural resources and to prioritize locals in employment, while resurrecting the ancestral practise of fostering community solidarity. "From now on the tourist must become a friend of the place, whereas before they were visiting foreigners," said Edmunds Paoa. — AFP



Tourists arrive at the Mataverí international airport in Hanga Roa, Easter Island, Chile. —AFP photos



Personnel of the Mataverí international airport perform a ceremony to Mother Earth while waiting for tourists to arrive in Hanga Roa, Easter Island, Chile.



Lifestyle | Features

# Raymond Briggs, author of UK Christmas classic 'The Snowman', dies aged 88

British cartoonist and illustrator Raymond Briggs, whose creation "The Snowman" became a Christmas staple for generations of children, has died aged 88, his publisher Penguin Random House said Wednesday. The 1978 picture book about a young, ginger-haired boy who builds a snowman that magically comes to life has sold more than 5.5 million copies globally and was transformed into an animated film in 1982. First shown on British TV, with an intro-

duction by David Bowie in some later versions, the film and its memorable musical score has become synonymous with Christmas ever since, being shown every year. "Raymond's books are picture masterpieces that address some of the fundamental questions of what it is to be human, speaking to both adults and children," said Francesca Dow, managing director of Penguin Random House Children's. Reflecting his own curmudgeonly nature, Brigg's first major success

came in 1973 with "Father Christmas", in which Santa Claus is an irascible old man who hates the cold and snow, and finds delivering presents a chore.

In 1977's "Fungus the Bogeyman", the eponymous hero of the slimy underworld scares vicars, wakes human babies and makes things go bump in the night. Briggs later admitted that it was based on himself-a "miserable, disillusioned, depressed middle-aged man". — AFP



In this file photo British author Raymond Briggs sits in a deckchair that Briggs designed based on his children's story "The Snowman" at a photocall in London's Hyde Park. — AFP



In this file photo taken on November 30, 2019, Bollywood actor Aamir Khan pays respect at the Golden Temple during his visit for the shooting of the upcoming film 'Laal Singh Chaddha' in Amritsar.



A man rides his bike past a poster of the upcoming new Bollywood film 'Laal Singh Chaddha' put up at the Metro theatre in Mumbai. — AFP photos

## Bollywood seeks boost with 'Forrest Gump' remake

One of India's biggest stars is banking on a remake of Hollywood feelgood hit "Forrest Gump" to revive the fortunes of Hindi-language Bollywood, after a string of weak box-office showings. Aamir Khan's "Laal Singh Chaddha", an adaptation of the 1994 US classic starring Tom Hanks, hits cinemas on Thursday ahead of India's 75th independence celebrations. Disappointing takings for other Bollywood A-listers have cast a pall over an industry still recovering from Covid-19 lockdown losses when many in movie-mad India turned to streaming giants like Netflix and Disney+ Hotstar. The adaptation keeps several iconic scenes from the original-which netted six Oscars, including for Best Picture-such as a floating white feather, ping-pong playing and lots of running.

### Box of golgappas

But there are several changes, with Gump's "box of chocolates" line becoming "Life is just like a golgappa. Your tummy might feel full, but your heart always craves more." Golgappa is a popular Indian snack, while the second half of the saying-"you never know what you're gonna get" in the original — draws from a common Hindi phrase. The film promises to take people through India's history in the same way Gump stumbled through and influenced major US events like the Vietnam War.

This could irk Indian right-wing critics who have already called for a boycott of the film because of comments made by Khan in 2015 that were deemed to be unpatriotic. Khan, the star of megahit "Dangal" (2016), and screenwriter Atul Kulkarni were coy in sharing what Indian historical settings would be featured. Kulkarni would only say that his script was a "beautiful story about a beautiful country called India through a beautiful person called Laal Singh".

### Remaking a 'classic'

Khan, 57, admitted that he initially put off reading Kulkarni's script,

uncertain it would be possible to adapt such a "cult classic". "It's like saying we are remaking 'Mughal-e-Azam' and 'Mother India'. It's not a wise thing to do," he said, referring to two Indian classics. "But when I heard the script, I understood he's done it. It was a moving experience for me. I really loved it. The moment I heard it I wanted to do this."

Bollywood star Kareena Kapoor, 41, who plays Singh's lifelong friend Rupa, based on Robin Wright's Jenny Curran, said the plot was "timeless" with a love story at its core. "I wondered how they would play around with such an iconic film," added Naga Chaitanya, a Telugu-language star from the southern film industry "Tollywood" who plays Bala, an adaptation of Gump's shrimp-fishing Vietnam comrade Bubba. "But the way they have conceived the film for Indian cinema is unique."

### Competition

Recent silver-screen hits have not come from Hindi-language Bollywood but are in other Indian languages, such as action flicks "Pushpa", "KGF: Chapter 2" and "RRR". "RRR", released in March, raked in \$87 million domestically, while "KGF: Chapter 2", which debuted a few weeks later, took in \$106 million, media analyst Karan Taurani of Mumbai-based Elara Capital told AFP.

Action film "Shamshera", released on July 22 and starring Bollywood actor Ranbir Kapoor, has so far only made \$5.6 million, dashing hopes it would lure audiences back to Hindi cinema. A rare Bollywood hit this year has been comedy horror "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2" released on May 20 and featuring rising star Kartik Aryan, which has brought in \$24 million so far.

