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# Crown Prince: Kuwait's diplomacy earns global community's respect

## Sheikh Mishal says envoys should address challenges with wisdom and clarity



**KUWAIT:** HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah affirmed on Wednesday that Kuwait's crucial diplomatic role regionally and internationally had earned the trust and respect of the global community. This came in a speech by HH the Crown Prince during a reception at Bayan Palace, which included Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and newly appointed Kuwaiti diplomats.

The diplomats included Ziad Al-Mashan, Ambassador to Libya; Salah Al-Haddad, Ambassador to Mexico; Adel Al-Amir, Ambassador to Senegal; Emad Al-Kharaz, Consul General to Mumbai, India; Abdullah Al-Kharafi, Ambassador to Cyprus; Thafer Al-Khurainj, Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina; Sami Al-Zamanan, Ambassador to Japan; Adel Al-

Adgham, Ambassador to Cuba; Abdullah Al-Turki, Consul General to Guangzhou, China; Mohammad Al-Hajri, Ambassador to Oman; Mohammad Al-Mutairi, Consul General to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; and Nayef Al-Otaibi, Ambassador to Ethiopia.

The diplomats took oath in front of HH the Crown Prince during the reception. In his speech to the diplomats, HH Sheikh Mishal congratulated them on their new posts and encouraged them to serve their country well under the leadership of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He called on them to represent their country to the best of their abilities in their respective posts. HH the Crown Prince said the regional and international challenges required vigilance on part of Kuwaiti diplomats who should address such challenges with wisdom and clarity.

Not only do ambassadors and diplomats represent the leadership of Kuwait, they also serve Kuwaiti people abroad and this is their main mission, HH the Crown Prince reiterated. He concluded his speech with wishes of success and welfare for all those embarking on their mission to represent the Kuwaiti leadership and people in regional and international arenas.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Ahmad delivered a speech congratulating the diplomats on assuming their posts, saying HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal had put their trust in the appointed diplomats. The leadership's expectations are high on the newly appointed officials and they will surely live up to those expectations, he added. Senior officials of the state attended the ceremony. — KUNA

**KUWAIT:** HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah addresses newly-appointed diplomats during a reception at Bayan Palace on Wednesday. — KUNA (See Page 3)

### News in brief

#### New public prosecutor named

**KUWAIT:** Counsellor Saad Al-Safran has been appointed as the head of the public prosecution, replacing Dherar Al-Asousi. Safran was the deputy attorney general at the public prosecution. He started his career there in 1981, worked as a public defender from 1995, and was the head of the judicial investigation department.



Saad Al-Safran

#### Kuwait boosts oil production

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil and Minister of Cabinet Affairs Mohammad Al-Fares announced Wednesday that in keeping with Kuwait's commitment to ensure secure and stable supplies of oil to the international markets, Kuwait has increased its crude oil production in line with its 2.8 million barrels per day quota under the OPEC+ agreement. — KUNA (See Page 2)



**DOHA:** Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani meets Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif on Aug 24, 2022. — AFP

#### Qatar to invest \$3bn in Pakistan

**DOHA:** Qatar said Wednesday it would invest \$3 billion in Pakistan's debt-ridden economy in the latest boost by a Gulf state for the ailing South Asian nation. The latest boost came in talks between Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani and Pakistan's Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif. — AFP

## Labor curbs eased during pandemic may be reinstated

**KUWAIT:** The government is contemplating reversing decisions it made previously related to labor in Kuwait during the coronavirus pandemic. Official sources said a ministerial committee discussed the cancelled decisions and found that their

approval was logical and needed. The decisions also agreed with the government's plan to remedy the population structure and fix marketplace issues, as well as supervise labor licenses and work permits, prevent iqama trade, control residency violations and ensure the departure of every expat the country is not in need of.

This in addition to matters related to the correct implementation of the new residency law to be approved by the new National Assembly after elections that will take place at the end of September. Sources said the ministerial committee has prepared a comprehensive report in this regard in

## US sends nuclear response to Iran, hits Syria militias

**TEHRAN/WASHINGTON:** Iran received Wednesday a response from the United States to its proposals on a final European Union draft for the

revival of the 2015 nuclear deal, the foreign ministry said. The announcement comes a day after Washington said Iran had agreed to ease key demands that had held up the revival of the 2015 deal trashed by former president Donald Trump. That came one day after Tehran criticized the United States for what it said was a slow response to its proposals.

Tehran "received this evening via the (EU) coordinator, the response from the US government over the Islamic republic of Iran's opinions on the outstanding issues in the negotiations to lift sanctions",

cooperation with concerned authorities such as the Public Authority of Manpower, commerce ministry and Civil Service Commission, and this report will be on the next government's agenda and expected to be approved and sent to concerned authorities for implementation.

The sources said among the decisions that were approved earlier and then cancelled due to the COVID situation was that an expat employee in the government sector cannot get a work permit in the private sector if the government authority where they work terminates their contract.

Continued on Page 6

## Boiling heat, no water as taps run dry in Iraq

**AL-AGHAWAT, Iraq:** Younes Ajil turns on the tap in his home but nothing comes out: Dozens of villages are without running water in drought-hit Iraq, surviving on sporadic tanker-truck deliveries and salty wells. For everything from drinking to bathing and washing dishes and clothes, Ajil and his eight children wait at their home in Al-Aghawat for trucked-in water from the Diwaniyah provincial

authorities once or twice a week.

In burning summer temperatures that at times approach 50 degrees Celsius, he said he hasn't bathed for four days. "Even if there were daily deliveries, there would not be enough" water, the 42-year-old said. Iraq is known in Arabic as the Land of the Two Rivers, but it has seen water levels on the once mighty Tigris and Euphrates plummet.

The Euphrates, which passes through Diwaniyah province, has visibly contracted in recent months, with some of the river's weaker branches drying up. Governor Zouheir Al-Shaalan said "around a third" of his province has problems accessing

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**AL-AGHAWAT, Iraq:** People gather to collect water from a cistern amid shortage and high temperature in this village in Diwaniyah province on July 18, 2022. — AFP

## Indian tycoon's bid for NDTV stokes worries

**NEW DELHI:** An Indian billionaire close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi is trying to buy a broadcast-

er seen as the last major critical voice on television, stoking fears about media freedom in the world's largest democracy. Under Modi, India has slipped 10 places in the Reporters Without Borders press freedom ranking to 150 out of 180, with critical reporters often finding themselves behind bars and hounded on social media by supporters of the ruling BJP.

Gautam Adani - Asia's richest person, with interests ranging from Australian coal mines to India's busiest ports - announced late Tuesday that his firm

had indirectly acquired a 29-percent stake in NDTV and was bidding for a further 26 percent. NDTV said that the move came "without any discussion" with the broadcaster, "or the consent of the NDTV founders", journalist Radhika Roy and economist Prannoy Roy.

Its two channels, one in Hindi and one in English, stand out among India's myriad rolling news broadcasters for inviting on critics of the government as well as their hard-hitting reporting.

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# Globetrotting couple follow their dreams, reach Kuwait

## Duo impressed by Kuwait's friendly people, safe environment, easy entry



KUWAIT: Travelers Aldo Giaquinto and Vera Kozlovskaja visit Kuwait Times.



Patagonia - We finding a shipwreck.



Italy - Wild camping in Apulia.

By Faten Omar

A mix of spontaneity, love and craziness were the key ingredients to create a perfect life for Italian Aldo Giaquinto and his Moldovan wife Vera Kozlovskaja. Giaquinto and Kozlovskaja's passion for traveling made them leave England to travel the world in a Land Cruiser.

Love at first sight was the reason behind their childhood dream come true. "We meet at Christmas in Italy. We had a connection that made us start the trip of our dream. Weeks after our first date, Aldo drew a contract to sign that we should share our dream of traveling the world. I wanted to explore cultures and nature," Kozlovskaja told Kuwait Times.

Giaquinto pointed out they were seeing each other once a week due to their work in the UK, but in different areas. "I asked her to inform her workplace that she will be one hour late due to signing bank papers. One of the points she agreed on in the contract was to start saving money for our dream trip. We opened a joint bank account that day and started planning. Each one of us had a list of places to visit and things to do," he said.

In 2016, the couple left Europe on a round-the-world trip, to chase a dream they always had. Aldo is a chef, while Vera used to work in IT. They started saving for almost three years to start their non-stop journey on the road. "Choosing a car to roam the world was a choice to make our traveling easier and not controlled by bus timings. The more comfortable you are, the more you tend to stay in the country to explore and interact with people," Kozlovskaja noted.

During their visit to Kuwait, the couple told Kuwait Times that Kuwait was a surprise to them, where they enjoyed the friendly, generous and kind people. "Kuwait's border was the most perfect experience. The customs man was very friendly, and his friend

invited us over to his farm. We spent hours chatting and drinking tea and coffee," Kozlovskaja said. "We received many invitations from people and hotels to stay for free. The Kuwaiti people are so welcoming! We ate machboos, it was good! People eat it with their hands, and we did the same. For us, we embrace the culture when we go anywhere. We try to dress and eat like locals," she said.

"We love Kuwait - it's a small country with educated people. It is different - you can see how clean the streets and malls are, and it is safe here. People are smiling and happy. The sad thing is that people leave trash behind, even if they are educated and aware. They have mini water bottles everywhere and children eat and throw," Giaquinto remarked.

Traveling made Giaquinto and Kozlovskaja fulfill their dream, but they also discovered an ugly side of the world, where they found themselves obligated to change as much as they can, spread awareness and help other communities understand. "During traveling, we realized that the world is more polluted and there are a lot of environmental issues, more than people realize, because they are busy chasing after money. We have seen how people are throwing garbage and bags of plastics in the oceans and rivers. So we founded the 'Try to give back' campaign," Kozlovskaja said.

Their nonprofit organization was created to bring awareness about environmental problems and sustainability. "From our revenues from our videos on YouTube, we planted over 6,000 trees. We help communities and children. We find a case and help them with money or food or environmental help. We are overfishing and produce too many cattle. The next generation will not find a healthy environment to live in. We overuse, consume and pollute. Our home is our planet. Money will not save us, a healthy planet will. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we decided to show



Canada - Camping overlooking a glacier.



USA - Selfie at Horseshoe Bend.

the beautiful side of the world, but it is also fragile," Giaquinto said.

The dream is to travel the six continents, in the same car they bought years ago. Over the past six years, Giaquinto and Kozlovskaja have traveled across five continents and through 60 countries. "The best investment is to invest in ourselves, by exploring the world and investing in knowledge. But the pandemic stopped us and we lived for a while in our car in a shopping center's parking lot north of Miami in the US," she said.

As a parting message, they said: "Do not wait; money you can make, but time is irreversible. There will never be a perfect time. Do not live a life with regrets. Fulfill your dream and be more environmentally aware. Do not be afraid to live your life. See what is more important. Make more experiences and more happy moments."



USA - Driving on Route 66



Argentina - Quebrada de las Flechas.



Peru - Machu Picchu



Canada - Crossing the Arctic Circle.

## Kuwait has ramped up oil production to meet rising demand

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil and Minister of Cabinet Affairs Mohammad Al-Fares announced Wednesday that in keeping with Kuwait's commitment to ensure secure and stable supplies of oil to the international markets, Kuwait has increased its crude oil production in line with its 2.8 million barrels per day quota under the OPEC+ agreement. The increased production is consistent with announcements made by Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) that it is bringing online investments that ensure international oil markets are adequately supplied and can meet the expected future demand, he said in a press statement released by the ministry of oil.

Fares further emphasized that Kuwait will continue to support efforts to promote market stability, particularly through the OPEC+ forum. "Since 2020, OPEC+ successfully restored and maintained oil market balance and stability by ensuring adequate supplies to markets," he said. He warned, however, that "structural supply weaknesses caused by years of underinvestment have led to extremely limited worldwide spare capacity, thereby creating extraordinary volatility in the oil markets at a time when these markets need stability like never before to allow participants to plan future production capacity increases to meet rising demand."

To that end, Fares assured that "Kuwait supports all efforts designed to protect market stability against the recent harmful volatility that threatens to undermine the basic functions of the market". —KUNA



Mohammad Al-Fares

## Study on suicides during the COVID pandemic in Kuwait

By Farah Al-Falah

KUWAIT: In line with capabilities assigned to the National Diwan for Human Rights by its establishment law (67 of year 2015) and according to the article no. 6 related to preparing studies about various human rights and sensing from it the dangerousness of suicidal behavior that accompanied the spread of the COVID pandemic globally and led to consequences on many economic, social and psychological levels have put humanity in different time that caused multiple changes in the lifestyle.

This study has been made with the title "Suicidal Behavior during the COVID pandemic in Kuwait 2019-2021", which discussed the scientific concepts of suicidal behavior, psychological aspects, the motives that encourage it and the suggested solutions to limit it.

The study team relied on three sources to support the main objective of the study, which is the hypothesis of linking suicidal behavior with repercussions, the epidemic's management at the state level or the so-called results of health precautions from staying in home quarantine, and the vaccination, stopping public activities,

repeated closure of state facilities and the contribution of the security system in managing the situation, causing serious social and psychological implications on humanity globally.

These sources included:

- 1- The scientific establishment of the concepts of suicide and its initiation by reviewing the results of the work, research and studies of international health organizations in this field.
- 2- Launching a survey of all Kuwaiti citizens on suicidal behavior during which opinions, information and suggestions were collected that would limit this behavior.
- 3- Inviting several related official authorities to listening sessions and requesting information about suicidal behavior as will be shown in the study.
- 4- Hosting psychological, legal and social specialists to seek assistance of their expertise in the field of various human behaviors, especially violent ones to enhance the study goals and purpose.

### Purpose of the study

The National Diwan for Human Rights, with this scientific effort, aims to deliver a message to official and civil authorities concerned with social and psychological aspects and to provide care and psychological guidance to Kuwaiti citizens as a fundamental human right, and pay more attention to the matter of suicide by all nationalities in the circumstances before and after the spread of the COVID pan-

demic, and try to find effective solutions for this behavior that killed 327 people.

The study warned of the spread of suicidal behavior during the past four years, calling for the need to expand efforts to check citizens and residents, both adults and children, especially those who have motives that could lead them to commit suicide to get rid of the difficulties they face in their lives. It stated 88 percent of suicide cases in the four years during which the study was based were of non-Kuwaiti "residents", while 35 Kuwaitis committed suicide, and 13 were illegal residents (bedoons).

The study also pointed out that the biggest increase in the number of suicides during precautionary measures to face the COVID pandemic was in 2020, when it jumped to 102 cases, which is the highest number during the four years. It was reported that Indians topped the number of suicides in all years of the study in a row, followed by Bangladeshis, then Sri Lankans and Nepalis.

The study indicated that suicide incidents in males witnessed a significant increase compared to females, and one of the most important reasons for this is that males are often the supporters of their families and relatives and are responsible for family life, especially in material aspects and providing a decent living. Psychologists and social specialists stressed that drug abuse, family disintegration and life pressures are among the main causes of suicide. —National Diwan for Human Rights

Local

# Crown Prince welcomes board of Al-Quds Fund



KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets newly-appointed Kuwaiti ambassadors during a reception at Bayan Palace on Wednesday. —KUNA



HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal receives Al-Quds Fund and Endowment officials at Bayan Palace.

KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Al-Quds Fund and Endowment Prince Turki Al Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Al-Quds Fund and Endowment Munib Al-

Masry at Bayan Palace on Wednesday.

During the reception, they handed HH Sheikh Mishal HH the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's certificate of endowment in Al-Quds and the annual report of Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's charitable pro-

gram. Senior officials of the diwans of HH the Amir and HH the Crown Prince attended the meeting.

HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal also affirmed on Wednesday that Kuwait's crucial diplomatic role regionally and internationally had

earned the trust and respect of the global community. This came in a speech by HH the Crown Prince during a reception at Bayan Palace, which included Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and newly appointed Kuwaiti diplomats. —KUNA

## Enhancing women's role in workforce a priority for Kuwait

KUWAIT: Seven goals have been set to enhance the role of women in society and the workforce, in compliance with Kuwait's plan for development as part of the New Kuwait 2035 vision. "The development plan aims to have women occupy 35 percent of executive roles in compliance with the fifth goal of the development plan," said General Secretary of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Dr Khaled Mahdi.

Mahdi added that "Kuwait has set forth a variety of laws, as well as signed international agreements to improve women's position in the workforce". Women have proven their capability to lead the workforce

and achieved many accomplishments, which encourages the country to provide more capabilities for women and give them a chance to hold more effective roles. "During the COVID pandemic, women played a heroic role in all the different sectors and proved their excellence in all of these fields," he added.

Mahdi also expressed his admiration of the private sector's role in providing women the opportunity to work and train through workshops, as well as giving them an opportunity to hold executive positions, which are important to reach these goals. "A platform to improve women's role is now available on LinkedIn under the banner 'Kuwaiti Women Leaders', which allows executives of companies to choose capable leaders for their companies," Mahdi said.

Acting United Nations representative for development Khaled Shahwan said Kuwait is taking important steps towards achieving the complete national plan, as the SCPD has arranged technical consultancy with nationals and international organizations like the UN's development program and the

UN's committee for women. As of today, around 44 companies have signed contracts to enhance women's role on all levels and positions in line with Kuwait's vision for 2035.

Dr Lubna Al-Qadhi, vice president of the women's committee in the SCPD said "this event is the fifth of its kind to encourage private companies to sign on the principles of enhancing women's role in their institutions, as many local and foreign companies in the Chamber of Commerce and Industry have expressed their agreement". Zain Telecommunications company was the first to sign this initiative, and many private institutions from banking to education have also signed the initiative to boost women's role.

Today, women play an effective role in the private sector, as important members initiated a platform in June of this year called 'WEEP Kuwait', which will help this initiative. Moreover, Gulf Bank and National Bank of Kuwait both expressed that enhancing women's role is a priority in order to have equal opportunity in the workforce. Gulf Bank was the first



Khaled Shahwan and Khaled Mahdi address the event.

bank to sign the initiative. As for NBK, women represent 30 percent of supervisory roles of its total employees.