Now, all eyes are on "Laal Singh Chaddha" and family dramedy "Raksha Bandhan" with Bollywood megastar Akshay Kumar-which also releases on Thursday. Taurani estimates that "Laal Singh Chaddha" will make \$19 million, falling short of Khan's per-film average of \$35 million.

Khan, who co-produced "Laal Singh Chaddha", believes Bollywood hasn't lost its mojo, blaming the early release of movies on streaming services for lower box-office takings. "I feel that perhaps we-I'm including myself in this-as Hindi filmmakers, need to... also pick topics which are relevant to a larger audience, as opposed to picking topics which are relevant to a smaller audience," he said. — AFP

## Space invaders: How video gamers are resisting a crypto onslaught

When video game designer Mark Venturelli was asked to speak at Brazil's biggest gaming festival, he submitted a generic-sounding title for his presentation-"The Future of Game Design"-but that was not the talk he gave. Instead, he launched into a 30-minute diatribe against the blockchain technology that underpins cryptocurrencies and the games it has spawned, mostly very basic smartphone apps that lure players with the promise of earning money. "Everything that is done in this space right now is just bad-actually it's terrible," he told AFP.

He is genuinely worried for the industry he loves, particularly because big gaming studios are also sniffing around the technology. To crypto enthusiasts, blockchain will allow players to grab back some of the money they spend on games and make for higher-stakes enjoyment. Critics say the opposite is true-game makers will capture more profits while sidestepping laws on gambling and trading, and the profit motive will kill all enjoyment. The battle lines are drawn for what could be a long confrontation over an industry worth some \$300 billion a year, according to Accenture.

### 'Ecologically mortifying'

Gamers like Venturelli might feel that they have triumphed in the early sorties. Cryptocurrencies have crashed recently and dragged down the in-game tokens that had initially attracted players. "Nobody is playing blockchain games right now," Mihai Nicol of Newzoo told AFP, saying between 90 and 95 percent of games had been affected by the crash. Ubisoft, one of the world's biggest gaming firms, last year tried to introduce a marketplace to one of its hit games for trading NFTs, the digital tokens that act as receipts for anything from art to video game avatars.

But gamers' forums, many already scattered with anti-crypto sentiment, lit up in opposition.

Even French trade union IT Solidarity got involved, labeling blockchain "useless, costly, ecologically mortifying tech"-a reference to the long-held criticism that blockchain networks are hugely power hungry. Ubisoft quickly ditched the NFT marketplace in Tom Clancy Ghost Recon Breakpoint. Last month, Minecraft, a world-building game hugely popular with children and teenagers, announced it would not allow blockchain technology.

The firm criticized the "speculative pricing and investment mentality" around NFTs and said introducing them would be "inconsistent with the long-term joy and success of our players". The wider sector also has a serious image problem after a spectacular theft earlier this year of almost \$600 million from Axie Infinity, a blockchain game popular in the Philippines. Analyst firm NonFungible last week revealed that the NFT gaming sector crashed in the second quarter of this



In this file photo youngsters use their mobile phones to play Axie Infinity, an NFT game where players earn tokens that can be exchanged for cryptocurrency or cash, in a neighborhood alley in Malabon, suburban Manila.

year with the number of sales plunging 22 percent. All of this points to a bleak time for crypto enthusiasts, but blockchain entrepreneurs are not giving up.

### 'Revolutionize' gaming

Sekip Can Gokalp, whose firms Infinite Arcade and Coda help developers introduce blockchain to their games, argues it

blockchain allows players to take items from one game to another, gives them ownership of those items and stores their progress across platforms. Nicol, though, reckons blockchain gaming needs to find other selling points to succeed.

"It could be the future," he said, "but it's going to be different to how people envisage it today". Brazilian Venturelli, whose



In this file photo Zacary Egea, a former member of the Bolivarian National Police, shows his mobile while checking the status of his plant while playing the Plant Vs Undead video game in the Cuarcua neighborhood in the Libertador municipality of Caracas. — AFP photos



In this file photo the Voxies game is shown on a screen at the Alwaysgeeky game booth during the DCentral Miami Conference at the Miami Airport Convention Centre in Miami, Florida.

is still "very early days". He told AFP some of the attention-grabbing play-to-earn games had been "misguided" and he was convinced the technology still had the potential to "revolutionize" gaming. Reports of a culture clash between gamers and crypto fans, he said, were overplayed and his research suggested there was substantial overlap between the two communities. Gokalp can take heart from recent announcements by gaming giants such as Sega and Roblox, a popular platform mostly used by children, indicating they are still exploring blockchain.

And Ubisoft, despite abandoning its most high-profile blockchain effort, still has several crypto-related projects on the go. Among the many benefits trumpeted by crypto enthusiasts are that the

games include the award-winning Relic Hunters, used his talk at the BIG Festival in Sao Paulo to dismiss all the benefits trumpeted by crypto fans as either unworkable, undesirable or already available. And he told AFP that play-to-earn games risked real-world damage in Latin America-a particular target for the industry-by enticing young people away from occupations that bring benefits to society.

He said many people he knows, including venture capitalists and the heads of billion-dollar corporations, shared his point of view. "They came to congratulate me on my talk," he said. But with new blockchain games emerging every day, he accepts that the battle is far from over. — AFP



In this file photo gaming fans play Ubisoft games at the 2019 Electronic Entertainment Expo, also known as E3, opening in Los Angeles, California.



## Sports

# Unrepentant LIV rebel Reed shifts focus to Asian Tour

## LIV Golf trio denied chance to play in PGA playoffs

**SINGAPORE:** Former Masters champion Patrick Reed said Wednesday he expects other high-profile LIV rebels to be drawn to the Asian Tour as it becomes one of the main avenues for them to earn world-ranking points. The American, along with fellow major winners Phil Mickelson, Bryson DeChambeau, Brooks Koepka and Sergio Garcia, has been suspended by the PGA Tour after joining the lucrative Saudi-backed LIV Golf series.

The breakaway circuit fronted by former world number one Greg Norman is threatening to tear the sport apart and has sparked accusations of Saudi "sportswashing". Reed, the world number 46, needs to finish inside the top 50 at the end of the year to earn exemptions into the 2023 majors.

But he and the other LIV golfers do not earn ranking points by playing LIV Golf events. They can make up for that on the new "International Series", which is sanctioned by the Asian Tour and bankrolled by LIV. "The world-ranking points on the Asian Tour will start growing and get bigger once more guys come over," Reed, the 2018 Masters champion, said on the eve of the US\$1.5 million International Series Singapore.

"It's also going to bring more talent over here too. It's not only about the place, but also the people. If they treat you like family, it just makes the experience much better." The 32-year-old Reed brushed off stinging criticism of LIV Golf. "It is an innovative product and a new way of playing golf," he said of the upstart circuit which has controversially offered the highest purses in golf history.

"You look at the old traditions of golf - traditions are great in every sport, but you have to evolve to keep up with the times." Although the American has enjoyed success on the PGA Tour, where he has nine wins, he is ready to move on. "Right now I'm enjoying where I'm playing. It'll be interesting to see how everything unfolds as everyone seems kind of going at it at the moment."

"As players we just want to go out, play golf and let the guys higher up deal with everything that's going on."

### Trio denied chance

Meanwhile, a federal judge on Tuesday denied a request by three LIV Golf Series players for a temporary restraining order allowing them to play in this week's US PGA Tour FedEx Cup playoffs. US District Court Judge Beth Labson Freeman made the ruling after a hearing at San Jose on the lawsuit filed in the Northern District of California.

Australian Matt Jones and Americans Tador Gooch and Hudson Swafford had sought the chance to compete in the FedEx Cup playoff opener, the St Jude's Championship, that begins Thursday in Memphis. All three were among those suspended by the PGA Tour after they teed off in their first event of the Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series in June. The ruling upheld that ban.

"We're disappointed that Tador Gooch, Hudson Swafford and Matt Jones won't be allowed to play golf," LIV Golf said in a statement. "No one gains by banning golfers from playing." Gooch was ranked 20th in FedEx Cup points with Jones 65th and Swafford 67th. The top 125 players in season points qualified for Memphis with 70 players advancing to next week's BMW Championship and the top 30 reaching the season-ending Tour Championship in Atlanta.

Had they been able to play and reached the Tour Championship, the trio would have earned berths in next year's Masters and US and British Opens. But LIV Golf players could not show irreparable harm since they will be allowed to play LIV Golf events when those resume next month in Boston. While LIV Golf players claim they are independent contractors, the PGA Tour argued they were members and the tour can punish members who violate rules, such as playing in LIV events.



**BEDMINSTER:** Henrik Stenson of Majesticks GC lines up a putt for birdie on the 15th green during day one of the LIV Golf Invitational - Bedminster at Trump National Golf Club Bedminster. —AFP

"With today's news, our players, fans and partners can now focus on what really matters over the next three weeks, the best players in the world competing in the FedEx Cup playoffs," PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan said in a memo obtained by The Golf Channel. LIV Golf has lured away such top stars as Dustin Johnson and Henrik Stenson with guaranteed money and record purses of \$25 million at events. Jones, Gooch and Swafford were among 11 LIV Golf players who filed an anti-trust lawsuit against the PGA Tour.

Mexico's Carlos Ortiz, who had been among the 11 players in the lawsuit, has dropped out of the case, his manager said. Some players at Memphis warned of a frosty reception for LIV golfers had they been allowed to tee off after departing for richer prize money as well as trying to knock PGA players out of their own playoffs. "Going to be a pretty icy Thursday morning if those guys play," 2009 US Open champion Lucas Glover told The Golf Channel. "They want their cake and eat it too." —AFP

## Antetokounmpo on fire as Greece beats Spain

**ATHENS:** NBA superstar Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 31 points to lead Greece to a 86-70 drubbing of Spain in a friendly encounter Tuesday evening at indoor Athens Olympic Stadium before 16,000 spectators. The Milwaukee Bucks power forward gained his highest points performance ever with the Greek squad with seven of 10 free throws, 9 of 10 two-pointers and making two of three shots for three points. "Giannis is a special case. He came very focused, with great appetite and great will. May he have good health. When this particular player goes low and plays defense on a 4/4 he is a living example," said Greece coach Dimitris Itoudis. Antetokounmpo also had 10 rebounds, three assists and one steal in the 20 minutes he played in the contest. It was his 50th appearance with the Greek team and his previous top score was 26 points. Also hitting double figures in scoring for Greece was Dallas Mavericks guard Tyler Dorsey with 11 points. Antetokounmpo's two brothers also played in the game with Kostas scoring seven points and Bucks teammate Thanasis adding three points.