KUWAIT: Health Minister Dr Khaled Al-Saeed inaugurates the first phase of operations of the new Farwaniya's Hospital on Wednesday. —KUNA

## Health minister opens new Farwaniya Hospital

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Khaled Al-Saeed launched on Wednesday the first operating phase of the New Farwaniya Hospital building, which is a huge contribution to the health sector, the national development plan and New Kuwait 2035 vision. Speaking to reporters following the opening ceremony, Dr Saeed said he is proud of this medical milestone, which reflects the huge steps the health system is taking in order to provide the best health services to citizens, under the directives of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

He pointed out that the project, which is considered a highly valuable addition to serve citizens in Farwaniya area, covers an area of 423,000 sqm and includes five main buildings. Health Ministry Spokesperson Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said the hospital's main building and outpatient clinics include



four main towers that consist of nine floors. Dr Sanad said the hospital includes 314 general clinics, while the emergency department includes 71 clinics, adding that the hospital includes 31 operating rooms for various uses, with a capacity of 233 intensive care beds.

He pointed out that the hospital includes a building for dental care and a main power generator, together with six sub-generators, which can cover the hospital's needs. Dr Sanad praised and thanked everyone for their great efforts that contributed to the new hospital. —KUNA

## Awadhi presents copy of credentials as envoy to UK

LONDON: Kuwait's new Ambassador to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Bader Al-Awadhi on Tuesday presented a copy of his credentials to Director of Protocol and Vice-Marshall of the Diplomatic Corps at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Victoria Busby. During the meeting, Ambassador Al-Awadhi conveyed to Busby the greetings of the political leadership of Kuwait and officials of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Both sides reviewed the friendly relations and expressed desire to further cement the strategic partnership between both countries in all areas. —KUNA



LONDON: Kuwait's Ambassador to UK Bader Al-Awadhi presents a copy of credentials to Director of Protocol and Vice-Marshall of the Diplomatic Corps at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Victoria Busby. —KUNA

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## News in brief



### Citizen killed, another injured in car accident

**KUWAIT:** The Department of Public Relations of Kuwait Fire Force announced a Kuwaiti was killed, while firemen rescued another person after a car accident on Tawoun Street near Anjifa beach on Tuesday. "The central command sent a squad from Bidaa station, who upon arrival saw that two cars were involved in an accident which caused the death of one Kuwaiti and the injury of another, who was transferred to the emergency room," the department said.

### 360 Mall fire caused by electrical short circuit

**KUWAIT:** The Public Relations Department of the Kuwait Fire Force announced that investigations into a fire at 360 Mall have been concluded. The fire damaged the new expansion phase consisting of two basements, a ground floor and two additional floors. "The fire started from the service alley which is covered by aluminum on the first floor, which spread to the outer cladding of the building, reaching the billboards outside. After further inspection of cables of these billboards, it turned out the fire was caused by a short circuit in the electric cables," the department said.



## stc collaborates with Teela as part of its summer initiatives

**KUWAIT:** Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, collaborated with Teela, a leading toy shop in the GCC, to distribute gifts to children during the "Purple Island" event held at 360 Mall. The initiative was in line with the Company's corporate social responsibility initiative and served as an additional event stc has participated in as part of its summer activities for children.

The event was held from the 19th-20th of August at 360 Mall where children were invited to participate in several competitive and fun activities for a chance to win one of the valuable prizes. Activities consisted of building competitions, spin the wheel, as well as other exciting games such as having 20 seconds to find prizes hidden in a large ball pen. Across the two days, a total of 800 prizes were distributed consisting of toys from Teela as well as electronic devices from stc.



Danah AlJasem

Danah AlJasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, said, "We are proud to have participated in the successful "Purple Island" event held at 360 Mall, which welcomed a large number of families who came to enjoy the different games and activities. Our involvement in this initiative and collaboration with Teela primarily focused on giving back to the community, especially families, in a unique and entertaining way. This event directly falls in line with our commitment to be socially responsible and spread joy within our society."

AlJasem thanked Teela App for another successful collaboration, as well as 360 Mall Management Team for their support and all those who participated in the family fun activities that led to the successful outcome. She added that the two-day event serves as one of the several summer themed activities that stc participates in or organizes annually to provide families with educational or entertainment filled experiences.

AlJasem concluded, "stc firmly believes in the importance of engaging with members of the community through diverse experiences that aim to spread



joy and bring the community together. The Company has consistently broadened and expanded its extensive corporate social responsibility program to incorporate a diverse selection of initiatives that focus on empowering the community. In line with its program, stc will continue to form strategic partnerships with local, regional or international entities that share the same views and objectives the Company holds when it comes to giving back to the community."

This initiative marks one of several collaborations

between stc Teela. Earlier this year during the month of February, stc collaborated with Teela and the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital ("KACCH") & Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice ("BACCH") association to distribute gifts and toys to children at hospitals whether they are sick or just visiting. stc indicated in a statement that it highly values the successful collaborations it has formed with local and international entities, enabling the Company to create a wider positive impact within the community.

## Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Cars traverse a highway towards Kuwait City. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

# PLAYHERA MENA platform, powered by Zain Esports, offers 50+ popular games

## Tournament to be regionwide PUBG Mobile league with attractive prizes



KUWAIT: Zain Esports, Zain Group, and PLAYHERA officials.

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading mobile telecom innovator in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa announces the launch of the PLAYHERA MENA esports and gaming platform, having unveiled a joint venture collaboration between Zain Group, Zain KSA and PLAYHERA Global, at the beginning of this year.

PLAYHERA MENA will primarily host own- and third-party esports tournaments, while also supporting ancillary activities such as cloud gaming, content hosting, e-commerce, and merchandise sales. With the speed and stability of the network being further boosted by Zain's award-winning 4G, 5G and fiber infrastructure, the user experience is set to be second-to-none. To mark the launch of the platform, Zain Esports will conduct a regionwide PUBG Mobile league from August 29 to October 3, 2022, expecting more than 7000 enthusiastic gamers from across the MENA region to participate.

Zain Esports' success in attracting and engaging gamers will bolster PLAYHERA MENA's efforts to leverage and expand its existing 150,000 global player base. The multi-faceted gaming social hub will help various industry stakeholders to converge and engage, with over 50 popular esports and other competitive games on offer, including popular titles

such as Fortnite: Valorant: PUBG Mobile; FIFA 22; Rocket League; and Call of Duty Warzone.

Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al-Deghaither, Zain KSA CEO said, "The MENA is one of the fastest-growing gaming regions in the world and we are committed to fostering the growth of the ecosystem and unlocking the many opportunities that will arise for the benefit of all industry participants. We are enthusiastic to bring this platform to market and are certain that PLAYHERA MENA will further uplift and electrify this high-growth sector."

Malek Hammoud, Zain Group's Chief Investment & Digital Officer commented, "Through Zain Esports, we have an impressive ecosystem already established, and we expect it to evolve and grow exponentially as we empower PLAYHERA MENA's regional gaming ambitions. This joint venture enables Zain operations across our markets to efficiently connect with the gamer community and offer the best-in-class products and services that they need."

Naif Mulaeb, CEO of PLAYHERA Global commented, "We are proud to be a Saudi brand that has expanded across the region with such an esteemed partner in Zain Esports which shares the same passion and enthusiasm for gaming. Developed by gamers for gamers, the PLAYHERA MENA platform

will offer countless opportunities to organize competitions, drive engagement, and socialize with like-minded individuals. We are confident PLAYHERA MENA will reach impressive heights as we delight regional gamers with the best experience possible across the entire esports ecosystem."

Zain Esports' presence as a gaming powerhouse engaging with gamers and youth across the region is creating an ecosystem that reduces reliance on traditional telco services and opens opportunities for fast-growing and lucrative digital services and online gaming. Gaming is one of the largest use cases for mobile and home broadband services and is assisting Zain operating companies connect to the gaming community through state-of-the-art infrastructure.

The growth of Zain Esports has seen it host no fewer than 16 flagship tournaments since its establishment in November 2020, attracting over 18,000 gaming participants, over 50 million social media impressions, and 6 million engagements on its Twitch, YouTube and other social media channels. The PLAYHERA MENA platform is available to all gamers across the region, uniting esports amateurs, professionals, teams, fans, organizers and sponsors under one roof.



Kidnapped Hong Konger pleads for help

## US says Iran agrees to ease key demands for nuclear deal

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NICE, France: Demonstrators hold Ukrainian flags and placards which read as "182 days of war" (L), "Russia, terrorist state" (C), "No to war in Ukraine" (R) as they take part in a march on the "Promenade des Anglais" in Nice, on war-torn Ukraine's Independence Day. —AFP

# Ukraine will fight 'till the end'

## Ukraine will resist Russian invasion as nation marks Independence Day

KYIV: President Volodymyr Zelensky vowed on Wednesday that Ukraine will resist the Russian invasion "until the end" without "any concession or compromise", as the nation marks its Independence Day as well as the six-month anniversary of the start of the war.

"We don't care what army you have, we only care about our land," Zelensky said in a defiant morning video address. "We will fight for it until the end." Referring to Russia — which launched a large-scale attack in the early hours of February 24 — he vowed Ukraine "will not try to find an understanding with terrorists".

"For us Ukraine is the whole of Ukraine," he said. "All 25 regions, without any concession or compromise." Meanwhile on Wednesday, the US is set to announce \$3 billion in fresh military aid to Kyiv on the date it severed ties with the Soviet Union in 1991.

The new tranche of American funding will help Kyiv acquire more weaponry, ammunition and other supplies for its armed forces, locked in a grinding war of attrition with Russian troops in the east and south with neither side advancing significantly in weeks.

The planned White House announcement comes as Washington warned Moscow could be planning a surge in strikes on civilian targets coinciding with Independence Day observations. Gatherings have

been banned in the capital Kyiv, where air raid sirens sounded in the morning, and Zelensky has urged citizens to be on guard against "Russian terror".

### Global support

As the war entered its seventh month with no end in sight, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson pledged unlimited assistance to Ukraine.

"People are fighting with steel, with courage to defend their homes and their families, and to preserve their right to decide their own destiny in their own country," he said in a video message on Wednesday morning. "However long it takes, the United Kingdom will stand with Ukraine and provide every possible military, economic and humanitarian support." On Tuesday, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz warned Russia against further attempts to annex Ukrainian territory in the same way it did the Crimean peninsula in 2014.

Polish President Andrzej Duda also advised against any "appeasement", saying: "There is no

return to business as usual in relations with Russia." And French President Emmanuel Macron vowed European Union support for Ukraine would continue "for the long term".

In an absurd message on Wednesday, the authoritarian leader of Belarus — which offered its territory as a staging ground for Russia's invasion — gave congratulations to Ukraine on its Independence Day. "I am convinced that today's contradictions will not be able to destroy the centuries-old foundation of sincere good neighbourly ties between the peoples of our two countries," Alexander Lukashenko said in a statement.

### Muted anniversary

In the early days and weeks of Russia's invasion, Kyiv was under siege by Russian troops which reached the suburbs of the capital. Moscow's offensive quickly faltered, and its forces withdrew in late March to regroup for assaults on Ukraine's east and south. But in the capital, Ukrainians were sombre about the anniversary after a half-year of

death and destruction.

"Six months, the peace of life has been broken in every family," Nina Mikhailovna, an 80-year-old pensioner, said at Independence Square in central Kyiv, on Tuesday. "How much destruction, how many dead, how can we relate to it?" she asked. Kyiv's city administration said it would shut public service centres on Wednesday and Thursday, and shopping malls said they would close for the anniversary for safety concerns.

### Threatened nuclear plant

Meanwhile, discussions continued on how to protect the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in southern Ukraine, occupied by Russian troops and threatened by shelling, which Moscow blames on Kyiv. The two sides traded accusations at a Tuesday meeting of the UN Security Council on Zaporizhzhia, with Ukraine and its allies demanding Russia pull its troops out of the plant — Europe's largest nuclear facility — and agree to a demilitarised zone. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov spoke on Tuesday by telephone to French counterpart Catherine Colonna about an expected visit to the plant by inspectors from UN nuclear watchdog the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), amid worries over the high risk of a radiation accident. — AFP



"We don't care what army you have"

## Court suspends Thai PM Prayut from office

BANGKOK: Thailand's Constitutional Court on Wednesday suspended Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha from office while it considers a legal challenge that could see him thrown out months before an expected general election.

The court agreed unanimously to hear a case brought by opposition parties who argue Prayut has reached the end of his eight-year term limit as prime minister. Judges also agreed by five votes to four to suspend Prayut from office until the case is decided, the court said in a statement.

"The court considered the petition and supporting documents and deems the facts according to the request indicate reasonable grounds to suspect that there is a case as requested," the statement said. "Thus, a majority vote (five against four) for (Prayut) to be suspended as prime minister, effective August 24, 2022, until the court issues a verdict."

Prayut, who will continue in his role as defence minister, has 15 days to respond to the case against him. Prawit Wongsuwan, one of Prayut's deputies and another former army chief, will take over as caretaker prime minister while the case is decided.

"The current cabinet will continue its duty as normal because General Prayut has not been ousted from his post, only suspended from duty," said Wissanu Krea-ngam, another deputy prime minister. Pita Limjaroenrat, leader of the opposition Move Forward Party which was among those that backed the petition, said the country needed fresh leadership.



BANGKOK, Thailand: File photo shows Thailand's Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha (R) poses for a photo opportunity with Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan (L) at Government House in Bangkok. Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan will take over as caretaker prime minister after Thailand's Constitutional Court suspended Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha from office. — AFP

"It is like rowing a boat round the bathtub, going from General Prayut to General Prawit," Pita told reporters at parliament.

### Legal wrangle

It is not the first time the Constitutional Court has played a role in Thai politics-it cancelled the results of general elections in 2006 and 2014. The kingdom's 2017 constitution bars the prime minister from serving more than eight years in total, and opposition parties say Prayut, who took power in a 2014 coup, has reached the limit.

Several hundred anti-government protesters rallied at Bangkok's Democracy Monument on Tuesday ahead of the court ruling and further demonstrations are planned. Anucha Burachaisri, a spokesman for the prime minister's office, urged "all groups" to "respect the results of the court's hearings and avoid criticising the performance of the court".

Supporters of the 68-year-old leader argue that the clock on his rule began when the 2017 constitution was instituted, or even after the 2019 general election. If the court follows this logic, Prayut could technically continue to serve until 2025 or 2027 — if he wins a general election which is due by March.

The former army chief came to power in a military coup that ousted Yingluck Shinawatra's democratically elected government. He headed the junta regime for five years and continued as prime minister after the 2019 national elections.

The stern, blunt-speaking Prayut has found himself increasingly out of favour with voters. A recent opinion poll found two-thirds of respondents wanted him to vacate office immediately. Under Prayut's watch, the kingdom registered its worst economic performance in 30 years and his government has also faced criticism over its handling of the pandemic. — AFP

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## International

# US says Iran agrees to ease key demands for nuclear deal

## Gaps still remain, but should reach an agreement to return to the deal

WASHINGTON: The United States said Tuesday that Iran has agreed to ease key demands that had held up the revival of a 2015 nuclear deal, with all eyes on what President Joe Biden in turn is offering. The United States is expected shortly to respond to Iran through European Union mediators, after a year and a half of indirect diplomacy that just weeks ago looked on the verge of collapsing.

US officials said Iran dropped demands to block some UN nuclear inspections after also relaxing on insistence on a key sticking point — that Washington remove its powerful Revolutionary Guards from a terrorism blacklist.



“Made concessions on critical issues”

“Gaps still remain, but should we reach an agreement to return to the deal, Iran would have to take many significant steps to dismantle its nuclear program,” a senior official in the Biden administration said. Biden has supported returning to the accord trashed by former president Donald Trump and Iran has pressed hard in negotiations in Vienna. But with Iran also claiming diplomatic wins, the US official insisted that Tehran ultimately “made concessions on critical issues.”

Iran had sought to shut down a probe by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) into three undeclared nuclear sites where the watchdog says it has questions related to nuclear work that has

since ended.

In June, Iran disconnected a number of IAEA cameras after the UN body's board censured Tehran for not adequately explaining previous traces of uranium. The senior US official said Iran would again face “the most comprehensive inspections regime ever negotiated” with monitoring “for an unlimited amount of time.”

But Henry Rome, deputy head of research at the Eurasia Group, said that Iran has not conceded on the undeclared sites. “I don't think anyone should be surprised if this issue comes up again at a later stage of these negotiations,” Rome said.

The recent progress came after the European Union put forward a draft agreement to Iran. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told Spanish public television TVE that Iran sought adjustments to it but that “most” countries agreed.

Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia are also party to the agreement, formerly known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

### “Tough compromises” inevitable

The US official insisted that accounts of new compromises by the Biden administration were “categorically false.” But Suzanne DiMaggio, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said both sides have had to show flexibility to come as far as they have.

“Neither side will want to admit that, but the reality is that in a high-stakes negotiation, especially between adversaries, making tough compromises is the only way to get to an agreement,” she said. “If both sides feel confident that they can frame the outcome as a win, chances are the JCPOA will be restored. If not, the road ahead looks rocky.”

She said Biden was in a strong position after legislative wins and had an incentive, amid high tensions with Russia and China, to avoid a nuclear crisis with Iran. But Biden faces heated opposition from Trump's



VIENNA, Austria: File photo shows photographers and TV cameramen watch a demonstration of a monitoring camera used in Iran during a press conference of Rafael Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) about the current situation in Iran at the agency's headquarters in Vienna, Austria. — AFP

Republican Party as well as Israel, which campaigned against the agreement when it was reached under former president Barack Obama.

Trump imposed sweeping sanctions on Iran in hopes of bringing the US adversary to its knees. Its economy suffered but the Biden administration contends the main result was to accelerate Iran's nuclear work. In a letter to Biden, the top Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee complained that the administration has left Congress in the dark.

“The only logical conclusion to draw is that Iran's negotiators are pleased with the outcome of negotiations, while US negotiators are still determining how to make further compromises and best sell a bad deal to the

American people,” Representative Mike McCaul wrote.

A EU official earlier said that Iran has agreed to defer discussion on ending Trump's terrorist blacklisting of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the clerical regime's elite ideological unit. Among ideas reportedly under consideration are for the United States to maintain the terrorist designation but not to punish dealings with the Revolutionary Guards, who have wide interests across the Iranian economy.

The return of the United States to the accord would mean an end to Trump's unilateral sanctions on Iran selling its oil, potentially easing further energy prices that had soared after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

## Migrants face abuse in Libya

TRIPOLI: Godwin risked everything for a better life in Europe, but he was detained and ransomed in Libya by European Union-backed authorities accused of “extreme abuse” against captured migrants. The 34-year-old Nigerian had paid 1,100 euros (\$1,100) for a place on an overcrowded vessel from the Libyan port of Zawiya, heading for Italian shores via the world's deadliest migration route.

“It was night when I got on the boat, it was already dark. I didn't know (where we were going),” he said, giving only his first name. “I just wanted to go to Europe and have a good life.” Those hopes were dashed when a Libyan patrol boat approached.

Godwin said he was so reluctant to avoid going back to Libya that he considered throwing himself into the sea. But he was detained and dragged back to Libya, where he was only released after his family paid a 550 euro ransom.

His is far from the only case. Earlier this month, Human Rights Watch said some 32,450 people had been intercepted by Libyan forces last year and “hauled back to arbitrary detention and abuse” in the war-ravaged country as European countries turned a blind eye.

HRW accused the EU's border agency Frontex of using a drone to provide information that “facilitates interceptions and returns to Libya ... (despite) over-

whelming evidence of torture and exploitation of migrants and refugees”.

The migrant-run @RefugeesinLibya Twitter account regularly posts images of refugees allegedly killed by Libyan forces or tortured to extort money from their families. Refugees in the country are “tortured by European taxpayers' money, dehumanised and deprived in all forms,” it said in a recent tweet.

That chimes with a report in October by United Nations experts, who said acts of “murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment (and) rape” against detained migrants in Libya may amount to crimes against humanity.

### Malta ‘abandoning’ vulnerable boats

None of this has stopped the European Union funding and working closely with the Libyan coast guard to prevent migrants reaching northern Mediterranean shores. The accusations against Europe are not limited to financial support.

Alarm Phone, a group running a hotline for migrants needing rescue, this month accused Malta of failing to launch operations to rescue migrants in danger, “despite their obligations to do so” under international law.

“Alarm Phone has witnessed this non-assistance policy in action innumerable times,” it said, accusing Malta of “abandoning boats at risk of capsizing” within the island's search and rescue zone. From the start of January until August 20, almost 13,000 migrants have been intercepted and dragged back to detention in Libya while trying to cross the Mediterranean, according to the



TRIPOLI, Libya: African migrant day labourers seeking small jobs wait along the side of a road under a bridge to be hired by potential employers, in the Libyan capital Tripoli. — AFP

International Organization for Migration (IOM). Some have been detained, while others have been sent home or simply allowed to leave the overcrowded detention centres. A further 918 were either dead or missing. Libyan authorities deny reports that migrants are abused. “The arrests are carried out according to the rules in place,” a migration official said.

But many argue that the long years of lawlessness since a NATO-backed revolt toppled and killed longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 has left the country prey to armed groups and peo-

ple traffickers.

“Human rights? There are no human rights in Libya,” said Hussein, another migrant stuck in Tripoli. The 26-year-old from Sudan said he had tried to reach Europe on an overnight boat crossing in 2017. “The Libyan coast guard caught us and sent us back,” he said.

He was detained for a day before managing to escape, he said. He called on African countries to “look after their people” and discourage them from leaving, “instead of European countries funding Libya to stop migration”. — AFP

## Labor curbs eased during pandemic...

Continued from Page 1

They said this decision was made in 2019, but cancelled due to the difficulty in leaving the country during the pandemic and the need of some private entities for labor, because some residents were stuck abroad and could not return to Kuwait due to health protocols.

The sources said reactivating this decision is possible at the start of next year, especially since the circumstances that caused its cancellation no

longer exist. The committee for remedying the population structure believes that those who are terminated means the state is not in need of them, and they should leave the country after receiving their indemnities. They said the country is not compelled to allow them to move to another workplace, especially since among the items of the new law is one that stipulates an expat who has been in the country for five years and his workplace is not in need of them should leave the country, and their residency permit will not be renewed.

Meanwhile, the Civil Service Commission announced that reports about allowing transfers of employees of fake or closed companies are not true. “Complaints about the workforce can be done through the labor laws, especially the executive decision to transfer employees,” the commission said.

tries to halt talks on reviving the agreement, warning against the consequences of returning to the accord. “On the table right now is a bad deal. It would give Iran \$100 billion a year,” Zionist Prime Minister Yair Lapid told journalists Wednesday. The money would be used by Iran-backed militant groups Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad to “undermine stability in the Middle East and spread terror around the globe,” he added.

Earlier, US President Joe Biden on Tuesday ordered air strikes in eastern Syria targeting facilities used by Iranian-backed militias, a US military spokesman said. The strikes in oil-rich Deir Ezzor province “targeted infrastructure facilities used by groups affiliated with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps,” Central Command (Centcom) spokesman Colonel Joe Buccino said in a statement.

Buccino said the “precision strikes are intended to defend and protect US forces from attacks like the ones on August 15 against US personnel by Iran-backed groups,” when a number of drones targeted an outpost of US-led anti-jihadist forces without causing any casualties. Tuesday's air strikes hit nine bunkers in a complex used for ammunition storage and logistics, the colonel told CNN separately. — AFP

## Boiling heat, no water as taps...

Continued from Page 1

water, with more than 75 villages affected. Ajil has dug a well, but the water is salty. “We mix that with the water from the trucks and make do,” he told AFP.

Local children cry out and run towards an orange water truck as it drives up the dirt road in their village. One person fills a tall white tank, climbing on top of it to hold the truck's hose as water gushes out, while others wait to fill smaller tanks or even cooking pots. Children splash gleeful-

ly in a rusting old fridge that has been laid on the ground as a cramped, makeshift tub.

The UN classifies Iraq as the world's fifth most vulnerable country to climate change. Authorities blame drought for the current water shortages, but also dams built upstream on some rivers and tributaries in neighboring Turkey and Iran. Ajil shares his house with his brother, Mohammed. Like most of their neighbors, they used to make a living from farming.

But over the past two years, the drought has brought local agriculture to its knees, so they have been selling their sheep to survive. There are around 50 houses in the village, Ajil said, but only 10 families remain. “The rest have left,” he said. “If there is no water, there is no more life.” A report published this month by the International Organization for Migration in Iraq said that “climate migration is already a reality” in the country. — AFP

## US sends nuclear response to Iran...

Continued from Page 1

confirmed it had responded to Iran's proposals. “As you know, we received Iran's comments on the EU's proposed final text through the EU,” State Department spokesman Ned Price said. “Our review of those comments has now concluded. We have responded to the EU today.”

The 2015 agreement between Iran and six world powers — Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States — gave the Islamic republic sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program. The deal formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, was designed to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon — something it has always denied wanting to do.

Iran's announcement comes as its arch-nemesis the Zionist entity has piled on pressure on Western coun-

## Indian tycoon's bid for NDTV...

Continued from Page 1

It has already been hit by a slew of legal cases that its owners said were a result of its reporting. On Wednesday morning an employee at NDTV told AFP that there was a “general sense of shock and disbelief” in the newsroom following the announcement.

“We only found out from other news agency flashes and channels about the takeover and then all hell broke loose,” the employee said, asking to remain anonymous. “People are still trying to figure out what has happened and what will happen. There is a sense of uncertainty since it is only a matter of time till the new management comes in.”

Geeta Seshu, founder of the Free Speech Collective, an independent organization that advo-

cates press freedom, said that “the space for independent journalism has shrunk alarmingly over the last few years.” “The few brave journalists who continue to put out information are also battling court cases, are lodged in jail for long periods without bail, attacked or silenced permanently,” Seshu told AFP.

Seshu said that while NDTV has been “struggling” commercially for some time, “the manner of this takeover is shocking, given the naked display of economic and political muscle.” The Adani group's closeness to the government was “hardly a secret”, she added. Self-made billionaire Adani, 60, this year overtook fellow Indian Mukesh Ambani to become Asia's richest man, with a net worth of \$139 billion according to Forbes, behind Jeff Bezos and ahead of Bill Gates.

Modi and Adani both come from the western state of Gujarat, and the latter's conglomerate has expanded aggressively in recent years, including into new areas like airports and renewable energy. But this growth into capital-intensive businesses has raised alarms, with Fitch Group's CreditSights warning on Tuesday that the group was “deeply overleveraged”. — AFP

## International

# Fighting resumes in northern Ethiopia after five-month lull

## Millions of people need humanitarian assistance in Tigray

**ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia:** Fighting erupted between government forces and Tigrayan rebels in northern Ethiopia on Wednesday, with the warring sides blaming each other for shattering a five-month-old truce.

The renewed warfare was unleashed after both sides repeatedly blamed each other for the lack of progress in efforts to hold negotiations to try to end the brutal 21-month conflict. The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) said government forces and their allies had launched a "large scale" offensive in the direction of southern Tigray early Wednesday.

He said on Twitter that the "large-scale" offensive was launched "against our positions in the southern front" by the Ethiopian army and special forces and militias from the neighbouring Amhara region. The March truce led to a lull in the brutal conflict that first began in November 2020, allowing a resumption of international aid to war-stricken Tigray.

On Tuesday, the Ethiopian National Defence Force had issued a statement accusing the TPLF of seeking to "defame" the army by claiming government forces were moving towards their positions or shelling them with heavy weapons.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government and the TPLF have been locked in a war of words in recent weeks even as both sides have raised the prospect of peace talks.

The two sides disagree on who should lead negotiations, and the TPLF also insists basic services must be restored to Tigray's six million people before dialogue can begin. Abiy's government says any negotiations must be led by the African Union's Horn of Africa envoy Olusegun Obasanjo, who is leading the international push for peace, but the rebels want outgoing Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta to mediate.

### Humanitarian crisis

The conflict in Africa's second most populous country has killed untold numbers of people, with widespread reports of atrocities including mass killings and sexual violence. Millions of people need humanitarian assistance in Tigray, the country's northernmost region, and neighbouring Afar and Amhara. The conflict has left Tigray in the grip of a serious humanitarian crisis, with the UN's World Food Programme saying last week that nearly half the population in suffering from a severe lack of food.

"Hunger has deepened, rates of malnutrition have skyrocketed, and the situation is set to worsen as peo-



**DANSA, Ethiopia:** File photo shows local farmers walk next to a tank of alleged Eritrean army that is abandoned along the road in Dansa. Ethiopian authorities accused Tigray rebels of launching a new offensive against federal forces in the country's north, five months after a truce paused the worst of the fighting. — AFP

ple enter peak hunger season until this year's harvest in October," the WFP said. The dire assessment came despite the humanitarian truce in March allowing the resumption of desperately needed international aid convoys to the stricken region's capital Mekele, with fuel shortages making it difficult to distribute supplies.

Tigray is largely cut off from the rest of Ethiopia, without basic services such as electricity, communications and banking. Abiy sent troops into Tigray in November 2020 to topple the TPLF after months of seething tensions with the party that had dominated Ethiopian politics for three decades.

The 2019 Nobel Peace Prize winner said it came in response to rebel attacks on army camps. The TPLF mounted a comeback, recapturing Tigray and expanding into Afar and Amhara, before the war reached a stalemate.

Last Wednesday, an Ethiopian government committee tasked with looking into negotiations called for a formal ceasefire to enable the resumption of services to Tigray as part of a proposal it planned to submit to the AU. But Abiy's spokeswoman Billene Seyoum on Thursday claimed that the rebels had "not a shred of interest" in peace. — AFP

## Murdoch sues small Australian news outlet for defamation

**SYDNEY:** Fox News boss Lachlan Murdoch has sued a small Australian media outlet for defamation over an opinion piece that linked his media empire to the US Capitol riots. The scion of the Murdoch media empire is seeking damages, accusing Crikey staff of tarnishing his reputation and "covertly using another media organisation to harass" him.

Murdoch—whose Fox News Channel regularly rails at threats to free speech—also asked the court to permanently ban the site from publishing anything suggesting he "illegally conspired with Donald Trump" around the events of January 6.

The lawsuit was filed late Tuesday in Australia's federal court, and came after Crikey published letters from Murdoch's lawyers and dared him to sue. Crikey even took out an advertisement in the New York Times on Monday, publishing an open letter that welcomed the opportunity to "test this important issue of freedom of public interest journalism in a courtroom". Murdoch is chief executive of media behemoth Fox Corporation, which owns Fox News, and co-chairman of News Corp. He is the eldest son of billionaire media tycoon Rupert Murdoch, owner of scores of outlets including The Wall Street Journal and the New York Post.

### 'Unindicted co-conspirator'

The lawsuit was sparked by a June 29 article written by Crikey's political editor Bernard Keane, headlined: "Trump is a confirmed unindicted traitor. And Murdoch is his unindicted co-conspirator".

The original piece did not name the younger Murdoch directly, referring only to the "Murdochs and their slew of poisonous Fox News commentators". In legal correspondence with Murdoch, Crikey's lawyers argued readers would more likely think the article referred to his father.

However, Murdoch's lawyers argued in documents filed to the federal court Tuesday that their client was defamed 14 times by the article. The legal filing also refers extensively to an article published in the Sydney Morning Herald—a major Australian newspaper—about Murdoch threatening to sue Crikey. Murdoch's lawyers alleged that Crikey tipped off the Sydney Morning Herald, and has since used the saga to drive subscriptions. The Fox executive has retained high-profile barrister Sue Chrysanthou, who previously represented actor Geoffrey Rush in his defamation case against another Australian media organisation.—AFP

who gave only his first name. Eight political parties are running, but the real contest lies between the MPLA and its long-standing rival and ex-rebel movement the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Opinion polls suggest that support for the MPLA—which won 61 percent of the vote in 2017 elections—will dwindle, while the UNITA, which has entered an electoral pact with two other parties, will make gains.

But UNITA's inroads might not be enough to unseat Lourenco, 68, who succeeded veteran leader Jose Eduardo dos Santos five years ago. "The margins will be closer than ever before... but the advantages of incumbency mean MPLA is still odds on to pip Costa (Junior)," said Eric Humphrey-Smith, an analyst at London-based Verisk Maplecroft. The MPLA traditionally wields a grip over the electoral process and state media in Angola, but the opposition is urging supporters not to be intimidated. "This is a historic day," Costa Junior declared, after casting his ballot. "It is important that this day be a celebration," he said, urging "full turnout and for all ballots to be counted." Lourenco urged citizens to come out and vote because "in the end it's all of us who will emerge winners and it is democracy that wins" he said after casting his ballot at Lusitana de Angola University in Luanda.—AFP

vulnerable to extreme weather caused by climate change, according to the Global Climate Risk Index compiled by environmental NGO Germanwatch.

### From heatwave to flood

Earlier this year much of the nation was in the grip of a heatwave, with temperatures hitting 51 degrees Celsius (124 Fahrenheit) in Jacobabad, Sindh province. The city is now grappling with floods that have inundated homes and swept away roads and bridges.

In Sukkur, about 75 kilometres (50 miles) away, volunteers were using boats along the flooded streets of the city to distribute food and fresh water to people trapped in their homes. Zaheer Ahmad Babar, a senior met office official, told AFP that this year's rains were the heaviest since 2010, when over 2,000 people died and more than two million were displaced by monsoon floods that covered nearly a fifth of the country.

Rainfall in Balochistan province was 430 percent higher than normal, he said, while Sindh was nearing 500 percent. The town of Padidan in Sindh had received over a metre (39 inches) of rain since August 1, he added.

"It is a climate catastrophe of epic scale," Rehman said, adding three million people had been affected. The National Disaster Management Authority said in a statement that nearly 125,000 homes had been destroyed and 288,000 more were damaged by the floods. Some 700,000 livestock in Sindh and Balochistan had been killed, and nearly two million acres of farmland destroyed, officials added. Nearly 3,000 kilometres of roads had also been damaged.—AFP

## Angolans vote for president in tightest ever race

**LUANDA, Angola:** Angolans were casting ballots on Wednesday in what was expected to be the most competitive vote in their country's democratic history, with incumbent president Joao Lourenco squaring up against charismatic opposition leader Adalberto Costa Junior. The election has been overshadowed by Angola's many woes—a struggling economy, inflation, poverty and drought, compounded by the death of a former strongman president. The People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), which has ruled the oil-rich nation for nearly five decades, is facing its most serious challenge since the first multiparty vote in 1992.

"It's been 20 years of peace and we are still poor," said Lindo, a 27-year-old electrician queuing up to vote in Nova Vida, a middle-class suburb of the capital Luanda. "The people want change—the government doesn't provide for people's basic needs," said Lindo,



**We are defending our positions**

But the Government Communication Service accused the TPLF of striking first, saying it had "destroyed the truce". "Disregarding the numerous peace options presented by the Ethiopian government, the armed wing of the terror group TPLF, pushing with its recent provocations starting 5 am (0200 GMT) today committed an attack" around southern Tigray, it said in a statement.

The rival claims could not be independently verified as access to northern Ethiopia is restricted, but there were reports of fighting around southern Tigray in areas bordering the Amhara and Afar regions. "They launched the offensive early this morning around 5 am local time. We are defending our positions," TPLF spokesman Getachew Reda told AFP in Nairobi in a brief message.