Kostas last played for French club Asvel but is now a free agent. The other Antetokounmpo brother, Alex who will play for Bucks' affiliate NBA G League side Wisconsin Herd, was cut from the team last week. Spain was led in scoring by New Orleans Pelicans centre Willy Hernangomez with 15 points. Greece will meet Spain again on Thursday in Madrid and then the squad prepares for 2023 World Cup qualifiers against Serbia and Belgium later this month. On September 1, the Greeks will begin play in Eurobasketin Group C alongside Estonia, Ukraine, Britain, Italy and Croatia. —AFP

## Kyrgios lifts mental game for 7th straight win; Murray out

**MONTREAL:** Wimbledon runner-up Nick Kyrgios let an early lead slip but regrouped on Tuesday for a 6-4, 6-4 first-round victory over Sebastian Baez at the ATP Montreal Masters. World number 37 Kyrgios, a title winner last week in Washington, next faces world number one Daniil Medvedev, who won last week's Los Cabos crown.

"It will be a great test and a lot of fun," Kyrgios said. "He's a hell of a player. He's unorthodox-an animal. I want to see where my game's at so I'll be giving it my best shot." The day was a disaster for Britain's Andy Murray as the treble Grand Slam winner was cut off in the first round, a 6-1, 6-3 victim of Taylor Fritz.

The American presented nothing but frustration to Murray, who lost with just seven winners and 19 unforced errors while Fritz fired 30 winners in 87 minutes. "It's an honor to be on court with Andy," Fritz said. "He has been dominating since before I came onto the tour." Medvedev's chances of retaining the top ranking over the next month are on the line when he plays Kyrgios. The 27-year-old Australian secured his seventh straight match victory since losing to Novak Djokovic in last month's Wimbledon final.

Kyrgios said he is on point physically but had to work to maintain mental strength in the match played 48 hours after lifting the trophy in the US capital. "Physically I feel fine, mentally I'm tired," he said. "I've not had much sleep in the last few days. I've put Washington behind me already. I've not played great in Montreal in the past, so I'm just trying to create some good memories for myself."



**MONTREAL:** Nick Kyrgios of Australia hits a return against Sebastian Baez of Argentina during Day 4 of the National Bank Open at Stade IGA on August 9, 2022. —AFP

Kyrgios held a comfortable 5-1 margin in the opening set before Argentine Baez fought back to 4-5 before dropping the set.

The Aussie managed to stop the rot and left nothing to chance in the second set as he closed out victory. Kyrgios has won 13 of his last 14 singles matches and stands 28-7 this breakthrough season. Earlier, fellow Aussie Alex De Minaur finished off a match delayed from Monday by rain, winning four of the only five points remaining to add to the misery of Canadian Denis Shapovalov 7-5, 7-6 (7/4).

Shapovalov stands 1-9 since upsetting Rafael Nadal at Rome last May as his slump deepens. French showman Gael Monfils defeated Spain's Pedro Martinez 7-6 (7/4), 3-6, 6-2. Matteo Berrettini's comeback from the Covid-19 positive test which forced him to quit Wimbledon stalled out, with the Italian losing 6-3, 6-2 to Paolo Carreno Busta in the opening round. Berrettini played a clay final last month against Casper Ruud in Gstaad, but was unable to make a decent start to his pre-US Open cement season. —AFP

## 'Countdown' to retirement has started: Serena

**TORONTO:** Serena Williams, a 23-time Grand Slam champion and iconic tennis superstar for a generation, said Tuesday that "the countdown has begun" to her retirement from the sport. The 40-year-old American wrote a cover essay for Vogue magazine and an Instagram post in which she set the stage for "evolving away from tennis."

"There comes a time in life when we have to decide to move in a different direction," she said on Instagram. "That time is always hard when you love something so much. My goodness do I enjoy tennis. But now, the countdown has begun. I have to focus on being a mom, my spiritual goals and finally discovering a different, but just (as) exciting Serena. I'm gonna relish these next few weeks."

After suffering a torn right hamstring at Wimbledon last year, Williams was sidelined until playing doubles at Eastbourne in June and made a return at Wimbledon as a wild card, losing in the first round. On Monday, Williams competed in her first hardcourt match in 18 months, defeating Spain's Nuria Parrizas Diaz to reach the second round of the WTA hardcourt event in Toronto, a tuneup for the US Open.

It was her first singles victory since the 2021 French Open, 14 months ago. Williams is set to

play next week at Cincinnati and compete at the US Open, where she won her first Grand Slam title in 1999 at age 17. "I have never liked the word retirement. It doesn't feel like a modern word to me," Williams wrote in Vogue. "I've been thinking of this as a transition, but I want to be sensitive about how I use that word, which means something very specific and important to a community of people."