**HYDERABAD CITY:** Residents use rafts to make their way along a waterlogged street in a residential area after a heavy monsoon rainfall in Hyderabad.—AFP

## Flood toll tops 800 in Pakistan

**ISLAMABAD:** Record monsoon rains were causing a "catastrophe of epic scale", Pakistan's climate change minister said Wednesday, announcing an international appeal for help in dealing with floods that have killed more than 800 people since June. The annual monsoon is essential for irrigating crops and replenishing lakes and dams across the Indian subcontinent, but each year it also brings a wave of destruction. Heavy rain continued to pound much of Pakistan Wednesday, with authorities reporting more than a dozen deaths—including nine children—in the last 24 hours.

"It has been raining for a month now. There is nothing left," a woman named Khanzadi told AFP in badly hit Jaffarabad, Balochistan province. "We had only one goat, that too drowned in the flood... Now we have nothing with us and we are lying along the road and facing hunger." Climate Change Minister Sherry Rehman said authorities would launch an appeal for international help once an assessment was complete. "Given the scale of the disaster there is no question of the provinces, or even Islamabad, being able to cope with this magnitude of climate catastrophe on their own," she told AFP.

"Lives are at risk, thousands homeless. It is important that international partners mobilise assistance." Pakistan is eighth on a list of countries deemed most



**LUANDA:** Leader of the opposition party, The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), Adalberto Costa Junior (C), casts his ballot at a polling station in Luanda.—AFP



**HONG KONG:** Human rights lawyer Patricia Ho (L) and Programme Manager at STOP, an anti-trafficking NGO, Michelle Wong (R), speak to the media in Hong Kong, about Hong Kong residents being trafficked into South East Asia and forced to work in scam syndicates.—AFP

## Kidnapped Hong Konger pleads for help

**HONG KONG:** Anti-trafficking campaigners in Hong Kong played a harrowing recording on Wednesday of a resident testifying that he has been kidnapped and forced to work for online scam syndicates in Myanmar.

Online "boiler room" scams have long had a presence across Southeast Asia but in recent months more details have emerged of people being trafficked and forced to work for them. Victims have reported travelling to Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand and Laos on false promises of romance or high-paying jobs, and then being detained and forced to work, sometimes for months. A 30-year-old man identified only as John said he has been trapped in Myanmar for three months and forced to run scams by armed men, according to an audio recording released on Wednesday. "I have seen people who tried to escape but failed, they were shot and carried back in... escape is not an option," he said.

"It's very stressful. Money comes before everything. If I cannot meet the (revenue) quota, they may send me somewhere else, where conditions could be 10 times worse." AFP is unable to independently verify the account which was released by local Hong Kong advocacy group Stop Trafficking of People and human rights lawyer Patricia Ho. John said he travelled to Thailand for a vacation on a friend's invitation but was kidnapped and taken to Myanmar, where his passport was confiscated. Hong Kong's government says so far 39 residents have asked for help since January after falling victim to boiler room scams. Law enforcement officials have established a task force and called on victims to use a government-run mobile app to submit details and send photos of their surroundings. John said he was contacted on Tuesday by the Hong Kong task force, but was told the situation was "beyond their control" and must be left to the Chinese government.

He added that a contact from the Chinese embassy in Myanmar told him two months ago to attempt an escape but then stopped responding. Hong Kong authorities say 21 people are in captivity in Myanmar and Cambodia, while 18 others have been confirmed safe. Family members of scam victims in Hong Kong have turned to the media and political parties to air their grievances. Michelle Wong, programme manager of Stop Trafficking of People, said Southeast Asian trafficking rings have increasingly turned their attention to young, educated people of Chinese ethnicity.—AFP

# Business

THURSDAY, AUGUST 25, 2022



KUWAIT: Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Airways Ali Al-Dukhan and the Chief Executive Officer Maen Razouqi during the press conference. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

## Kuwait Airways holds its general assembly for the fiscal year 2021

### A year of accomplishments, expansion and modernization

- **Al-Dukhan:** Airline's fleet expansion plan underway, to restructure aircraft types
- **Razouqi:** Airline to launch 8 new destinations in line with network expansion strategy

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Airways on Wednesday held its ordinary General Assembly meeting for the fiscal year ending on December 31, 2021. The meeting approved all the items on the agenda including the financial and administrative reports. It also reviewed the annual report of the board of directors and their achievements during the year 2021 in the presence of the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Airways Ali Al-Dukhan and Chief Executive Officer Maen Razouqi.

Addressing a press conference following the general assembly meeting, Dukhan said the losses incurred by the airline during the year 2019 amounted to KD 107 million, adding that the airline expects to reduce the losses by half by the end of 2022 and to zero financial losses by 2024. He stated that Kuwait Airways seeks to restructure its airline fleet to consist 60 percent of small planes and 40 percent of large planes, which will give them more flexibility in flight preparation, lower fares and operations costs, adding that the current fleet provides 50 percent of the aircraft's fleet development plan.

Dukhan pointed out that the board of directors accomplished several achievements, such as setting a plan for the future fleet expansion, taking into consideration the arrival of six new Airbus 320 air-

craft out of 15 and two Airbus aircraft A330-800 out of eight. This is in addition to the communication the airline had with Airbus Industries in order to speed up the delivery of the Airbus order that was signed in 2014 and modified in 2018.

"The board succeeded in re-obtaining the approval of the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) for immediate maintenance procedures for aircraft of other airlines, re-approval of the working plan and submitting it to the General Investment Authority. Kuwait Airways has activated the digital transformation program to develop a work system to reach the best level of customer service, in addition to signing a contract to supply emergency training equipment, which is a qualitative step for Kuwait Airways in improving and developing its safety and security procedures. This has been done in coordination with the Direct Investment Promotion Authority," Dukhan said.

"Kuwait Airways has striven hard to raise the level of services at Kuwait International Airport (I4) and the results have been phenomenal as the airline could maintain a high percentage of regularity in flight departures without any delay," he said.

#### Pragmatic strategy

"Kuwait Airways is not looking for any funding currently," said Razouqi. "Kuwait Airways is in a sound financial situation currently. Therefore, in



Kuwait Airways CEO Maen Razouqi (left) and Chairman Ali Al-Dukhan.

2022, we will not seek any funding from any party, neither from the authorities nor from any banks. We are in the process of building a strategy for 2023-2024 that includes funding by ourselves through a pragmatic operational strategy," he pointed out. "The recent achievements were accomplished in a very challenging operational environment for the aviation industry as jet fuel prices went up by 40 percent, representing 30 percent of our total cost. With all these challenges, we managed to cut our operational costs significantly."

Razouqi said: "Kuwait Airways is relentlessly striving to meet the needs of its valued customers through a variety of different destinations, as it has previously launched 17 new destinations linking Kuwait to the world, in an effort to meet the

growing demand for markets - short, medium and long-term. Therefore, Kuwait Airways pays great attention to the comfort and service of their customers, and to provide them with the opportunity to travel on Kuwait Airways planes to their preferred destinations."

He added: "In line with its plan to expand its network, Kuwait Airways will launch eight new destinations for the winter schedule, which includes the Maldives, Abu Dhabi, Kuala Lumpur, Addis Ababa, Madinah, Taif, Hyderabad and Kathmandu. The company continues to operate two destinations, Madrid and Izmir, throughout the year, which were previously launched, due to the increasing demand for the two destinations and their importance to our valued customers."

## Germany flags off world's first hydrogen train fleet

**BERLIN:** Germany on Wednesday inaugurated a railway line powered entirely by hydrogen, a "world premiere" and a major step forward for green train transport despite nagging supply challenges. A fleet of 14 trains provided by French industrial giant Alstom to the German state Lower Saxony has replaced diesel locomotives on the 100 kilometers (60 miles) of track connecting the cities of Cuxhaven, Bremerhaven, Bremervoerde and Buxtehude near Hamburg.

"We are very proud to put this technology into operation together with our strong partners as a world premiere," Alstom CEO Henri Poupart-Lafarge said in a statement. Hydrogen trains have become a promising way to decarbonize the rail sector and replace climate-warming diesel, which still powers 20 percent of journeys in Germany. Billed as a "zero emission" mode of transport, the trains mix hydrogen on board with oxygen present in the ambient air, thanks to a fuel cell installed in the roof. This produces the electricity needed to pull the train. Regional rail operator LNVG said the fleet, which cost 93 million euros (dollars), would prevent 4,400 tons of CO2 being released into the atmosphere each year.

#### Run for its money

Designed in the southern French town of Tarbes and assembled in Salzgitter in central Germany,



BREMERVORDE, Germany: Train driver Alexander Kluge drives a train powered entirely by hydrogen in Bremervoerde, on August 24, 2022. —AFP

Alstom's trains-called Coradia iLint-are trailblazers in the sector. The project created jobs for up to 80 employees in the two countries, according to Alstom. Commercial trials have been carried out since 2018 on the line with two hydrogen trains but now the entire fleet is adopting the groundbreaking technology.

The French group has inked four contracts for several dozen trains between Germany, France and Italy, with no sign of demand waning. In Germany alone "between 2,500 and 3,000 diesel trains could be replaced by hydrogen models", Stefan Schrank, project manager at Alstom, told AFP. "By 2035, around 15 to 20 percent of the regional European market could run on hydrogen," according to Alexandre Charpentier, a rail expert at consultancy Roland Berger. Hydrogen trains are particularly attractive on short regional lines where the cost of a transition to electric outstrips the profitability of the route. —AFP

## Markets mark time ahead of Fed chair speech

**LONDON:** European and US equities moved sideways on Wednesday as investors awaited signals on the next US interest rate hikes. With the Jackson Hole meeting of central bankers this week, focus is on what US Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell will say Friday about plans to tackle high prices-with many fearing higher borrowing costs could send the world's biggest economy into recession in its battle to rein in inflation. The euro held close to a two-decade low against the dollar, and the greenback struck a two-year peak against China's yuan. European gas prices rose close to record intraday prices.

#### Losing momentum

"Markets seem to have lost their momentum," noted AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould. "Investors have become nervous once again, with all eyes on Powell and what he says this coming Friday." Analyst Patrick O'Hare at Briefing.com said a mountain of expectations were building ahead of Powell's speech. "Those expectations range from fear of a resolutely hawkish speech to hope of a tempered rate-hike outlook," he said.

Central banks face a delicate balancing act between battling inflation, with Russia's war in Ukraine sending energy prices soaring, and avoiding recession. Yet concerns are growing that spiking energy costs could still prompt a worldwide

downturn. "Investor anxiety is growing that a combination of central banks raising rates and higher energy prices will tip the global economy into a long recession," said CMC Markets analyst Michael Hewson.

Key markets in Asia slid on Wednesday. In Europe, London shed 0.5 percent but Frankfurt and Paris were broadly steady. Wall Street opened narrowly mixed, with the Dow dipping 0.1 percent.

#### Rollercoaster ride

The foreign exchange market has faced a rollercoaster ride so far this week. The euro tumbled on Tuesday to \$0.9901 — a new two-decade low-but later clawed back losses as the greenback was hit by poor US economic data. The dollar had strengthened this week ahead Powell's speech, as markets speculate that the Fed will continue to tighten its monetary policy.

Higher interest rates boost the American currency as they make dollar-denominated debt more attractive to investors. But the euro also has been weighed down by a gloomy outlook for the eurozone economy amid fears of a halt to Russia's gas deliveries.

Oil was steady following talk of an OPEC output cut, with Brent crude hovering just above \$100 per barrel. "While this may simply be a case of Saudi Arabia talking up the price, for now, the prospect of the group taking such action effectively removes two of the biggest downside risks for prices," said OANDA analyst Craig Erlam.

Oil prices fell back under \$100 per barrel this month on worries of a global economic slowdown and the possibility of Iran reaching a deal on its nuclear program that would end international sanctions on its crude exports. — AFP



## Business

# Germany, Canada partner on transatlantic hydrogen trade

## Volkswagen, Mercedes sign EV battery accords with Canada

OTTAWA: The leaders of Canada and Germany signed a green hydrogen deal on Tuesday, laying a path for a transatlantic supply chain as Europe seeks to lessen its dependence on Russian energy.

"It's a vote of confidence for Canada as a leader in clean energy," Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said during a joint press conference with visiting German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. "We cannot as a world continue to rely on authoritarian countries that will weaponize energy policy, as Russia is, that don't concern themselves with environmental outcomes or labor rights or even human rights," Trudeau added. Moscow has slashed its energy exports to Europe in response to punishing Western sanctions over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, forcing countries to scramble for alternatives.

Scholz said there was a need to discuss "short-term constraints and LNG (liquefied natural gas) but in the long run, the real potential lies in green hydrogen from the wind-rich, thinly populated Atlantic provinces."

Canada aims to become a major producer and exporter of hydrogen and other related clean technologies to displace climate-warming fossil fuels, with Germany lined up to become a first customer. In a joint declaration, Trudeau and Scholz outlined plans to "kickstart the hydrogen economy and to create a transatlantic supply chain for hydrogen."

The plan is to make the first deliveries of Canadian hydrogen to Germany as early as 2025, the statement said. Canada said it would also export hydrogen to the broader European market—"contributing to European energy security," as the bloc looks to end its reliance on Russian energy—as well as to Asia.

The two leaders, with a sizeable German business delegation in tow, toured a site in Stephenville,



TORONTO, Canada: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (left) and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (right) watch as Volkswagen AG's CEO Herbert Diess (second left) shakes hands with Canadian Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Francois-Philippe Champagne, after signing a Memorandum of Understanding at the Canadian-German Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, on Tuesday, August 23, 2022. — AFP

Newfoundland, where US-based World Energy GH2 Inc. is looking to build a hydrogen production facility powered by a 164-turbine, one-gigawatt wind farm on the Port au Port Peninsula.

The former pulp mill boasts substantial wind resources, access to the power distribution grid and a port that can ship product to Europe. The project is one of a dozen under consideration by the Newfoundland government since it lifted a moratorium

on new wind farms, and in July issued a call for proposals to put turbines on government lands.

With an estimated \$10 billion price tag, it would be the largest single investment ever made in Canada's Atlantic region.

Canada also announced Tuesday tentative deals with Volkswagen and Mercedes-Benz that would see the two European automakers tap into burgeoning North American supply chains as they seek to chal-

lenge Tesla in the electric vehicle market. The memorandums of understanding were signed during a visit to Canada by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who is seeking to firm up access to new energy supplies for Germany and deepen bilateral trade ties.

The agreements "will help us meet growing demand, both here at home and around the world, for electric vehicles," Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tweeted. Scholz commented in a statement that the cooperation, notably in the securing of critical battery inputs such as lithium, nickel and cobalt, "may encourage other companies to follow."

Mercedes-Benz said it envisages partnering with Canadian companies across the electric vehicle and battery supply chains, including Rock Tech Lithium for the supply of up to 10,000 tons of lithium hydroxide annually, starting in 2026. The Volkswagen agreement specifically focuses on the production of battery precursor and cathode materials. Volkswagen's newly-formed battery company PowerCo will also open a Canadian office. "Working hand in hand with governments around the world is an absolute prerequisite to meet our climate goals," Volkswagen chief executive Herbert Diess said in a statement.

"The supply of battery raw materials and the production of precursor and cathode materials with a low carbon footprint will allow for a fast and sustainable ramp-up of battery capacity—a key lever for our growth strategy in North America," he added.

The deals come on the heels of several other agreements announced by the sector, including by Stellantis in March to manufacture batteries for electric vehicles in Canada. Ottawa meanwhile has boosted its support of domestic exploration for critical minerals used to make electric vehicle batteries. — AFP

## Germany prioritizes fuel cargo on rails over energy crunch

BERLIN: Germany on Wednesday agreed to give coal and oil cargo precedence over passenger travel on railways in case of an energy crunch this winter due to a Russian gas squeeze.

Ministers from the centre-left-led coalition government said the shift in priorities was essential to ensure Europe's top economy can meet its energy needs. "We have a shortage situation on the rails—there's a real run on the rails right now, the rails are at full capacity," Transport Minister Volker Wissing told reporters.

"That means that if additional fuel transports are temporarily necessary we would have to prioritize them, which could mean that passenger trains would have to wait. That won't be an easy decision."

Economy Minister Robert Habeck noted that part of the problem is that low water levels on major rivers like the Rhine have forced some cargo including coal and oil to be shifted off ships. The prioritization option, set for six months, would get fuel to power stations faster, he said.

Berlin and its EU partners have accused Moscow of "weaponizing" energy supplies in response to Western sanctions over the Kremlin's war in Ukraine. Germany, which is heavily dependent on Russian gas, has seen supplies slashed by 80 percent in recent months, triggering deep uncertainty about how it will keep the heat on and industry humming this winter. Berlin has been scrambling to diversify supplies and has been forced to temporarily increase its reliance on other climate-warming fossil fuels as a stopgap measure.

"We want to free ourselves as quickly as possible from the grip of Russian energy imports," Habeck said. The government is also imposing energy-saving measures throughout the country, including an upper limit agreed on Wednesday on the temperature of public administrative offices this winter of 19 degrees Celsius (66 degrees Fahrenheit). — AFP



BERLIN: German Minister of Economics and Climate Protection Robert Habeck (second right) and German Minister for Transport and Digital Affairs Volker Wissing (left) arrive to give a joint statement on the prioritization of energy transports on rails on August 24, 2022 in front of the Chancellery in Berlin. — AFP

## Sri Lanka widens import ban as crisis deepens

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka tightened import restrictions Wednesday with a ban on more than 300 additional items, as an economic crisis that has created months of shortages and toppled a president refuses to abate. President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who replaced Gotabaya Rajapaksa after his ouster in July, slapped a ban on goods including home appliances, tools and sports gear.

The South Asian island nation of 22 million people has been suffering dire shortages of many essentials due to a lack of foreign currency. The new bans come despite the central bank announcing last week that the foreign exchange shortage was easing thanks to better inflows.