"Maybe the best word to describe what I'm up to is evolution. I'm here to tell you that I'm evolving away from tennis, toward other things that are important to me. Unfortunately I wasn't ready to win Wimbledon this year. And I don't know if I will be ready to win New York. But I'm going to try." Williams won the most recent of her 23 Slams at the 2017 Australian Open when she was already pregnant with daughter Olympia.

### 'Terrible at goodbyes'

She remains one shy of the all-time record of 24 Grand Slam singles titles won by Margaret Court, having dropped her past four Grand Slam finals at Wimbledon and the US Open in 2018 and 2019. "I'm not looking for some ceremonial, final on-court moment," Williams wrote in Vogue. "I'm terrible at goodbyes, the world's worst."

Williams has won seven Wimbledon and Australian Open titles, six US Opens and three French Open crowns as well as the 2012 London Olympic singles gold medal and three more golds in doubles. Fellow US tennis legend John McEnroe compared Williams to all-time NFL and NBA sports heroes. "She's like an icon. Her place in

American society has just gone to a place where she deserves it after everything she has accomplished," McEnroe told USA Today.

"She's sort of in that level where Michael Jordan, LeBron James and Tom Brady are. She's like one of the all-time greatest athletes in the history of any sport—male or female." She completed two "Serena Slam" sweeps of four consecutive majors, runs that began at the 2002 French Open and 2014 US Open and ended when she was upset in the 2015 US Open semi-finals by Italy's Roberta Vinci while going for a calendar-year Slam.

She has evolved into business interests but also wants to have another child. "A few years ago I quietly started Serena Ventures, a venture capital firm. Soon after that, I started a family. I want to grow that family," she said. "But I've been reluctant to admit to myself or anyone else that I have to move on from playing tennis." Williams gave birth to Olympia in 2017 but was bedridden for six weeks after suffering a pulmonary embolism and said she doesn't want to be playing and pregnant again.

"I definitely don't want to be pregnant again as an athlete. I need to be two feet into tennis or two feet out," Williams said. That's a line call only Williams can make. "I'm turning 41 this month, and something's got to give," Williams said. Williams said she feels like part of her legacy is that women athletes can feel freer to be themselves while competing with gestures and clothes and aggression. "Over the years, I hope that people come to think of me as symbolizing something bigger than tennis," she said. —AFP



**NEW YORK:** In this file photo, Serena Williams of the US jumps with the trophy after her victory in the 2014 US Open women's singles final match. US tennis great Serena Williams announced on August 9, 2022, that "the countdown has begun" to her retirement from the sport. —AFP



Sports

# Benfica, Kyiv, Eindhoven, Rangers into Champions League play-offs

## Benfica beat Mitjyland 3-1; Dynamo Kiyv stun Sturm Graz 3-1

**PARIS:** Two-time former champions Benfica will play Ukraine's Dynamo Kyiv while Ruud van Nistelrooy's PSV Eindhoven will face Glasgow Rangers after they all qualified for the final Champions League qualifying play-off round on Tuesday. Luuk De Jong claimed an 109th-minute winner as PSV Eindhoven edged Monaco 3-2 in extra-time in the Netherlands, to go through 4-3 on aggregate.

De Jong was adamant his side deserved the win. "Monaco hit the bar and the post, I hit the target," said the PSV captain. Monaco had been awakened overnight when fireworks were set off outside their hotel, and there was a fiery atmosphere inside a packed stadium in a see-saw match. Joey Veerman fired the Dutch ahead on 21mins with a sweet shot into the far corner but Guillermo Maripan then levelled clinically with a cool finish in a goalmouth scramble.

Monaco striker Wissam Ben Yedder then raced on to a sweeping through ball to smack home the go-ahead goal before PSV grabbed a late equalizer as Mexican Erick Gutierrez delivered PSV on 89 minutes. Benfica beat Mitjyland 3-1 to win 7-2

on aggregate thanks largely to midfielder Enzo Fernandez and 20-year-old striker Henrique Araujo who scored before Pione Sisto responded for the Danes.

Argentinean Fernandez, 21, and Araujo were making just their second European appearances as Diogo Goncalves claimed the third goal for the 1961 and 1962 winners. In Scotland Malik Tillman completed a turn around when he scored the decider with 11 minutes left as Rangers beat Union Saint-Gilloise 3-0. The Belgian outfit had won the first leg 2-0 in their first appearance in European competition since 1964-65.

Kostiantyn Vivcharenko and Viktor Tsygankov guided Dynamo Kiyv past Austrians Sturm Graz 3-1 over two ties with efforts in extra time. Dynamo were second in the Ukrainian Premier League when Russia invaded the country earlier this year. Earlier, Moldovans Sheriff Tiraspol, who stunned Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu during last season's group stages, were knocked out by Viktoria Plzen as the Czech outfit won 4-2 over two legs. The first leg of the play-offs take place on August 16/17 with the return fixtures a week later. —AFP



**HERNING:** Benfica's Diogo Goncalves shoots to score a goal during the UEFA Champions League third qualifying round second leg football match between FC Midtjylland and SL Benfica in Herning, Denmark, on August 9, 2022. —AFP



**TORONTO:** Naomi Osaka of Japan wipes a tear after she retired early from her match against Kaia Kanepi of Estonia during the National Bank Open, part of the Hologic WTA Tour, at Sobey's Stadium on August 9, 2022 in Toronto. —AFP

## Osaka retires with back pain

**TORONTO:** Four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka retired from her opening match on Tuesday at the WTA Toronto Masters with lower back pain, raising injury concerns with the US Open looming. Estonia's Kaia Kanepi advanced when Osaka retired trailing 7-6 (7/4), 3-0. Kanepi, a runner-up last week in Washington, needed 71 minutes on court as she broke three times before the Japanese star called it quits.

Defeat drove the emotional Osaka to tears. "I felt my back from the start of the match and despite trying to push through it, I just wasn't able to today," Osaka said. "I'd like to pay credit to Kaia for playing well and want to wish her all the best for the rest of the tournament." Osaka has played only six matches with a 2-4 record since losing the Miami final in early April to world number one Iga Swiatek. Kanepi, 37, won their only prior meeting five years ago in three sets at the US Open.

"I tried to play my game and stay aggressive. It was a very tight match," Kanepi said. "I felt I needed a little more time to get used to new things, but after that I felt comfortable." Reigning US Open champion

Emma Raducanu of Britain exited in the first round, losing 7-6 (7/0), 6-2 to Italy's Camila Giorgi. Despite the setback in the city of her birth 19 years ago, Raducanu kept her spirits up as her US Open title defence draws nearer. "It was a really good match, to be honest," Raducanu said. "The level was pretty high, especially in the first set."

"Camila's a great opponent. She won this tournament last year. I just need to get better at dealing with players who play probably as quick as she does." Defending WTA Canadian champion Giorgi won a combative first set and ran away with the second against the 19-year-old Englishwoman, whose title defense in New York begins in less than three weeks. The feisty Italian trailed by a break in both sets but showed her spirit by winning the last six games of the contest.

Giorgi needed just over an hour and three-quarters to advance to the second round over the ninth seed who broke into the ranking top 10 less than a month ago. Raducanu had to hold on in a wild opening set, where serve was broken in six of the dozen games played. The Briton saved a set point in the 12th game to bring on a tiebreaker, but collapsed to lose seven straight points as Giorgi took the set after 71 minutes. Raducanu was broken three times in the second set as Giorgi finished off her victory. —AFP

## NFL club owners approve Broncos sale to Walton

**LOS ANGELES:** NFL club owners voted unanimously on Tuesday to approve the sale of the Denver Broncos to Wal-Mart store heir Rob Walton and his family. The final step in completing

the record-shattering sale needed at least 24 of 32 votes from team owners. Walton, his daughter Carrie Penner and son-in-law Greg Penner bought the Broncos from the Pat Bowlen Trust for \$4.65 billion, the largest sale price for any North American sports team. "We are grateful for the support and trust of the NFL and the 31 other teams," Walton said in a statement for the ownership group. "We couldn't be more excited."

Among those with a stake in the Broncos ownership are seven-time Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton of Britain and former US

## CAF draws: Nigeria clubs 'out of luck'

**JOHANNESBURG:** Hopes of Nigerian clubs making an impact in the CAF Champions League this season were dealt a double blow when the draws for the preliminary and last-32 rounds were made in Cairo on Tuesday. Domestic champions Rivers United were paired with Liberian outfit Watanga and, if they progress, will face title-holders Wydad Casablanca of Morocco for a place in the group stage.

Wydad have an outstanding record in the marquee African club competition, culminating in a 2-0 victory over Al Ahly of Egypt last May in the 2022 final through two goals from Zouhair el Moutaraji. The Casablanca outfit also defeated Ahly in the 2017 title decider, then reached the final once, the semi-finals twice and the quarter-finals once before lifting the trophy again.

Nigeria league runners-up Plateau United were drawn against Stade Mandji of Gabon in the preliminary round, and four-time African champions Esperance of Tunisia await the winners. Esperance won successive titles in 2018 and 2019, overcoming Ahly and Wydad in the finals. The victory over Ahly

was particularly impressive as they overcame a 3-1 first-leg deficit. While Nigeria craves Champions League glory for the first time since Enyimba won back-to-back titles in 2003 and 2004, the chances of Rivers or Plateau making the group draw are slim.

Ahly, who have been performing poorly in Egypt since Portuguese Ricardo Soares replaced South African Pitso Mosimane as coach recently, will face APR of Rwanda or US Monastir of Tunisia in a last-32 tie. Debutants Monastir should overcome APR, but a lack of experience could prove their undoing against the battle hardened African campaigners of Ahly. Six clubs were given byes into the last-32 round and, among them, 2016 African champions Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa received what appears to be the easiest task of reaching the group stage.

Sundowns, a Pretoria-based club owned by Confederation of African Football (CAF) president Patrice Motsepe, await the winners between Volcan of the Comoros and La Passe of the Seychelles. Neither Volcan, in two attempts, nor Passe, in four efforts, have progressed beyond the initial round and whoever does succeed is likely to come off second best against expensively assembled Sundowns. Preliminary fixtures will be played on the weekends of September 9-11 and 16-18 and last-32 fixtures are scheduled for the weekends of October 7-9 and 14-16. —AFP

## Man City's Mendy goes on trial for rape and assault

**CHESTER:** Manchester City and France footballer Benjamin Mendy on Wednesday began his trial for the alleged rape and assault of seven women, which could see his playing career end in jail if convicted. Mendy, 28, arrived at Chester Crown Court in northwest England wearing a dark blue suit and tie to face eight counts of rape, one count of sexual assault and one count of attempted rape, relating to seven young women.