However, Sri Lanka's economy is projected to contract this year by a worse-than-expected 8.0 percent, according to the bank, with inflation forecast to peak at a record 65 percent by September.

The lack of foreign currency pushed Sri Lanka into defaulting on some of its \$51 billion external debt pile in April. A delegation from the International Monetary Fund was due on Wednesday to continue talks with Sri Lankan offi-

cials on a bailout.

But IMF assistance could be delayed if Sri Lanka's creditors, the biggest being China, refuse to restructure some of their loans. Beijing has not publicly shifted from its offer of issuing more loans rather than taking a haircut on existing credit. Worker remittances, a key source of foreign exchange for Sri

Lanka, have dropped by more than 50 percent to \$1.6 billion in the six months to June compared to the same period last year. Rajapaksa, 73, fled to Singapore after months of protests culminated in demonstrators storming his official residence in July. He has since flown to Thailand but wants to return home, according to his party. — AFP



COLOMBO: A mobile phone seller waits for customers at his shop in Colombo on August 24, 2022. Sri Lanka tightened import restrictions on August 24 with a ban on more than 300 additional items, as an economic crisis that has created months of shortages and toppled a president refuses to abate. — AFP

## Japan eyes nuclear power push to fight energy crunch

TOKYO: Japan's prime minister on Wednesday called for a push to revive the country's nuclear power industry in a bid to tackle soaring imported energy costs linked to the war in Ukraine.

Such a move could prove controversial, after the 2011 Fukushima disaster led to the suspension of many nuclear reactors over safety fears. Like many countries, Japan—which is aiming to become carbon neutral by 2050 — has faced a squeeze on its energy supplies since Russian forces entered Ukraine six months ago.

The nation has also sweltered through record-breaking temperatures this summer, with residents asked to conserve power wherever possible.

"Russia's invasion of Ukraine has vastly transformed the world's energy landscape" and so "Japan needs to bear in mind potential crisis scenarios", Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said at an energy policy meeting. Japan should consider building next-generation nuclear reactors, he said, while the government will discuss bringing more nuclear plants online and extending the service life of reactors if safety can be guaranteed.

Kishida called for "concrete conclusions by the end of the year" on the topic, which remains a sensitive one after a deadly tsunami in March 2011 caused a meltdown at the Fukushima plant, the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl.

Eleven years on, 10 of Japan's 33 nuclear reactors are back in action, although not all are operational year-round, and the country is heavily dependent on imported fossil fuels. The national nuclear safety watchdog has approved in principle the restart of seven more reactors, but those moves often face opposition from local communities.

### 'All it takes'

"In addition to securing the operations of the 10 reactors that are already back online, the government will spearhead an effort to do all it takes to realize the restart" of the others whose safety has been approved, Kishida said. The prime minister, who joined the meeting remotely after testing positive for COVID-19, also urged policymakers to consider "constructing next-generation nuclear reactors equipped with new safety

mechanisms". Before the Fukushima disaster, around a third of Japan's power generation came from nuclear sources, but in 2020 the figure was less than five percent. Japan's government has overhauled and strengthened nuclear safety standards, and wants nuclear power to account for 20 to 22 percent of electricity production by 2030, as part of efforts to reach carbon neutrality.

Tom O'Sullivan, a Tokyo-based energy consultant at Mathyos Advisory, said building next-generation reactors in Japan would be a "major step", because "all the current reactors are conventional ones".



TOKYO: This file photo taken on July 8, 2016 shows a man holding an anti-nuclear placard at a rally to protest against the reopening of nuclear power plants, in front of the Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) in Tokyo. — AFP

Bringing more existing nuclear plants online will need to be approved by local governors, which could prove "politically challenging", O'Sullivan told AFP. "But again, there's a different environment now after the Ukraine war," he said. Polls in recent months also show that public opinion may be softening towards the use of nuclear power.

"I don't think it's just the electricity costs. It's the reliance on Russia, for natural gas, oil and coal... the Japanese public have really woken up to that," O'Sullivan said. Japan has imposed sanctions on Russia over the war in Ukraine along with other G7 countries, and the government has pledged to try and reduce its energy dependence on Moscow.

The price of Japanese shares related to nuclear power surged in afternoon trade as local media reported the possible plans, with Tokyo Electric Power ending up 9.96 percent and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries jumping 6.85 percent. — AFP

## Steep drop in military aircraft keep US goods orders flat

WASHINGTON: Orders for big-ticket US-manufactured goods were flat in July after four straight monthly increases due to a plunge in the volatile military aircraft category, according to government data released Wednesday. New orders for durable goods held steady at \$273.5 billion, after the nearly 50 percent drop in demand for defense aircraft and parts — a segment that surged more than 80 percent in June, the Commerce Department reported.

The result was far worse than economists had projected, but excluding the defense sector, orders rose 1.2 percent, the data showed. Economists say businesses are likely to pull back on investments, fearing Americans will become more cautious about spending amid the highest inflation in 40 years, even though families are buoyed by a stockpile of savings. Despite high prices and rising interest rates, there were nonetheless signs of continued demand, although some categories hinted at a slowdown, including appliances, which fell, and autos, where orders increased but by much less than in recent months, as did computers and electronics. — AFP

## Business

# China faces 'severe threat' to harvest from worst heatwave on record

## Phenomena of severe heat, flash floods and drought becoming frequent, intense

**CHONGQING, China:** China's autumn harvest is under "severe threat" from high temperatures and drought, authorities have warned, urging action to protect crops in the face of the country's hottest summer on record. The world's second-largest economy has been hit by record temperatures, flash floods and droughts this summer—phenomena that scientists have warned are becoming more frequent and intense due to climate change.

Southern China has recorded its longest sustained period of high temperatures and sparse rain since records began more than 60 years ago, the agriculture ministry said. Four government departments issued a notice on Tuesday urging the conservation of "every unit of water" to protect crops.

"The rapid development of drought superimposed with high temperatures and heat damage has caused a severe threat to autumn crop production," the statement said.

China produces more than 95 percent of the rice, wheat and maize it consumes, but a reduced harvest could mean increased demand for imports in the world's most populous country—putting further pressure on global supplies already strained by the conflict in Ukraine. Temperatures as high as 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) have led multiple Chinese provinces to impose power cuts, as cities struggle to cope with a surge in demand for electricity that is partly driven by people cranking up the air conditioning. The heat broke records in the province of Sichuan, where a temperature of 43.9 degrees Celsius (111 degrees Fahrenheit) was recorded on Wednesday afternoon, the province's Meteorological Service Centre said in a statement.

The megacities of Shanghai and Chongqing have

turned off outdoor decorative lighting, while authorities in Sichuan have imposed industrial power cuts after water levels dropped at key hydroelectric plants. The searing heat is also drying up the critical Yangtze River, with water flow on its main trunk about 50 percent lower than the average over the last five years, state media outlet China News Service reported last week.

### 'Worst heatwave ever'

In Chongqing, where more than 1,500 people were evacuated after hot and dry conditions sparked multiple wildfires, locals were struggling. "I feel too hot to sleep every night, and I'm awakened by the heat every morning," Xu Jinxin, a 20-year-old student, told AFP.

"Because of the electricity shortage, we don't leave the air conditioner on all day but rather turn it off once it's cooled down a bit." The national meteorological service renewed its warnings for drought and high temperatures on Tuesday, calling for 11 provincial governments to activate emergency responses.

Authorities have already turned to cloud seeding—a method to induce rainfall—in parts of the country.

State broadcaster CCTV published footage this month showing meteorological staff shooting catalyst rockets into the sky and firefighters transporting water to farmers in need.

"This is the worst heatwave ever recorded," climate and energy expert Liu Junyan of Greenpeace East Asia told AFP. "Climate science shows extreme heat is becoming exponentially worse," she said.

"So it's more likely that next year will have record-breaking heat." This year's extreme weather



CHONGQING, China: This photo taken on August 22, 2022 shows a combine harvester harvesting rice in a field in China's southwestern Chongqing. —AFP

is raising public awareness of climate change in China, with state media "now coming around to covering climate impacts" with unprecedented urgency, Liu said. Government climate expert Zhou Bing warned over the weekend of mass displacement caused by climate change, describing extreme weather as nature's "revenge" on humanity. China

has experienced three other episodes of intense heat so far this century—in 2003, 2013, 2017.

The gap between heatwaves is "significantly shortening", according to Zhou. For those living through the sweltering summer, "life goes on with some endurance", said Xu, the Chongqing resident. —AFP

## Iceland central bank raises rate again

**REYKJAVIK:** Iceland's central bank said Wednesday it raised its main interest rate for the third time since May to combat a "bleaker" inflation outlook. Central banks across the world are hiking their rates to combat soaring consumer prices, which rose after Covid restrictions were eased and surged even higher as Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent food and energy prices through the roof.

Iceland's central bank, Sedlabanki, said it lifted the rate by 0.75 percentage points to 5.5 percent following hikes in May and June. The Nordic country's economy is expected to grow by nearly six percent this year, 1.3 percentage points higher than previously forecast, thanks to "more robust" private consumption and a quicker rebound in tourism than projected. But, the bank added in a statement, "the inflation outlook has continued to deteriorate".

Inflation accelerated to 9.9 percent in July and is forecast to peak at nearly 11 percent later this year, it said. "The bleaker inflation outlook reflects stronger economic activity than was forecast in May, as well as more persistent house price inflation and higher global inflation," the statement said.

"In addition, inflation expectations have risen even further by most measures." The bank said it will likely further tighten its monetary policy "so as to ensure that inflation eases back to target within an acceptable time frame". —AFP

## China probes state property firm execs for 'violations'

**BEIJING:** China has announced it is investigating several executives at state-owned property companies, in another blow to a key sector already struggling with slowing sales, angry customers and heavily indebted developers. Authorities said in separate notices on Tuesday that they were investigating Zhuang Yuekai, chairman of C&D Real Estate, and Shi Zhen, chairman of C&D Urban Services. They are also looking into Liu Hui, deputy general manager of Shenzhen Talents Housing Group, and Tang Yong, a former chairman at China Resources Land.

All four were "suspected of serious violations of discipline and law", the notices said, providing few details. The language used in the announcements, however, typically indicates impending graft charges. "This is a continuation of China's crackdown on corruption, from government agencies to financial institutions, and to state-owned enterprises," said Ting Meng, senior Asia credit strategist at ANZ Bank.

As sentiment in the sector is already weak, this news will "further suppress market confidence" and increase concerns about the internal governance of some state-owned firms, she told AFP. The investigations come ahead of the ruling Communist Party's 20th National Congress, at which President Xi Jinping is widely expected to be anointed for an unprecedented third term. Xi has championed an anti-corruption drive since coming to power, taking down big-name detractors, and observers expect him to use the months leading up to the meeting to cement his grip on power. —AFP

## South African inflation hits new 13-year high

**JOHANNESBURG:** Inflation in South Africa accelerated to its highest level in 13 years in July, pushed mainly by surging food, transport and electricity prices, official data showed Wednesday as workers staged protests over the high cost of living.

Consumer prices rose at an annual rate of 7.8 percent in July, up from 7.4 percent in June, the national statistics agency StatsSA said in a statement. The publication of the latest statistics coincided with protests in major cities over the worsening economic conditions, which have been particularly crushing for the poorest in the continent's most industrialized country.

Strikers led by South Africa's two largest trade unions called for government action to combat rising poverty and the cost of living in the world's most unequal country. While the new inflation figure is bad news for consumers, economists see the country likely reaching a tipping point and believe inflation could ease in the coming months. This "is likely the peak in the current inflation cycle," according to Investec bank chief economist Annabel Bishop. "Inflation will be lower this time next year," said Dawie Roodt, an economist with the financial services firm Efficient Group.

Inflation has been soaring worldwide, fuelled by supply chain disruptions after the easing of COVID restrictions as well as surging energy and food prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

For South Africans, it has resulted in rising costs for necessities including food, electricity, fuel and medication, the statistics agency said. Although grain prices are on the decline internationally, Roodt said, "it takes as much as two years before a price shock works its way through the economy."

## Thailand approves first instant noodle price rise in 14 years

**BANGKOK:** Thailand will raise the price of Thai instant noodles, the trade department said Wednesday, marking the first price increase on the must-have daily staple in 14 years. The kingdom's economy has not bounced back after fully reopening to tourists earlier this year, and has been battered by 14-year-high inflation and the economic knock-on effects of the Russian-Ukraine war.

Prices of instant noodles are capped by Bangkok at six baht (\$0.16) per packet but anxious major producers had urged the government to raise the limit to eight baht, citing spiraling costs.

The internal trade department confirmed to AFP that it would approve an increase to seven baht per regular-sized packet, effective from August 25.

## Privacy activists target Google over French 'spam' emails

**PARIS:** Google is breaking EU law by sending users of its email service Gmail direct advertising messages, activists said in a complaint sent to French regulators on Wednesday.

It is the latest in a long line of complaints filed by the activist group NOYB (None of Your Business), which has fought the tech giant for years



JOHANNESBURG: Inflation in South Africa accelerated to its highest level in 13 years in July, pushed mainly by surging food, transport and electricity prices, official data showed Wednesday as workers staged protests over the high cost of living.

Prices for breads and cereals were up 13.7 percent in July, from 11.2 percent in June. It means a loaf of white bread now costs 17.84 rand (\$1.05) compared to 15.57 rand (\$0.91) a year ago, the statistics agency said. The price of fuel increased by 56.2 percent on last year.

Rising inflation prompted the country's central bank to impose the steepest hike to the benchmark interest rate last month, raising it by three-quarters of a percentage point to 5.5 percent.

Roodt said another hike is likely to come. It will have a spiraling impact on the broader economy with higher rates resulting in higher debt repayments for consumers, which will hit household bud-

gets, said Christie Viljoen, senior manager and economist for PwC South Africa. "This, in turn, results in reduced spending power for consumers and companies. This is a challenge for South Africa which is a consumer-driven economy," he said.

The rising cost of living is taking a toll on a population where the unemployment rate hovers near 34 percent. The government called the unemployment figures a "major concern" on Wednesday, saying more needed to be done to improve conditions following the pandemic.

"Job creation and economic recovery remain the top priorities for government," said cabinet spokeswoman Phumla Williams in a statement. —AFP

The news comes after five major Thai instant noodle producers—Wai Wai, Mama, Yam Yam, Sue Sat and Nissin—petitioned the department for a rise. "We are facing rising commodity prices, oil prices for export," explained Veera Naphaprukchart from Thai Preserved Food, part of popular brand Wai Wai. The price of wheat flour rose roughly 20-30 percent and the price of palm oil had doubled, he said.

Veera blamed rising costs on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which was a major supplier of wheat to the kingdom prior to the conflict. Pipat Paniangvait, of Thai President Food, said the price of instant noodles was last increased in 2008.

Producers' issues have been compounded by the high export costs—thanks to rising oil and wheat prices—meaning selling abroad is not viable either.

"In the past, we were selling more outside Thailand to curb the situation here as we cannot raise the price freely," he said. The trade department said it would continue to monitor the cost of production and indicated it could adjust the price accordingly. —AFP



CNIL confirmed to AFP it had received the complaint. Google told AFP it had no comment as yet.

Google and Facebook's parent company Meta are at the centre of a long-running battle over their data-collection practices in Europe. The French regulator fined Google 150 million euros (\$150 million) and Meta 60 million euros last December over their failure to provide users with an easy opt-out for cookies, files that track users around the web.

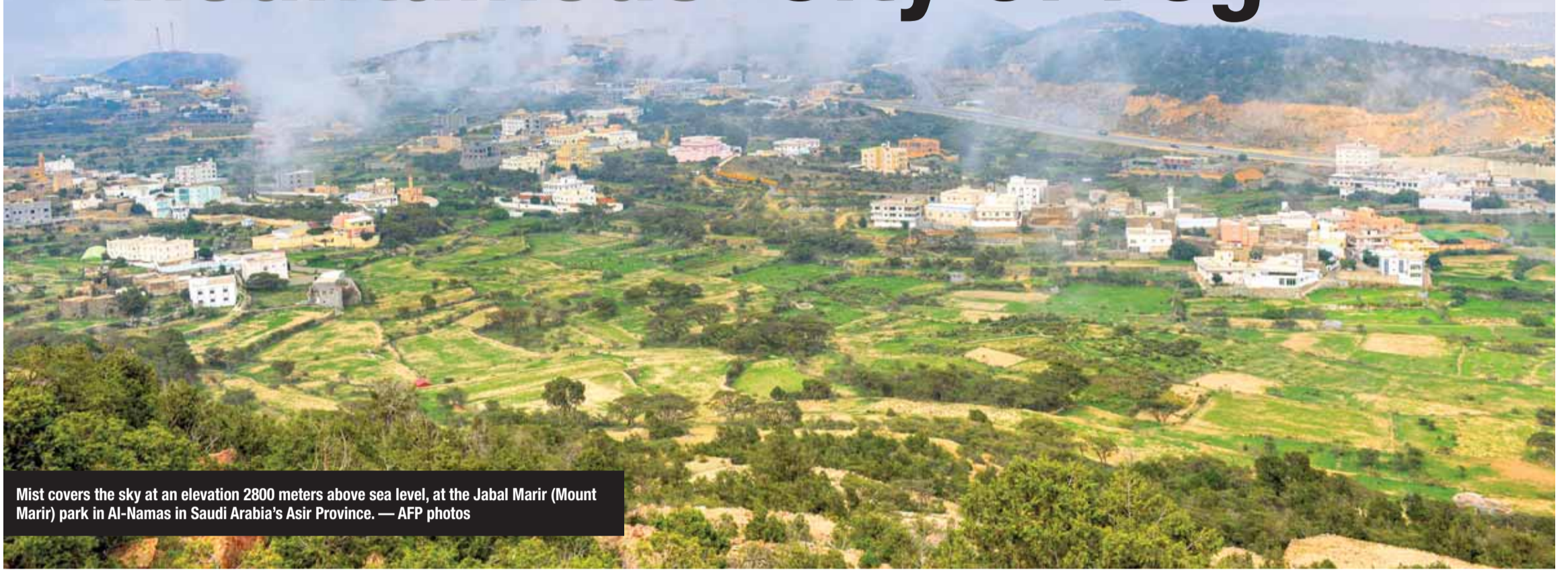
The two firms also face scrutiny over their practice of sending the personal data of EU residents to servers in the United States. NOYB has filed dozens of cases with regulators across the bloc arguing that the practice is illegal. —AFP

on data privacy. The French data regulator CNIL has been among the most active in Europe, doling out huge fines against Google and Facebook in particular.

The activist group provided screenshots to CNIL that showed marketing messages at the top of a user's inbox.

The messages were marked with a green box and the word "annonce", French for advert. The group said under EU law, that kind of marketing was allowed only if users had consented. "Spam is a commercial email sent without consent. And it is illegal," said NOYB lawyer Romain Robert in a statement. "Spam does not become legal just because it is generated by the email provider."

# Sweltering Saudis escape to mountainous 'City of Fog'



Mist covers the sky at an elevation 2800 meters above sea level, at the Jabal Marir (Mount Marir) park in Al-Namas in Saudi Arabia's Asir Province. — AFP photos

**A**s Saudi Arabia swelters in sizzling desert temperatures, some are escaping to the "City of Fog"—a mountainous oasis of cool where warm clothing is needed even in summer. Sitting with friends on a picnic blan-

degrees Celsius (59 degrees Fahrenheit) at night, as fog blocks out the sun over verdant hills. "It's 46 degrees in Riyadh and only 20 here, it's 26 degrees lower," says Al-Enizi at the holiday destination, about 850 kilometers (530 miles) south-west of



Mist covers the sky at an elevation 2800 meters above sea level, at the Jabal Marir (Mount Marir) park in Al-Namas in Saudi Arabia's Asir province.

ket, under light rain and a thick, swirling mist in Al-Namas, Abdullah Al-Enizi wears a body-warmer over his traditional white robes to guard against the chill. The retreat, 2,800 meters (9,200 feet) above sea level in Saudi Arabia's rugged south, is in stark contrast to other parts of the vast, largely desert country where summer heat of up to 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit) is an annual challenge.

At Al-Namas, humid monsoon weather keeps temperatures below 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit), dropping as low as 15

the Saudi capital.

"We're escaping the heat. Here, it's cool and the rain and fog are here nearly all the time," added the semi-retired Saudi, 45, who drove about 12 hours from Riyadh. Around his group of friends, families enjoy the breeze as their children run around in the fresh air, rather than being cooped up in their air-conditioned houses as usual elsewhere in the country. Clusters of holidaymakers in raincoats and woolly hats sip Arabic coffee and crowd under umbrellas, while kites flutter in the wind.

"Before we came, we packed all



An aerial view shows people sitting by a promontory in Al-Namas in Saudi Arabia's Asir province.

our winter things!" says Nouf, who did not want to give her surname, while doing up her daughter's coat. Tourist authorities have built a "fog road" for hikers and cyclists traversing a high summit that overlooks the mist-shrouded mountains. Khalaf Al-Juheiri travelled to Al-Namas with his wife and children from Tabuk, in Saudi Arabia's north, to enjoy the "cool weather". "We really miss this weather when the temperature goes over 40 degrees in summer" in Tabuk, said the 33-year-old civil servant, covering his head against the rain.

#### 'Visit Saudi'

In 2020, a study published by the Science Advances magazine showed that the Gulf region has the hottest

and most humid climate on the planet. Because of global warming, some Gulf cities could become uninhabitable before the end of this century, experts say. Thanks to its altitude and strong winds, Al-Namas escapes the worst of the increasing heat, says Hassan Abdullah, a Jordan-based official from the WASM weather technology company. It has become a prized destination at a time when Saudi authorities, searching for new income streams apart from oil, are heavily promoting domestic and international tourism. The 'Visit Saudi' promotion is in full swing just three years after tourist visas were first made available for foreign visitors in 2019.

As plane fares surge after the pandemic, Saudi families spent 80 billion

riyals (about 21 billion euros) on domestic travel last year, a 30 percent increase from 2019, ministry of tourism figures show. "Summer is the peak tourist season, going from May to October," says Abdullah Al-Shahri, a hotelier at Al-Namas where winter temperatures sometimes plunge to zero degrees. At the top of a hill that overlooks the green valley, Mushabab Al-Omari takes in the view, sitting next to his wife. "I've been here nearly three months," says the retiree, "and I'm ready to stay another four or five months if the weather stays like this." — AFP



An aerial view shows people sitting by a promontory in Al-Namas in Saudi Arabia's Asir province.



People sit with umbrellas along a promontory in Al-Namas in Saudi Arabia's Asir province.



People walk with raincoats along a promontory in Al-Namas in Saudi Arabia's Asir province.



A woman walks with an umbrella along a promontory in Al-Namas in Saudi Arabia's Asir province.



A woman holds an umbrella while she sits with another along a promontory in Al-Namas in Saudi Arabia's Asir province.



## TikTok stars boycott Amazon in activism push

**T**ikTok influencers boasting collectively more than 51 million followers say they won't work with Amazon until the e-commerce colossus delivers key concessions to workers and halts anti-union efforts. It's the latest example of creators lending their online stage to a cause on the massively growing platform more known for dance crazes and catchy songs. An advocacy group calling itself Gen-Z for Change said it coordinated the pledge from more than 70 popular TikTok talents to stand in solidarity with Amazon workers through a "People Over Prime Pledge."

The vow references Amazon Prime—a paid subscription from the online giant that includes benefits like rapid deliveries—but also the pressure it puts on those working to fill the orders. "We are calling on Amazon to listen to their workers and make tangible changes to their workplace environment," the group said in a letter, noting that TikTok has more than a billion users. "Unless changes are made, we will prevent Amazon from monetizing one of the largest social media platforms in the world."

The coalition is pushing for the firm's workers to get a minimum hourly wage of \$30, improved medical leave and easing of productivity requirements. The group is also calling on Amazon, which has long resisted unionization efforts in its US facilities, to stop its opposition. "We have always known how essential creators are to the Amazon marketing model," Gen-Z for Change director of strategy Elise Joshi told AFP on Monday.

"Creators, especially TikTok creators, are the gateway to young people; we are reclaiming that power," the 20-year-old added. An Amazon Influencer Program launched five years ago offers creators at TikTok, YouTube, Instagram and other social media platforms ways to make money by recommending products in posts and steering buyers to the e-commerce service. Some, but not all coalition members—who began last week refusing to do business with Amazon, including direct sponsorships and use of the e-commerce titan's storefront—were associated with that partnership initiative.



### 'Comfortable pace'

The demands sought in this case are those put forth by labor organizers who early this year won a vote to launch the first union shop at one of Amazon's US warehouses. The second largest employer in the United States behind retail mega-chain Walmart, Amazon has fiercely opposed attempts to unionize workers. "The health, safety and welfare of our employees is our top priority," Amazon spokesman Paul Flanigan said in response to an AFP inquiry.

"We are committed to giving our employees the resources they need to be successful, creating time for regular breaks and a comfortable pace of work," he added. Amazon has invested billions of dollars in safety measures, technology and more intended to protect employees, Flanigan said. Joshi dismissed Amazon's response as "boilerplate" and hoped it would inspire social media influencers to get involved in the campaign.

### TikTok activism

Gen-Z for Change organizers reasoned that the power to reach tens of millions of young internet users comes with responsibility to advocate for social justice. "We feel obligated because we have a large platform and a passion for equity," said 19-year-old Connor Hesse, a content specialist at Gen-Z for Change and TikTok creator with some 2.3 million subscribers.

Mobilizing on social media for Amazon employee rights can prompt other companies to improve worker conditions to avoid being targets of similar campaigns, argued Aly, a TikTok creator behind the account usa.mom.in.germany. Gen-Z for Change has aimed pro-labor campaigns at coffee chain Starbucks and Kroger supermarket group. —AFP

# Colombians combat stress with 'Day of Laziness'

**C**olombians in the city of Itagui hauled mattresses and hammocks into the streets Sunday to mark the annual "World Laziness Day," a quirky effort to urge overstressed workers to slow down. The daylong celebration of relaxation has been held annually since 1985 in this small city of some

200,000 in northwestern Colombia. The city is known, rather paradoxically, for its bustling commerce and its thriving industrial park. But 32 years ago, one resident, Carlos Mario Montoya, had the idea that the city should celebrate not just the hustle-bustle of business, but also slowing down and enjoying life. "We wanted to draw attention to the importance in any community of free time and leisure activities," said Montoya, 65, who helped put together this year's event as well. Organizers said festivities include a competition for the best-looking pajamas, a pillow-juggling contest, and a race for the fastest bed on wheels.

Those taking part in the annual fete say laziness gets a bad rap. Far worse, they say, is the wear-and-tear of workaday life, and all the physical and emotional ailments that often go along with it. "The biggest illness we have today is stress—the hustle-bustle of everyday life," said Jhon Jairo Alonso, reclining in his pajamas in the midday sunshine. Flanked on a wide mattress by his wife, his mother, and a family friend, they made a cozy group, even if surrounded by curious onlookers. "Please don't disturb us," Alonso joked. "We're going to be spending the whole day in bed!" —AFP



A man celebrates the World Day of Laziness in Itagui.

200,000 in northwestern Colombia. The city is known, rather paradoxically, for its bustling commerce and its thriving industrial park.

But 32 years ago, one resident, Carlos Mario Montoya, had the idea that



People celebrate the World Day of Laziness in Itagui, near Medellin, Colombia. — AFP photos



People celebrate the World Day of Laziness in Itagui.



A couple celebrates the World Day of Laziness in Itagui.



People celebrate the World Day of Laziness in Itagui.

## Drought uncovers dinosaur tracks in US park

**A** drought in Texas dried up a river flowing through Dinosaur Valley State Park, exposing tracks from giant reptiles that lived some 113 million

years ago, an official said Tuesday. Photos posted on Facebook show three-toed footprints leading down a dry tree-lined riverbed in the southern US state. It is "one of the longest dinosaur trackways in the world," a caption accompanying the images says. Stephanie Salinas Garcia of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department said dry weather made the tracks visible.

"Due to the excessive drought conditions this past summer, the river dried up completely in most locations, allowing for more tracks to be uncovered here in

the park," she said. "Under normal river conditions, these newer tracks are under water and are commonly filled in with sediment, making them buried and not as visible," Garcia said. Most of the recently revealed tracks were made by Acrocanthosaurus, which weighed nearly seven tons (6,350 kilograms) as an adult and stood 15 feet (4.5 meters) tall.

Another dinosaur, Sauroseidon, also left tracks in the park. It measured 60 feet tall and weighed 44 tons in adulthood. The state park-located in an inland area southwest of the city of

Dallas—was once on the edge of an ancient ocean, and dinosaurs left footprints in the mud, its website says. While drought revealed the tracks, rain is in the forecast, meaning they will likely be covered once more. "While they will soon be buried again by the rain and the river, Dinosaur Valley State Park will continue to protect these 113 million-year-old tracks not only for present, but future generations," Garcia said. —AFP



This handout image shows dinosaur tracks from around 113 million years ago, discovered in the Texas State Park after a severe drought conditions that dried up a river. — AFP photos



## Lifestyle | Features



Members of Russian historical clubs dressed in historical costumes perform reenactment of the victory of Prince Alexander Nevsky over Teutonic Knights in 1242 take part in "Alexander's road" historical festival in Pskov region. -AFP photos



Member of Russian historical clubs dressed in historical costumes perform reenactment of the victory of Prince Alexander Nevsky over Teutonic knights.

## For Russian re-enactors, battle with West is more than history

Surrounded by dozens of men in chainmail and helmets playing dead in a field, an impersonator of mediaeval Russian prince Alexander Nevsky raises his sword and roars. "This land is Russian, always has been, and always will be!" It was on this spot near Lake Peipus on Russia's border with Estonia that eight centuries ago Nevsky repelled a force of Teutonic Knights who wanted to convert Russia to Catholicism. Known as the Battle of the Ice because it was fought largely on the frozen lake, the clash in April 1242 is celebrated as a great victory against efforts to turn Russia away from Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

For the hundreds of history enthusiasts re-enacting the battle on a recent August day, that victory is especially resonant today, as Russian forces wage an offensive in Ukraine framed by the Kremlin as part of an enduring conflict with the West. "We are fighting against Europe just like our ancestors did," says Oleg Yakontov, a 56-year-old retired paratrooper, holding a sword and shield

as sweat drips off his face. Historical re-enactments are a popular pastime in Russia, whether of mediaeval battles, Napoleonic-era clashes or the fierce fighting of World War II.

### Historic parallels

Drawing parallels with that history and with President Vladimir Putin as a kind of successor to figures like Nevsky is part of the messaging put forward by the Kremlin and Russian state media in support of Moscow's campaign in Ukraine. "To me, Nevsky symbolises the defense of the Motherland and victory," says 23-year-old Vladislav Vasilyev, still out of breath after taking part in the re-enactment. Several hundred people gathered for the mock battle near the lake, called Lake Chud in Russian. They feasted on grilled meat and listened to live rock music as the combatants pummeled each other on the field. The event culminated in horseback combat demonstrations a few metres away from a large metal sculpture of Nevsky that was inaugurated in September 2021 by Putin and



Member of Russian historical clubs dressed in historical costumes perform reenactment of the victory of Prince Alexander Nevsky over Teutonic knights.

Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church.

"Alexander Nevsky's personality was truly grandiose," Putin said at the time, praising him as a "talented commander" and "skilful diplomat". Part of the modern-day appeal of Nevsky for the Kremlin was his alliance with the great power of the time, the Mongol Empire and its Golden Horde, which had destroyed and seized many of Russia's lands.

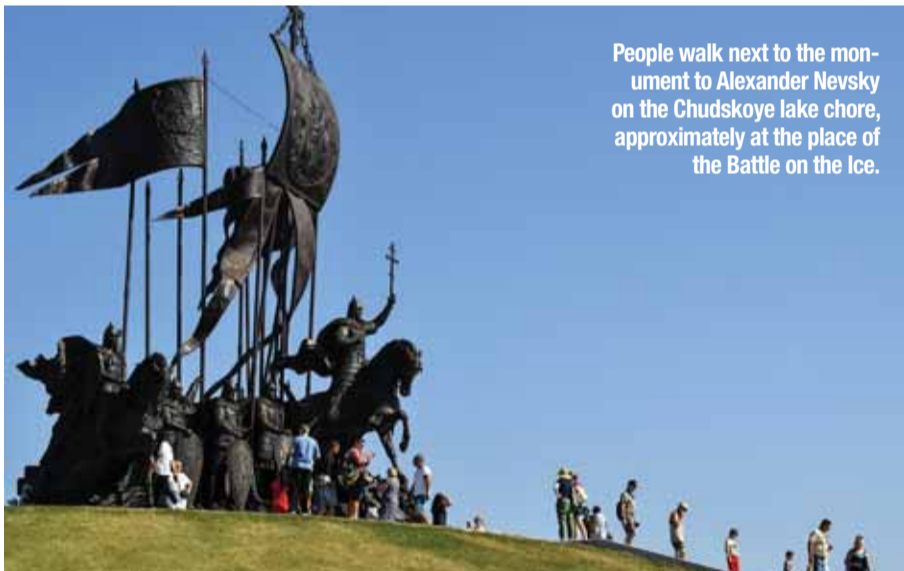
For some in Russia, Nevsky's acceptance of Mongol dominion helped preserve the country's religious traditions and Eurasian character in the face of Western expansionism. "His main achievement is this civilization choice," says Igor Fomyn, a bearded 52-year-old Orthodox priest in a black cassock who came to watch the spectacle. "By making this choice, he put spirituality, his people, and his Motherland before comfort," the priest says.

### Hero of landmark film

Nevsky has been used in the past to stir up patriotic fervour, most famously in

Sergei Eisenstein's landmark propaganda film "Alexander Nevsky" in 1938. Made at a time of strained ties between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, the film portrayed Nevsky as a heroic figure battling Teutonic domination. It features an epic recreation of the battle at Lake Peipus with the heavily armored crusaders crashing through the ice and drowning—a scene many historians regard as of dubious authenticity.

The film was pulled from cinemas when the USSR and Germany signed a non-aggression pact in 1939, then allowed back onto screens when the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union in 1941. Nevsky remains a cherished historical figure for many in Russia, and some here have little doubt about who would be his modern counterpart. "Our president is continuing his work, of course," says Oleg Davydov, a 52-year-old engineer, in attendance at the re-enactment. "It's all about this country's defence, its strength, its security." — AFP



People walk next to the monument to Alexander Nevsky on the Chudskoye lake shore, approximately at the place of the Battle on the Ice.

## Iconic Algeria record store's fortunes revived by DJ Snake

Legendary Algerian music label Disco Maghreb, which launched the careers of some of the Rai folk-inspired genre's most famous stars, has seen a revival thanks to a hit song by DJ Snake. This week, the label's miniature headquarters at a long-shuttered record store in the eastern city of Oran will receive another prominent guest: French President Emmanuel Macron, whose official visit will be focused on outreach to youth in the North African country.