Flanked by an interpreter in the dock, the French player spoke in English to confirm his identity. He pleaded not guilty in May to nine of the charges, and not guilty on Wednesday to a subsequent rape count that had not yet been put to him in court. All the alleged offences are said to have taken place at Mendy's home address in Prestbury near Macclesfield, also in northwest England, between October 2018 and August last year.

He is standing trial before a jury along with his co-defendant Louis Saha Maturie, 40, who has also

pleaded not guilty. Maturie denies eight counts of rape and four counts of sexual assault, relating to eight young women. His alleged offences span from July 2012 to August last year. Both the defendants are on bail, with Mendy subject to what a judge previously called "stringent" conditions, including the surrender of his passport.

After his arrest last August he was initially held at Altcourse prison in Liverpool, and then a prison in Manchester, before being freed on bail in January. The trial is due to last 15 weeks, with the prosecution set to open its case on Monday. None of the women said to have been assaulted can be named under English law, which also places restrictions on what can be reported about the case. It begins in the same week that former Manchester United star Ryan Giggs started his trial on charges of assaulting and coercively controlling his ex-girlfriend.

Mendy joined Premier League champions City from French side Monaco in 2017. He has played 75 times for the Manchester club, but his playing time was limited by injuries and a loss of form. He was suspended by City after being charged by police in August. The last of Mendy's 10 international caps came in November 2019, after the defender picked up a World Cup winner's medal after playing just 40 minutes of France's successful 2018 campaign in Russia. —AFP

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. "It's a responsibility and privilege to serve as stewards of such an iconic franchise," Walton said. "We have tremendous respect for what Pat Bowlen has meant to the Broncos and look forward to building on this organization's championship legacy."

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. Walton said the new ownership was "deeply committed to fielding a great team to win Super Bowls" and planned to "draw on our indi-

vidual strengths and those of the players, coaches and staff who have shaped the Broncos' storied history.

"Across the entire organization, we will all continue to listen and learn." Broncos president Joe Ellis, part of the organization for the past 27 seasons, said he will step down and serve as an advisor to ownership for the upcoming campaign. "I'm confident the Walton-Penner family ownership group will add to the Broncos' championship tradition," Ellis said. "I've accepted their request to help in the transition however possible." —AFP

# Classifieds

### Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9
Maternity Hospital	24843100	<b>Clinics</b>	
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700		
Chest Hospital	24849400	Kaizen center	25716707
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Rawda	22517733
Adan Hospital	23940620	Adaliya	22517144
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300		

Khalidiya	24848075	Dasmah	22532265
Kaifan	24849807	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shamiya	24848913	Shaab	22518752
Shuwaikh	24814507	Qibla	22459381
Abdullah Salem	22549134	Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Nuzha	22526804	Mirqab	22456536
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764	Sharq	22465401
Qadsiya	22515088	Salmiya	25746401

### CHANGE OF NAME

**I, Saleem Ahmed, S/o** Haseenuddin, Vill-Mirampur Bega PO/PS - Mandawli, Tehseel - Najibabad, Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh, India, Passport No. P9486722, have changed my name to Mohd Saleem for all purposes. (C# 2036) 10-08-2022





DOHA: People check the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup countdown clock in Doha on August 10, 2022. The World Cup's start will be brought forward by a day to allow hosts Qatar to play the opening game, sources told, just over three months before the competition gets underway. —AFP

## Qatar World Cup to start a day early on November 20

### Qatar to play Ecuador on Nov 20, 24 hours earlier than planned

DOHA: The World Cup's start will be brought forward by a day to allow hosts Qatar to play the opening game, sources told AFP on Wednesday, just over three months before the competition gets underway. Qatar will now play Ecuador on November 20, 24 hours earlier than planned, in a move that FIFA's ruling council was expected to confirm soon, according to sources with knowledge of the matter.

The change will see the tournament, which was switched to November-December to avoid the Gulf country's searing summer heat, keep to its tradition of the hosts playing the opening match. Senegal and the Netherlands had been scheduled to play the first game on November 21, followed by England against Iran and then the official inauguration match, Qatar's World Cup debut, that evening.

"There were discussions and agreement

between the two respective teams and there was a request from CONMEBOL—the South American confederation," one World Cup source told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity as no official decision has been announced. "We wanted to follow the tradition that either the reigning champions or the host country be involved in the opening match," the source added. FIFA and the Qatari organizing committee declined to comment on the change to the mega event that ends on December 18.

But another tournament source said action would be taken to help fans with tickets for the November 21 game. "Any disruption will be dealt with so the impact is minimal," the source told AFP. Under the change, Netherlands v Senegal in Group A would be moved from 1:00pm (1000 GMT) on November 21 to a 7:00pm start. "It is a better slot

for both teams for television and other areas," said the World Cup source. England's Group B match against Iran is not changed.

#### 100-day countdown

Companies with major deals linked to the World Cup expressed confidence that the unusual schedule change could be handled smoothly. "It is something we will deal with," said Jaime Byrom, chairman of Match Hospitality, which has a deal with FIFA to organize hospitality packages for World Cup matches and has locked in 450,000 tickets for the tournament.