Owner Boualem Benhaoua, 68, said he has "so many memories in the music, so many memories with Rai singers, they all came through here". Cheb Khaled, Cheb Mami, Cheb Hasni and Cheba Zahouania are among the most famous stars of the genre, which emerged in

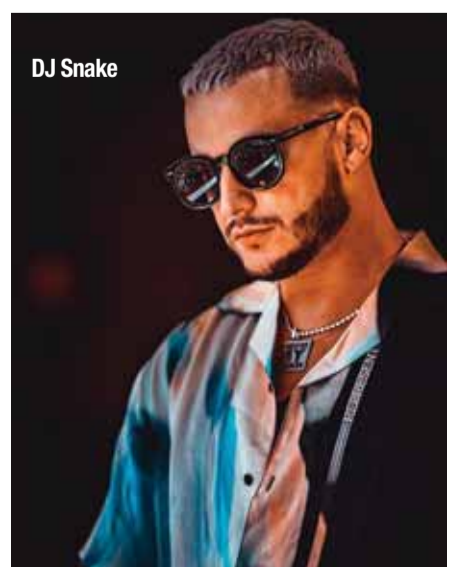
1920s Oran but became a major world music genre in the 1980s, particularly popular in Algeria's former colonial ruler France.

French-Algerian singer DJ Snake paid tribute to the genre in his song Disco Maghreb, which has been seen 78 million times on YouTube alone and prompted an influx of young Algerians to take selfies at the shop with its iconic model cassette tape hanging outside. The singer, whose real name is William Sami Grigahcine, has also published a video of himself visiting the famous shop on a street corner in Oran.

"I imagined 'Disco Maghreb' as a bridge between different generations and origins, linking North Africa, the Arab world and beyond... This is a love letter to my people," he wrote on Twitter in May. Inside the shop, barely touched in years, cassettes pile up on the shelves, surrounded by vintage audio equipment that could be in an antiques museum. Most of DJ Snake's fans are from the era of YouTube and TikTok, but they queue up happily for photos with Benhaoua and his vinyl collection.

"It's an emblematic place in Oran and DJ Snake's latest track gave it more resonance," said airline pilot Nawel, 36. She said she was bringing her children for a visit and to take photos, as they live in France. Despite the store being closed for years, Benhaoua said he wanted it to become "a place for artists to meet and for new talent to be discovered".

Benhaoua said the young singer has also shone a spotlight on Oran, with his video clip young people on mopeds and dancing in the street shot in the city. Many on social media have commented that the clip has done more to promote tourism in the city than official tourism agencies. Benhaoua said DJ Snake had "the qualities of a great man". "He sympathizes with people with modest incomes, he himself grew up in these conditions," he said. "He's not just a singer, but like part of the family." — AFP



## 'House of the Dragon' ratings boost as 'Rings of Power' nears

As "House of the Dragon" debuted to nearly 10 million US viewers this weekend, HBO appears to have claimed first blood in its much-hyped TV fantasy epic showdown with Amazon's upcoming "Lord of the Rings" prequel. Set in the same Medieval-inspired Westeros world as smash hit "Game of Thrones," "House of the Dragon," which launched Sunday, is a crucially important series for the premium cable network and its streaming platform HBO Max.

HBO is banking on its prequel matching the wild popularity of the original "Thrones," which over eight seasons became appointment viewing, spawned countless imitations and delivered 59 Emmys—a record for a drama at television's equivalent of the Oscars. A press release on Monday hailed 9.986 million

viewers as "the largest audience for any new original series in the history of HBO"—although some analysts noted that "new original" might be pushing a definition for a spin-off, and that its parent title drew a whopping 17.4 million to the debut of its final season.

Still, the figure represents a success for newly merged Warner Bros Discovery, which is under intense scrutiny as it tries to navigate its place in a rapidly changing entertainment landscape dominated by the so-called "streaming wars."

On September 2, fierce competition will arrive in the form of "The Rings of Power," another swords-and-dragons-themed epic of the small screen, this time taking place in J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth, and created by retail giant Amazon's own streaming platform Prime Video. Said to be a passion project for Amazon's uber-wealthy founder Jeff Bezos, "The Rings of Power" has been commissioned for five seasons, and has been dubbed the most expensive show ever made. Its overall budget of around \$1 billion dwarfs the \$150 million spent so far on "House of the Dragon," though HBO has several other glossy Westeros-set prequels, sequels and spin-offs in the works. — AFP



## Elon Musk's Twitter friendship with Indian superfan

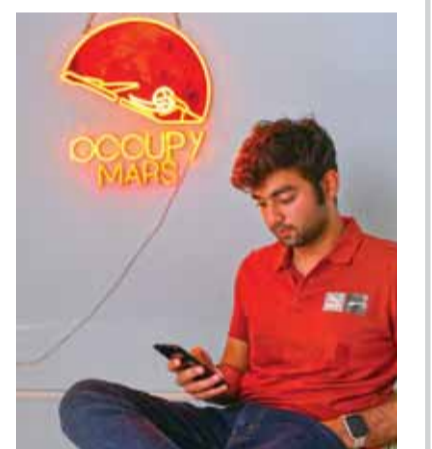
Not many people can boast of having candid conversations about planetary conquest with Elon Musk, but for Indian software engineer Pranay Pathole, a friendly chat with the world's richest man is just a tweet away. Their unlikely online friendship has blossomed since Pathole was a teenager, with the mercurial billionaire responding to him over hundreds of tweets and private messages with headline-making company updates and even life advice.

This week, the two finally met face to face, when Pathole travelled to the United States—his first trip overseas—to begin a master's degree there in business analytics. "He is super genuine. Like, way down-to-earth. He's humble," the 23-year-old told AFP beforehand. "The way he takes his time to respond to me... just shows." Musk is a prolific user of Twitter, often posting more than 30 times a day to his 103 million followers.

But it remains a mystery why the SpaceX and Tesla boss, with a net worth of \$266 billion, maintains regular contact with the young Indian. "To be very honest, I have no idea. I think he must be like, really intrigued by my questions," Pathole told AFP from his parents' upper-middle-class home in the western city of Pune.

Pathole's account is one of only a small handful that the billionaire frequently replies to—an average of once every two days, based on Musk's public Twitter posts since the start of 2020. The first time Musk responded to him was in 2018 when Pathole, then aged 19, pointed out a flaw in Tesla's automatic windshield wipers.

"Fixed in next release," Musk replied, with Tesla addressing the issue in a subsequent software update. His mother and father celebrated by taking him out to dinner that night. "I was blown away, to be very honest," Pathole says. "I took multiple screenshots of it and just never wanted the day to end."



Pranay Pathole

Their later private chats—daily at first—covered "busting myths" about Musk's past and discussions about why colonizing other planets is "essential", Pathole says. "I used to ask him dumb questions, silly questions. And he used to take his time to reply to me." The time difference between the US and India has done little to hamper the four-year virtual friendship. "I don't think he sleeps that often. Because he's on Twitter, like, the majority of the time," Pathole says.

### 'He's an unpredictable guy'

Pathole says interactions with Musk have become "much more casual" over the years, and he no longer rushes to share them with friends and family. "Elon is the same guy in his public persona as well as in his private," he says. Musk's candid, irreverent and often cryptic tweets have sparked wild stock and cryptocurrency price swings, inviting scrutiny by US regulators.

The billionaire investor is also locked in a high-stakes legal battle with Twitter itself over his effort to walk away from an agreement to buy the company, with the trial set to begin in October. But Pathole rejects suggestions that the billionaire acts with malice. "I don't think that he's a troll," Pathole says. "He's an unpredictable guy."

Recruited straight out of engineering college to work at Tata Consultancy Services, India's biggest IT firm, Pathole says he was "infamous" for getting into trouble at school—a trait he says helps him better understand Musk. Having travelled to the US last week—bearing sweets for Musk—he hopes to not only earn his degree at the University of Texas at Dallas but gain work experience at a US company, including any of Musk's. "I want to get a job at Tesla on my own merit. It's not like I want any favours. It would be good if he could interview me," Pathole says. After their meeting, Pathole tweeted a picture of the pair, which Musk "liked". — AFP

## Sports

# Former No1 Srikanth bows out of badminton worlds

## Zhao Junpeng stuns Srikanth in second round

TOKYO: India's Commonwealth Games badminton bronze medalist Kidambi Srikanth was stunned by unseeded Zhao Junpeng in the second round of the world championships in Tokyo on Wednesday. Number 12 seed Srikanth, the silver medalist at last year's world championships, lost 21-9, 21-17 to China's Zhao, his second-game comeback falling away at the finish. Srikanth, part of India's Thomas Cup-winning team in May, said he "could have maybe played better" but was not as clinical as his opponent. "He just played well when it really mattered," said the former world number one. "I had my chances in the second set and if I could have won it, anything could have happened in the third set. "It's just about winning the points when it really matters and I think he played really well in the closing stages of the second set," the 29-year-old added.

### Antonsen crashes out

Meanwhile, third-seeded Anders Antonsen crashed out in the first round of badminton's world championships in Tokyo on Monday but top-ranked fellow Dane Viktor Axelsen was a ruthless winner.

The 2019 world silver-medalist Antonsen fell behind early and never managed to get a foothold in a 21-15, 21-19 loss to Japan's Kenta Nishimoto.

The 25-year-old Antonsen was playing his first competitive match in three months after pulling an abdominal muscle in May and said it "felt a bit

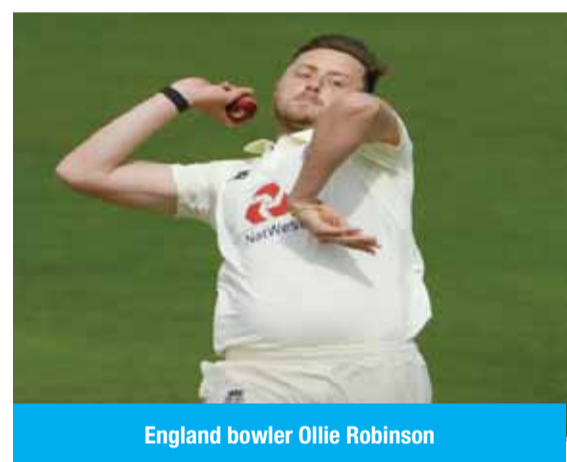
strange just to suddenly be on court again". "I felt like I played better and better and it was a shame that I didn't make the comeback in the second game, I was so close," said Antonsen, who had fended off four match points. "It's my first match in a long time so I just need to get back to competition. Today was the beginning." Axelsen lived up to his billing as the world's number one with a straightforward 21-16, 21-12 win over Malaysia's Daren Liew.

Axelsen was pleased to safely negotiate his way past the world number 29. "Every first round is always tricky. Daren is an experienced opponent, he's a really good player when he plays well," said Axelsen. "I really had to step up in big parts of the game today and I'm really happy about how I managed to deal with everything." China's Shi Yuqi returned to action for the first time in 10 months after serving a ban and beat Azerbaijan's Ade Resky Dwicahyo 22-20, 21-10.

Shi, a world finalist in 2018, retired during a 2021 match against Japan's Kento Momota and was banned by the Chinese Badminton Association for making "inappropriate comments" about his withdrawal. He said he "felt a bit nervous" as he entered the court to face Dwicahyo but "felt good to be playing again" once he had settled into the match. "It definitely feels a lot different," said the 26-year-old. "When you're playing in training it's a lot different from playing tournaments." — AFP



TOKYO: India's Kidambi Srikanth returns a shot against China's Zhao Junpeng during their men's singles match on day three of the Badminton World Championships in Tokyo on August 24, 2022. — AFP



England bowler Ollie Robinson

## England recall Robinson at the expense of Potts

MANCHESTER: Ollie Robinson, who last played for England in the final Ashes Test in January, has been recalled for the second Test with South Africa as the hosts bid to level the three match series. Sussex pacesman Robinson replaces Matthew Potts for the match at Old Trafford which starts on Thursday.

"Everything that we've seen in training and how he's (Robinson) been around the group is exactly what we want," said England captain Ben Stokes. "We all know the quality of bowler he is, because when he's played for England his skill set is incredible." Stokes added that Potts had taken the news remarkably well after playing in the previous five Tests.

"For a 23-year-old to understand the bigger picture and not be throwing his toys out the pram was something that I think shouldn't be overlooked," said Stokes. England will need a considerably improved performance following the innings and 12 runs thrashing inside three days at Lord's in the first Test. Robinson has 39 wickets in nine Tests at an average of 21.28. Following a poor Ashes series, where his approach to fitness were questioned in public by the England coaching staff, Robinson missed the subsequent tour of the West Indies with back spasms.

He was due to play for a County Select XI against New Zealand in May, only to miss out with a stiff back, before a bout of Covid-19 caused him to spend more time on the sidelines. Stokes said he had spoken frankly to Robinson about his attitude to fitness. "I feel that's something people deserve," said Stokes. "Rather than just have a conversation to get through it easy, I'd rather let him know exactly where I stand.

"It enables him to go away and work on what has been asked of him. All I can say is he's done that to the absolute extreme. "All the feedback Robbo has got from myself, the coach, the people who have helped him get where he is now, has been nothing but positive." Stokes revealed earlier this week he is taking anxiety medication to help his battle with mental health issues. The 31-year-old's father, Ged, died of brain cancer two years ago and Stokes opted out of his sport for six months as he struggled to come to terms with the loss.

The Durham all-rounder said on Wednesday that people who like him suffer from mental health problems could take heart from how he had enjoyed such a successful career. "To be here today as England Test captain is something hopefully a lot of people can take a lot of promise from and realise that even when you do feel like you are down and dark you can bounce back and achieve things you want to," he said. Stokes has retained faith with opener Zak Crawley despite another poor outing at Lord's-scoring nine and 13.

In 35 innings as a Test opener, Crawley averages 22.25, a figure boosted by a double century against Pakistan in 2020. Only two openers in Test history have a lower average from at least as many innings. Australia's Alick Bannerman, who played in the 19th century, averaged 21.44, and Bangladesh's Javed Omar 22.07. England's defeat last weekend against the top-ranked Test side ended a run of four successive victories under red ball head coach Brendon McCullum and Stokes. — AFP

## England vow to stick with 'Bazball' in bid to level S Africa series

LONDON: England captain Ben Stokes has insisted there will be no let-up in the team's attacking approach as they look to bounce back in the second Test against South Africa starting Thursday. The hosts have arrived at Manchester's Old Trafford 1-0 down in a three-match series following a chastening innings and 12-run defeat inside three days by the Proteas at Lord's last week.

That was their first defeat under the new leadership duo of Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum following a run of four successive wins with an aggressive approach dubbed 'Bazball', characterised by attacking batting that saw England chase down stiff fourth innings targets against New Zealand and India during the past two months.

England, however, had no answer to a formidable South Africa pace attack led by Kagiso Rabada at Lord's, where they were dismissed for just 165 and 149 in their two innings, although a lack of domestic red-ball cricket since last month's win over India, was arguably more responsible than 'Bazball' for a clatter of wickets.

And a rare double failure by Joe Root meant England have not won a Test when the star batsman has not made a fifty for more than two years. All-rounder Stokes, who took over as captain after close friend Root had presided over just one win in 17 Tests, was in no mood to change tack after just one loss. "Absolutely not," he said. "We know well that when we perform to the capabilities that we're capable of, then we can go out and put on an incredible performance, like everybody's seen in the four games before."

### 'Timid'

Former New Zealand captain McCullum said England's problem at Lord's had been a lack of attack rather than too much cavalier cricket. "I think

they were perhaps a touch timid," he said. "We approach the game with a clear mentality about the way we want to play. "It's not always going to work. As we said at the time, you've got to buckle up for the ride. It's not nice at times like this but we'll come back strong." There are, however, legitimate questions over the form of opening batsman Zak Crawley who, after another two low scores at Lord's, is now averaging a mere 16.4 across 10 Test innings this season.

England, however, seem determined to stick with the 24-year-old Kent right-hander, backed in bizarre fashion by McCullum when the coach said: "I look at a guy like Zak and his skill-set is not to be a consistent cricketer." As for their bowling, England may consider recalling Ollie Robinson in place of Matthew Potts to a seam attack that lacked sharpness and penetration at Lord's, where South Africa cemented their position at the top of the World Test Championship table.

No Proteas batsman managed a century in the match but a collective effort led by opener Sarel Erwee got them to a competitive total of 326. Undeniably gifted batsman Aiden Markram came out of the match, however, with an average of under 10 from his last 10 Test innings. The uncapped Ryan Rickelton, in form for English county side Northamptonshire, could be given a Test debut if Markram is dropped.

South Africa spinner Keshav Maharaj, asked Tuesday if the Proteas had struck a psychological blow against England by winning the first Test so emphatically, replied: "I'd like to think so." The left-armer added: "I think England have played some really good cricket and fought themselves out of tough situations to win Test matches and series in the last year." South Africa captain Dean Elgar made it clear before the series he was still a believer in Test cricket's fundamentals for all the 'Bazball' hype surrounding England.

Elgar also demonstrated a nice line in tactical innovation when his decision to bring Maharaj on early in England's second innings was rewarded by the spinner taking two top-order wickets. The Proteas have become a highly effective Test team



England's captain Ben Stokes

since Elgar became their skipper 18 months ago. "I think we know what to do and go about our business a lot better," said Maharaj. "And there's more clarity and role definition within the team. "I think that's been Dean's mantra from the time he's taken over as the Test captain." —AFP

## Jacobs, Warholm denied Diamond League wild cards

PARIS: Olympic champions Marcell Jacobs and Karsten Warholm have had the door closed on their hopes of a wild card entry for next month's Diamond League finals in Zurich. Jacobs, the 27-year-old Italian who won the 100m in Tokyo, has been kept out of the Diamond League this season by illness and injury but said after winning the European title last week that he wanted a chance to have a go at the best American sprinters.

His hopes of beating them and winning the world title disappeared when he withdrew before the semi-finals of last month's world championships in Oregon. Zurich's co-meeting director Andreas Hediger told AFP there was no way round the rules to allow either Jacobs or Norwegian 400m hurdles world record holder Karsten Warholm to compete in the climax to the season on September 7/8.