"It is really not—compared to the other challenges that we could have faced or have faced in the past—a particularly large problem," Byrom told AFP. "We have to focus on those customers who are most affected and I guess in this case we will

be looking at our Ecuadorian customers who are travelling from overseas, and making sure that they are on time for the match." The opening match is scheduled to be held at the 60,000-capacity Al Bayt stadium, one of seven new venues purpose-built for the tournament since Qatar was controversially awarded the World Cup in 2010.

The wealthy Gulf state is preparing a spectacular opening ceremony in the stadium, whose structure was inspired by traditional Arab tents. Moving forward the opening match will also mean changing the 100-day countdown that had been scheduled to start on Saturday, with special events across the tiny nation of 2.8 million people. After a row over the bidding process, Qatar has faced criticism over labor rights. But FIFA president Gianni Infantino has said the tiny, gas-rich state will host the "best ever" World Cup. —AFP



KONYA: Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi poses for a group photo with Kuwait athletes. —KUNA

### Kuwait working on strategy to develop the sports sector

KONYA: The Public Authority for Sport is working on developing a new strategy in cooperation between the public and private sector to boost the sports field in Kuwait, said the representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi.

The new strategy aims to develop Kuwait's sports sector on the regional and international level, Al-Mutairi, also Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs said during his meeting with Kuwaiti

male and female athletes participating in the Islamic Solidarity Games, held in Konya city in Turkey on Wednesday.

The strategy, announced in November 2021, includes building a sports city, six stadiums and hosting 45 regional, intercontinental and international tournaments. Last night, the minister honored Kuwaiti pole-vaulter Majid Al-Zaid for receiving the bronze medal in the competition, as well as the head of the Kuwaiti team Sheikh Jaber Thamer Al-Sabah and Kuwait's mission manager Fatma Hayat.

There are 60 Kuwaiti athletes participating in the tournament in ten games including athletics, swimming, Judo, Karate, Tae Kwon Do, archery, shooting, bicycles and ping pong. The tournament is held until 18 August, with the participation of about 6,000 athletes from 56 countries. —KUNA

### Giggs 'headbutted' ex-girlfriend in the face, court hears

LONDON: Former Manchester United star Ryan Giggs headbutted his former girlfriend in the face as she tried to end their relationship, she told a jury Tuesday on the second day of his trial on charges of assault and coercive control. Giggs, 48, who until recently served as coach of the Wales national team, was sitting in the dock at Manchester Crown Court for the trial that has upended his managerial career.

The jury has heard that Giggs subjected his former partner, 36-year-old PR agent Kate Greville, to a "litany of abuse, both physical and psychological" and revealed a "sinister side". Giggs denies the charges, which could lead to a five-year jail term. His lawyer, Chris Daw, said earlier the footballer "used no unlawful violence", while conceding that his behaviour "on a moral level was far from perfect".

#### 'Angry'

Greville testified from behind a screen, responding to questions from prosecution lawyer Peter Wright. She detailed the evening of November 1, 2020, when Giggs allegedly "lost control" and attacked her as she tried to leave the house they shared. He is also charged with common assault of Greville's sister Emma, who was dog-sitting at the time. The prosecution has said Giggs deliberately elbowed Emma in the jaw. "I hadn't seen him that angry before. He was drunk," she said, detailing how he pushed her to the floor and pinned her down. Emma "grabbed (Giggs) round the waist to try and pull him off", Greville said, and "he pushed his arm back to try and get her off him." Greville then told Giggs she would report his attack on her to police. "That's when he came towards me and headbutted me in my face," she said. "I was in shock. I fell backwards. My lip instantly swelled. "All the other times that he had hurt me—this was different, because it was with real intent."

#### 'Pattern'

The jury also saw messages where Giggs upbraided Greville for not responding promptly to him. He threatened to forward a video she feared was "sexual" to her



Ryan Giggs

work colleagues and called her a "whore". Greville detailed her numerous suspicions of his infidelity. "Violated. I had no control of what he could do and his actions," Greville said of her feelings. The jury earlier watched a video of the police interview Greville gave following the alleged assault. At times in tears, she described a "pattern" of controlling behavior. She said that initially she "was madly in love with him" but "there were definitely red flags" from the start.

#### 'Constant battle'

"It was like a constant battle, mentally. I started getting the most horrendous anxiety," she said. She described an argument early in their relationship in 2017 when the couple were at a hotel and he "literally flipped", grabbed her by the arm and dragged her naked into the corridor. He then threw the contents of her suitcase into the hallway. "That was the first time he had been aggressive with me," she said.

Greville said that at one point she had felt suicidal. "I honestly felt like I didn't want to carry on any more," she said, sounding tearful. She said she had viewed Giggs as her "savior" when they met because she was married to a man who controlled her finances and had a drinking problem. But Giggs had made her feel "paranoid" about her own perceptions of their relationship, she said, making her question whether she was being "a psycho". "I was just naive, I was just vulnerable, I guess," she added.

The trial continues. A dazzling teenage talent, Giggs ended his career at Old Trafford as the most-decorated player in English football history. As a player, he made a club-record 963 appearances over 23 years for Manchester United, winning 13 Premier League titles and two Champions League trophies. —AFP