Hediger added Jacobs's entourage had been told this. "The Diamond League qualification rules state that there is only one qualification for the finals via collecting points at the 13 series meetings," he said in an email. "The best 6-10 athletes (depending on the discipline) according to the collected points then qualify for the final. "There is no other way, no one can be invited who has not qualified." "One can disagree in good faith about the sense or nonsense of this rule and it is also regularly discussed within the Diamond League," Hediger said.

"Currently, the majority opinion is that an athlete who has not earned any points during the season in the WDL should not take the 'cherry off the cake' from the other athletes at the finals, regardless of why no points were or could be earned." Warholm's preparations for the world championships were also blighted by injury that restricted the Norwegian to the world championships - he finished seventh - and the European championships, where he won title. Winners of each Diamond League discipline receive a trophy and \$30,000. —AFP



WILMINGTON: Will Zalatoris of the United States plays his shot from the ninth tee during the second round of the BMW Championship at Wilmington Country Club. —AFP

## Injured Zalatoris out of Tour and Presidents Cup

MIAMI: Will Zalatoris has withdrawn from this week's US PGA Tour Championship and next month's Presidents Cup after suffering a back injury at the BMW Championship last weekend, his management team said on Tuesday. The 26-year-old world number nine had been riding high after winning the St. Jude Championship on August 14 - his

first PGA Tour title and the first leg of the season-ending FedEx Cup playoffs. However the three-time major runner-up withdrew from last weekend's BMW in Delaware after suffering a back injury during the third round that was later diagnosed as two herniated discs.

"Unfortunately this means that Will is unable to play this week at the Tour Championship," his agent Allen Hobbs said in a statement on Tuesday. "He is also very disappointed that he will not have the opportunity to play in next month's Presidents Cup, where he was hoping to play for Captain (Davis) Love and represent the United States. "He is fully focused on getting healthy and back onto the course as soon as he is able. — AFP

Sports

# Pregnant Kerber withdraws from US Open; Kvitova announces engagement

‘Two against one just isn’t a fair competition’

PARIS: Former women’s world number one Angelique Kerber announced on Wednesday that she is pregnant and has withdrawn from next week’s US Open joking “two against one just isn’t a fair competition.” The 34-year-old German added that Flushing Meadows holds great memories for her. She won the title there in 2016 and, as a result, became world number one.

“I really wanted to play the @usopen but eventually I decided that two against one just isn’t a fair competition,” tweeted Kerber, who is ranked 52. “For the next months, I will take a break from traveling the globe as a tennis player but then again, I believe it’s for the best possible reason! “New York has often been a turning point in my career and it feels like this year will be no different in some way!”

“From restarting my career in 2011 (ranked 92 she reached the semi-

finals) to winning the title in 2016 and becoming #1 in the world.” Kerber, who won the 2016 Australian Open and Wimbledon in 2018 - said she was excited about her new chapter. “Being a professional athlete means everything to me but I’m grateful for the new path I’m heading to,” she said. “To be honest, I’m nervous and excited at the same time.”

**Kvitova’s engagement**

In another development, two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova announced her engagement to coach Jiri Vanek on Wednesday, posing with an engagement ring on her hand in her “special place”. “Happy news we wanted to share with you guys... I said ‘yes’ in my special place,” the 32-year-old world number 21 tweeted, adding a photo of the couple from the All England Club. Kvitova, who won Wimbledon in 2011 and 2014, hired the 44-year-old Vanek in



Germany's Angelique Kerber

2016. Vanek has two sons from his previous marriage. Kvitova lost to Caroline Garcia in the final of the

WTA Cincinnati Masters last week in the run-up to the US Open which begins next week. — AFP

## Fulham suffer shock League Cup exit 2-0

LONDON: Fulham suffered an embarrassing League Cup exit as the Premier League side were beaten 2-0 by Crawley in a second round shock on Tuesday. Marco Silva’s side are 83 places above League Two Crawley and beat Brentford 3-2 in the Premier League on Saturday. But the Fulham manager’s decision to make 10 changes backfired badly at the Broadfield Stadium as struggling Crawley upset the form book.

Former Fulham striker Kevin Betsy, who has taken only a single point from his first five matches as Crawley manager, masterminded a memorable victory thanks to goals from Tom Nichols and Liverpool loanee James Balagizi. The Cottagers joined Norwich and Leeds on the list of top-flight clubs who have suffered cup embarrassment at Crawley in recent years.

Silva handed debuts to Issa Diop, Marlon Fossey and 17-year-old academy graduate Luke Harris, while Shane Duffy and Kevin Mbabu made their first starts. But Fulham fell behind with 16 minutes on the clock when Nichols took Ashley Nadesan’s pass and drilled a low left-footed drive across Marek Rodak into the far corner. Just four minutes into the second half, Fulham midfielder Tyrese Francois conceded possession deep inside his own half and Balagizi seized on Nichols’ reverse pass to slot home.

“From the first minute they wanted it more than

us. We lost a bit of control of the game and started to make some mistakes, then they scored and everything was more difficult for us,” Silva said. “These type of games you have to equalise with the same enthusiasm, the same intensity as our opponent.” The Premier League clubs involved in this season’s European competitions have a bye into the third round, leaving the spotlight on Aston Villa, Everton and Leicester in the other second round ties.

**Villa relief**

Villa came from behind to spare Steven Gerrard’s blushes in a 4-1 win at Bolton. After a frustrating start to the season and just three wins from 14 games stretching back to March, questions were being asked of Villa’s direction under Gerrard. The Premier League side were stunned as Dion Charles gave third tier Bolton a 24th-minute lead, but Douglas Luiz levelled directly from a corner. Danny Ings put Villa ahead with a 62nd-minute penalty and further goals from Lucas Digne and Leon Bailey eased Villa into the third round. “You are always looking for the right reaction and response,” Gerrard said. Everton are also off to a slow start in the Premier League and they only scraped into the third round with a 1-0 victory at League One side Fleetwood.

A first-half goal from Demarai Gray, playing after Tom Davies was injured in the warm-up, ensured Frank Lampard’s side progressed.

Leicester needed a 3-1 penalty shoot-out victory to avoid a shock defeat at fourth tier Stockport, who held Brendan Rodgers’ troubled side to a 0-0



LONDON: Fulham’s supporters attend a football match at Craven Cottage in London. —AFP

draw. Without a win in three Premier League games and with Wesley Fofana and James Maddison linked with moves, Leicester needed debutant keeper Daniel Iversen to make three saves in the shoot-out before they advanced.

Bournemouth edged past Norwich as Todd Cantwell missed the decisive penalty in the Cherries’ 5-3 shoot-out victory after a 2-2 draw at Carrow Road. Wolves striker Raul Jimenez celebrated his opener by wearing an eye patch and pirate hook as his team beat Preston 2-1 at Molineux. Southampton cruised to a 3-0 victory at Cambridge and Nottingham Forest beat Grimsby by the same score. Crystal Palace won 2-0 at Oxford and Brentford eased to a 2-0 victory at Colchester. —AFP

## West Ham, Chelsea’s Emerson seal deal

LONDON: West Ham signed Italy defender Emerson Palmieri from Chelsea in a deal worth a reported £15 million (\$17 million) on Tuesday. Emerson has agreed a four-year contract with the Hammers, with the option of a further one-year extension. The 28-year-old left-back was born in Brazil, but moved to Italy in 2014 and was eventually granted citizenship. He struggled to break into the Chelsea team in five years at Stamford Bridge and spent last season on loan at Lyon. Emerson has won 27 caps for Italy and played in their win over England in the Euro 2020 final at Wembley.

“I’m very happy to be here and to arrive here. It’s a big challenge for me, it’s a big team, so I’m very happy to be here and I’m ready,” Emerson told West Ham’s website. “Personally, since the first day I arrived here in England, I always saw the big clubs and I always watched the big games and I knew the history about West Ham. “The history is so big for this team and so when I knew about the interest for sure I said ‘Yes, let’s go, I want to go there’ and I’m here now! I can’t wait to get started in a West Ham shirt.”

Emerson becomes West Ham manager David Moyes’ seventh signing since the end of last season. “He is an experienced player with a good pedigree, who has enjoyed great success at both club and international level in recent years,” Moyes said. “He will give us strong competition in defensive areas and brings a winning mentality that we are looking to build here at West Ham.” West Ham lost 2-0 at home against Brighton on Sunday and sit bottom of the Premier League after three straight defeats, the club’s worst start to a season in 51 years. —AFP

## Urawa vow to attack ‘really tired’ Jeonbuk in AFC semi-final

SAITAMA: Free-scoring Urawa Red Diamonds will go on the attack in their Asian Champions League semi-final against an ailing Jeonbuk Motors, midfielder Takahiro Sekine warned on Wednesday. Japan’s Urawa have scored 15 goals in their last three games in all competitions, the latest a 4-0 thrashing of Thailand’s BG Pathum United in the Champions League quarter-finals on Monday.

Urawa will enjoy home advantage for Thursday’s one-legged tie against the K League’s Jeonbuk in Saitama and Sekine hopes they will put on another scintillating showing for their passionate fans. “We want to attack them before they get the chance to attack us,” the 27-year-old told reporters. “I’m really looking forward to it and we don’t have any intention of losing, so we will give it everything we’ve got.” Urawa are chasing their third AFC Champions League crown, having won Asia’s premier club competition in 2007 and 2017.

In contrast to Urawa’s bullish message, Jeonbuk go into the last-four clash with their reserves of energy running low. They needed extra-time in the last 16 last week and once again played 120 minutes before coming back to defeat Vissel Kobe 3-1 on Monday, all in Saitama. “It’s been a difficult situation and I appreciate the players,” said the South Korean side’s manager Kim Sang-sik. “Because we played two games with extra-time the players are really tired and there will be problems with physical strength. “But we have one spirit and one mind to go into this game and get the win.” — AFP

## Kuwaiti qualifies for world Triathlon Championship

KUWAIT: Kuwait’s Triathlon Athlete Abdallah Al-Refae qualified for the World “Iron Man” championship to be held in Kona Island, Hawaii on 8th of October. Al-Refae qualified after recording nine hours and 56 minutes, which is a new Kuwait record in the Iron Man race. The event was held in Kalmar City, Sweden. Al-Refae ended in 28th place in his age category (35-39 years) and this qualified him to the Hawaii event.

Abdallah Al-Refae dedicated his achievement to Kuwait people, Kuwait Triathlon Club, the Federation, and to all those who supported him. He said that he had a training camp in Thailand with coach Mohammad Al-Sabbagh who prepared for the Swedish Champions. He said the Swedish race was for a distance of 226 Km - non-stop, which is the longest in the Triathlon event, and was divided by 3.8 km swimming, cycling for 180 Km and finally running for 42 km.



Abdallah Al-Refae

# Classifieds

**Hospitals & Clinics**

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

**Clinics**

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I have changed my name MOHAMAD ISHAQ ABDUL HAMID CHOUGLE (old name) to MOHAMAD ISHAQ ABDUL HAMID CHOUGLE (new name) Address: At & Post-Nilik, Tal Khed, Dist. Ratnagiri Maharashtra State-415709. (C# 2040)

\*\*\*\*\*

I, TOSIF MOHAMMED Father Name RAIS MOHAMMAD holder of passport No. V6052629 do hereby change my name to TOSIF MOHAMMAD Father Name RAISE MOHAMMAD and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C# 2042)

\*\*\*\*\*

I, Yasir Mohammad, holder of Passport No. R8277909, do hereby change my name to Mohd. Yasir (as given name) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Mohd. Yasir and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C# 2044)

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LISBON: (From left) Dynamo Kiev's Ukrainian midfielder Serhiy Sydorchuk fights for the ball with Benfica's Brazilian defender Morato and Benfica's Portuguese forward Henrique Araujo during the UEFA Champions League playoff second leg football match at the Luz stadium in Lisbon on August 23, 2022. — AFP photos

## Benfica's Neres ends Dynamo Kyiv's Champions League hopes

### Kliment shines as Plzen book a place

PARIS: Benfica cruised into the group stage of the Champions League after overrunning Dynamo Kyiv 3-0 in the second leg of their playoff on Tuesday thanks to David Neres' assist and goal. The two-time European champions from Portugal will be in the draw on Thursday while Dynamo will be in the Europa League. "From the first second we wanted to win and showed it. Now we are happy to be in the Champions League," Benfica coach Roger Schmidt said. "Let's wait for the draw and then we'll see. It's never easy. I'm happy because we deserve it," he added.

Domestic top-flight football, which had been suspended since Russia's invasion in February and during the ongoing war, returned to Ukraine earlier on Tuesday. The Dynamo players, who begin their league campaign on Sunday, took to the pitch at the Estadio da Luz draped in the Ukrainian flag in a message of support to their compatriots back home. Dynamo were already trailing 2-0 from the first leg and they were always on the back foot against last season's quarter-finalists.

Former Manchester City defender Nicolas Otamendi's emphatic header put Benfica ahead on the night in the 27th minute in front of a crowd of more than 58,000 from a Neres cross. Rafa Silva netted next for the Portuguese side and Brazilian forward Neres swept the ball into the net after a flowing move before half-time. In the second half Enzo Fernandez's close-range effort was saved by Dynamo goalkeeper



LISBON: Benfica's Brazilian midfielder David Neres (left) kicks the ball during the UEFA Champions League playoff second leg football match between SL Benfica and Dynamo Kiev at the Luz stadium in Lisbon on August 23, 2022.

Georgiy Bushchan as Benfica wrapped up a convincing 5-0 aggregate win.

Elsewhere, Milan Pavkov's 90th minute own goal secured Maccabi Haifa's spot as they beat Red Star Belgrade 5-4 over two legs. Jan Kliment's 73rd minute effort booked Viktoria Plzen's place in the draw as they beat Azeris Qarabag 2-1 on aggregate. On Wednesday, former two-time champions PSV Eindhoven hosted Rangers with the tie at 2-2, Copenhagen headed to Trabzonspor with a 2-1 lead and Bodo/Glimt went to Dinamo Zagreb with a 1-0 advantage.—AFP

### Real Madrid, rivals await Champions League draw

ISTANBUL: Title holders Real Madrid and the rest of Europe's elite clubs will be able to start plotting their route to Champions League glory when the draw for this season's group stage is made in Istanbul on Thursday from 1600 GMT. All going to plan, the journey will end back in the Turkish city on June 10 next year for the final at the Ataturk Olympic Stadium, the same venue where Liverpool defeated AC Milan on penalties in 2005.

Istanbul was supposed to host the final in 2020 and again in 2021, but on each occasion UEFA moved the game to Portugal due to pandemic-related restrictions. Another late change was required last season, with Saint-Petersburg being stripped of the final after Russia invaded Ukraine, and Paris instead stepping in to host Madrid's 1-0 victory over Liverpool.

The Spanish giants have now been crowned kings of Europe 14 times, twice as many times as the competition's next most successful club, AC Milan, and they started this season by defeating Europa League winners Eintracht Frankfurt in Helsinki to lift the UEFA Super Cup. "The joy and satisfaction you get after such wins tends to stick around, making you feel like no one should ever take your place. And that's a pretty strong motivation to keep winning," coach Carlo Ancelotti told UEFA.com in a recent interview when asked about the chances of a repeat triumph for his side.

Their success is likely to be recognized elsewhere on Thursday, with goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois and Karim Benzema nominated alongside Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne for the UEFA Men's Player of the Year prize for last season. Ancelotti is nominated alongside City's Pep Guardiola and Liverpool's Jurgen Klopp for the coaching gong.

As for the draw itself, Real are in Pot One along with the champions of Europe's other leading leagues in the shape of City, Bayern Munich, Milan, Paris Saint-Germain, Porto and Ajax, as well as Europa League winners Frankfurt. Liverpool will be

in Pot Two, meaning there is a possibility that they could get a rematch with Real. Chelsea, winners in 2021, and Tottenham Hotspur are the other English representatives.

Meanwhile, Celtic will be in Pot Four as they return to the Champions League proper for the first time since 2017. Russian clubs are banned because of the ongoing war, but Ukraine—where a new domestic season kicked off this week—will be represented by Shakhtar Donetsk. Dynamo Kyiv, who faced Benfica in the play-offs, were hoping to join them but lost 5-0 on aggregate to the two-time winners.

The final places will be decided in this mid-week's play-off round ties, with Bodo/Glimt aiming to become the first Norwegian team to feature in the group stage in 15 years. What awaits all clubs involved is an intense two months of competition, with a World Cup in November and December forcing UEFA to organise all six matchdays in the space of nine weeks starting on September 6. There will be an international break in that period too, and the demands on the players will be greater than ever, but the financial rewards will make it worthwhile for the clubs.—AFP

### Kuwait Premier League kicks off its 61st edition

KUWAIT: Kuwait Premier League "Zain's league" will start its 61st edition (2022/2023) on Thursday with two matches. The first match is between Al-Nasr facing Al-Arabi in Ali Sabah Al-Salem stadium, while the second match will have Al-Salmiya facing Al-Tadhamon in Thamer stadium. On Friday, last year's champions Kuwait Club will host the match versus Al-Jahra Club while Al-Qadsia will face Al-Sahel in Al-Shabab stadium. The first round will conclude on Saturday when Kazma will face Al-Fahaheel in Al-Sadaqa Wal Salam stadium. The premier league consists of 10 teams on a two leg home-away style competition with the teams spread into two groups.

The six highest ranking teams will then play another round of home-away matches in order to have a winner. The last four teams will play to determine the two lowest ranking teams to move to the first league. The Kuwaiti Premier league began its first edition in 1961/62 season, with the most winners being Al-Arabi, Al-Qadsia and Kuwait Club - with 17 championships each. Salmiya and Kazma come second with 4 championships each and 1 championship for Al-Jahra.—KUNA

Zain First Round Matches		
Zain Premiere League 2022 - 2023		
Al-Arabi	6:50	Al-Nasr
Al-Tadhamon	9:10	Al-Salmiya
Jahra	6:50	Kuwait SC
Al-Qadsia	9:10	Al-Sahel
Al-Fahaheel	8:10	Kazma